



## Driving Change with On-the-Floor Mentoring

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Do you walk around your organization and wonder where your Supervisors are or listen to phone calls and wish your performance were different? Do you find yourself thinking, “It’s time for a change!” While you may find yourself with a flurry of ideas of how to get to higher performance, it is important to follow a process that will lead to success. Understanding the importance of on-the-floor mentoring and how to effectively implement this process is the first step to achieving greater results.

There are four types of on-the-floor coaching:

1. Relationship Building
2. Visibility
3. Informal Reviews
4. Scooting (side by side immediate feedback)

Each one of these four types of coaching has a specific purpose and it is critical that they are exercised appropriately to effectively and efficiently drive change. When you are first examining the details of your performance and notice that you may have been tolerating more than you should, (*“What you tolerate becomes your standards.”*), the first step to driving change is to communicate your standards and reestablish your level of tolerance for various behaviors. Some behaviors that may have been tolerated in the past that require a restatement of your standards include eating while on the phone with customers, doing personal work in between calls, or talking in a loud volume with word choice that escalates situations. It is critical that you reestablish your standards first so that your Supervisors can then effectively hold Representatives accountable for the confirmed standards.

Once you post your standards, communicate them in team meetings or distribute memos, it is time to implement more on-the-floor coaching. It is now critical that your Supervisors are ready for this process and that your Representatives are prepared in order to ensure everyone’s comfort level. To assure an efficient and effective on-the-floor coaching strategy, Visibility and Informal Reviews are the foundations for Supervisors to begin enhancing their skills and advancing their comfort levels with being on the floor. These types of coaching are also an important step for the Representatives to ensure that they grow accustomed to seeing Supervisors on the floor and receiving coaching in an open and sharing environment.

Visibility is the act of purposefully walking around the operation floor to observe the activities that are occurring and to be readily accessible to Representatives. Being visible acts as an extrinsic motivator to Employees to remind them to stay on task and perform to the desired standards. While no verbal coaching is done, your physical presence acts as a coaching vehicle.

When you are purposefully walking the floor it is important that your body language portrays feelings of helpfulness, care, concern and being purposeful. While you are walking the floor it is important to:

1. Walk at a moderate pace so that it does not appear that you are simply racing across the operation to get to another task.
2. Have arms open, not crossed, to portray care, not apprehension.
3. Wear a smile on your face to show others that you enjoy this time in their work space.
4. Do not immediately go to areas that typically present an immediate problem. Follow a similar course to show equality and fairness as to how you are making yourself available.
5. Do not have a notebook or other materials as it appears that you are "looking to catch people to write them up".

There are certain purposeful acts that will present themselves as a destination point for you and give you a specific place to go as you are walking the floor so that it does not appear that you are "aimlessly wandering" with nothing to do:

1. Visit the restroom to ensure that facilities are well attended and there are no immediate needs. Take this opportunity to put paper in the trash can or wipe around the sinks. (No more than you would normally do for yourself. You are certainly acting in a maintenance fashion.)
2. Visit the break room to also ensure that everything is available for the Employees.
3. Go to the fax machines to see if anything needs attention.
4. Walk through the scheduling area to see if anyone has an excessively long call or is not available for an excessive period of time.
5. Spend a few minutes in any training session that is occurring so that you can demonstrate your support and reinforce your commitment.

By doing these activities, you are modeling a servant mentality and by demonstrating the desired behaviors, others will follow your lead.

When you are on the floor being visible, you will come across situations that will lend themselves to necessary communication. This is the time for Informal Reviews. This type of communication is brief, targeted, specific and focused to addressing issues that arise while you are in the operation. The following is a list of specific situations that may arise and the mentoring that will help communicate your needs and change future performance.

<b>Observed Behavior</b>	<b>Suggested Mentoring</b>
Attending to personal emails or web sites unrelated to business needs.	<i>"I'd like to remind you that communication for personal reasons should be handled on your breaks and lunches, not between calls. When you are not focused to the business needs, it puts extra work on your peers and makes the day harder for everyone. I really appreciate your focus to the business needs."</i>
Eating while on the phone.	<i>"I understand that sometimes we may need to eat something when we are not on break or lunch, but it is important that we do not eat while we are talking to Customers. They can hear food in your mouth and it may make it difficult to understand you or may make you sound unprofessional. Please refrain from eating while you are speaking to Customers."</i>
Feet on the desk or sitting in an undesirable position.	<i>"I want you to feel comfortable in your work place, but it is important that we maintain a professional posture since it helps us sound like we are attentive to our Customers. If you need another chair or to be in a standing position to feel more comfortable, please let me know how I can help."</i>
Spending time in after call work or unavailable.	<i>"I know it is important to address the Customer's issues and complete the order that they requested. I appreciate your attention to detail. Can I help make your job easier to see if there are ways that you can expedite this process?"</i>
Using negative word choice or a loud volume that indicates that there is a potential escalated situation.	(Move to the side of the individual and make yourself available. Wait for an appropriate time to communicate with the Employee to offer assistance. Provide assistance as necessary by handling the call or walking the Employee through specific steps.) After the call concludes: <i>"I appreciate the fact that the Customer was in a challenging situation. It is important to show respect and concern for the Customer by maintaining positive word choices and an even volume. We do not want to contribute to an escalated situation."</i>
A raised hand of someone who needs assistance.	Another great value to being on the floor is being immediately accessible to Representatives who need assistance. Commend them for using your assistance so that they know it is appropriate to call on you when they need you. It is also important to recognize those individuals who seem to need your help for recurring issues. Be sure that you leave a reminder with them of the information that you provided to help them become more self-sufficient.

It is important to keep in mind that being on the floor is also a wonderful opportunity to provide positive reinforcement for a job well done. When you do so, be sure that your acknowledgments are sincere and genuine. You will accomplish these feelings by being specific and focused to events that truly go above and beyond. You do not want your mentoring to appear trivial, but instead to be meaningful and purposeful.

- ✓ *“I really appreciate how you offered several options to that Customer to ensure that the situation did not escalate.”*
- ✓ *“I know that the call volumes have been high and I really appreciate you maintaining an appropriate pace so that every Customer gets the same feeling of patience.”*
- ✓ *“I recognize that some of these standards are different than we have had in the past and I really value your support of them to help us create a more productive and fair working environment.”*

Your Employees must recognize the benefits of you being available to them and see you as an asset to assist them in making their jobs easier. By embracing the value of being available to your Employees, they will become intrinsically motivated to perform at the desired levels while feeling your support and consistent care. You will ultimately experience greater productivity and higher customer satisfaction. Your Employees will appreciate a more consistent and fair work environment. Your Supervisors will then be able to focus on proactive forms of mentoring and that will take your organization to greater sales and enhanced Customer relationships. Everyone will win in an environment that supports on-the-floor coaching.

### **About the Author**

With nearly 25 years of contact center experience, Kimberly King looks for the details in your company that will enhance your Customer relationships, foster deeper Employee relationships and create more success for your business' bottom line. Kimberly's passion is driving change as she implements her strategic mentoring processes in telecommunication, utility, financial service, insurance, and personal product lines of business. Visit InterWeave's web site at [www.interweavecorp.com](http://www.interweavecorp.com) for more tips for taking the Journey to WOW™!