



## **Rules and Regulations.**

Many people immediately "turn off" when one talks about teams having rules and regulations. I remember many years ago when I first introduced "ground rules" for behaviours in meetings, the looks that I got and the initial "disgruntlement" that was evident. "We don't need ground-rules. We operate as a team already and we are all grown adults!" was one immediate reply. I backed off and let them proceed with the meeting. What a shambles! No agenda, no chairperson, people talking over each other, subgroups forming and a lot, lot more. Not only did the group need proper facilitation they needed to be aware of what behaviours were not acceptable and what behaviours were desired. There eventually was agreement that this state of affairs was unacceptable.

So, what can the coaching manager do with their teams to ensure that not only meetings go smoothly and productively but also general behaviours are positive and constructive? Ground-rules are important as they give people a framework to work productively behind. People need to know what is acceptable and what is not and once they know where they stand they will start to abide by them. Ground rules also provide a framework for the giving and receiving of feedback so when someone follows the rules explicitly they should be congratulated and praised and when someone transgresses or flouts the rules the opposite will apply. That person will be informed of the impact that their negative behaviours are having on the group and its productivity.

A coaching manager will ensure that the team forms the ground rules themselves. Too often I have seen managers impose their "rules" on the team and as such there has been little acceptance of them. This behaviour from a manager is seen as dictatorial and is usually borne out of fear. The "do as I say" set of rules are not very productive. Get the team to discuss what behaviours they feel uncomfortable with within the team and what behaviours they feel will drive the team forward productively. Let them come up with a list and let them produce what in some instances is called the team "charter". If there are some "givens" then make sure you outline them right from the start, as most organisations will have various processes that must be adhered to. For example, for a sales rep, it

may be that call records must be filled in after each sales call and sent off to Head Office that following evening. Get the "givens" out of the road and then facilitate and coach the team to come up with their own set of ground rules. If they have input to these then they are far more likely to adhere to them and to give feedback to individuals when the rules are flouted or ignored.

In the short term as constructive feedback on negative behaviours is difficult for most people the coaching manager will have to take the lead, and lead by example. If a manager is seen to ignore the rules or ignore giving feedback to someone who does not abide by the rules then other team members start to wonder what the point is!

**In summary:**

- Ground rules may seem to formal but they are very important if a team is to function properly and productively.
- The coaching manager should let the team form their own set of ground rules but only after the company "givens" are discussed and agreed to.
- The coaching manager does not dictate the rules but plays the coach and facilitates the team to come up with their own set of agreed rules.
- The coaching manager will lead by example and give feedback when both the rules are adhered too well and also when they are ignored.

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