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Using the Individual Development Plan as a Vehicle for Coaching and Communication

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Submitted to the Program of Organizational Dynamics in the Graduate Division of the School of Arts and Sciences in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Organizational Dynamics at the University of Pennsylvania Advisor: Charline S. Russo

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Abstract

This capstone explores the underutilization of the Individual Development Plan (IDP) as a vehicle for communication and coaching at all organizational levels throughout the United States Coast Guard (USCG). The capstone will gather data through informal interviews using basic line questioning; exploring the IDP in the USCG, when and why it was developed, how it was designed to be used and how it is currently used. While many interviewees feel the IDP is in fact a useful tool, many Guardians (Coast Guard personnel) feel the IDP is not used appropriately and that supervisors and subordinates are neither adequately trained on how to use the tool properly, nor on how to effectively use the IDP as a coaching tool. The capstone looks critically at the IDP and recommends how training in the use and application of the IDP through the development of communication and coaching skills enhances the value and application of the IDP for all ranks within the USCG.

Comments

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COACHING AND COMMUNICATION

By

Kryisia V. Pohl

Submitted to the Program of Organizational Dynamics
in the Graduate Division of the School of Arts and Sciences
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Organizational Dynamics
at the University of Pennsylvania

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

2010

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COACHING AND COMMUNICATION

By

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ABSTRACT

This capstone explores the underutilization of the Individual Development Plan (IDP) as a vehicle for communication and coaching at all organizational levels throughout the United States Coast Guard (USCG). The capstone will gather data through informal interviews using basic line questioning; exploring the IDP in the USCG, when and why it was developed, how it was designed to be used and how it is currently used. While many interviewees feel the IDP is in fact a useful tool, many Guardians (Coast Guard personnel) feel the IDP is not used appropriately and that supervisors and subordinates are neither adequately trained on how to use the tool properly, nor on how to effectively use the IDP as a coaching tool. The capstone looks critically at the IDP and recommends how training in the use and application of the IDP through the development of communication and coaching skills enhances the value and application of the IDP for all ranks within the USCG.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The United States Coast Guard

The United States Coast Guard (USCG or Coast Guard) is a branch of the U.S. Armed Forces. A uniformed service, the USCG is the largest agency within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). As the leading U.S. maritime enforcement agency, the USCG performs three broad maritime roles including safety, security and stewardship. These roles include: search and rescue, maritime safety, ports, waterways and coastal security, drug and migrant interdiction, defense readiness, ice operations, aids to navigation, marine environmental and living marine resources protection, and law enforcement (U.S. Coast Guard, 2009, p.4). Equipped with small boats, cutters and aircraft, Coast Guard personnel are tasked to perform these missions daily along 95,000 miles of U.S. shoreline and within nearly 3.4 million square miles of Exclusive Economic Zone (p.3). The USCG is made up of roughly 50,000 active duty and reserve personnel. The breakdown of the grade structures of the USCG officer and enlisted workforce are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Officer Grade Structure of the United States Coast Guard

Admiral (ADM)	Vice Admiral (VADM)	Rear Admiral (RADM)	Rear Admiral (lower half) (RDML)	Captain (CAPT)	Commander (CDR)	Lieutenant Commander (LCDR)	Lieutenant (LT)	Lieutenant (junior grade) (LTJG)	Ensign (ENS)
O-10	O-9	O-8	O-7	O-6	O-5	O-4	O-3	O-2	O-1

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Coast_Guard#Personnel.

Warrant Officer Grade Structure of the United States Coast Guard		
Chief Warrant Officer 4	Chief Warrant Officer 3	Chief Warrant Officer 2
W-4	W-3	W-2

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Coast_Guard#Personnel

Non Commissioned Officer Grade Structure of the United States Coast Guard					
Master Chief Petty Officer	Senior Chief Petty Officer	Chief Petty Officer	Petty Officer First Class	Petty Officer Second Class	Petty Officer Third Class
(MCPO)	(SCPO)	(CPO)	(PO1)	(PO2)	(PO3)
E-9	E-8	E-7	E-6	E-5	E-4

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Coast_Guard#Personnel

Enlisted Grade Structure of the United States Coast Guard		
<u>Seaman</u>	<u>Seaman Apprentice</u>	<u>Seaman Recruit</u>
(SN)	(SA)	(SR)
E-3	E-2	E-1

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Coast_Guard#Personnel

With the Coast Guard's significant mission expansion and subsequent workforce growth over the past two decades, many changes and an evolved personnel management system have been implemented. Included in this personnel management system is an evaluation system, which is applicable to all levels of the workforce. Depending on rank, officer or enlisted, members undergo a formal annual or semi-annual evaluation. These evaluations are included in a member's official record and are used in consideration for promotion. Additionally, also depending on rank, officer or enlisted, some members are required to follow the Individual Development Plan (IDP) process. The IDP is an

unofficial record of a member's personal and professional goals and was implemented to be used as a counseling tool with a supervisor.

Created as a self-assessment tool focused on capturing a member's personal and professional goals and career plans, the IDP was developed to be a standard communication process between a direct report and his/her supervisor. It was initially developed as a strategic initiative by the USCG's Diversity Action Council to ensure that all junior members were receiving adequate counseling and mentoring early in their careers. The Council recognized that by making mentoring and counseling mandatory for all junior members of the workforce this would ensure a higher rate of success for members starting their careers and ultimately guarantee the Coast Guard a higher retention rate within the organization. In addition, it was determined that the IDP would serve a more purposeful use in that supervisors would be required to counsel or coach as part of their supervisory responsibility, improving supervision and leadership among the ranks. In essence, the IDP was developed to standardize supervision and personnel management by requiring mandatory counseling meetings and mid-period evaluation assessments.

The focus of this capstone is to assess IDP usage among the ranks within the USCG. I conducted 31 interviews with personnel across all mission areas, which provided an understanding of how the IDP is used and whether the IDP process is being followed as initially intended. This capstone reflects on whether USCG personnel think the IDP tool is useful, what kind of training is provided on the process and offers recommendations for improvement.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM BACKGROUND

Problem Background

Performance management is an ongoing process that focuses on job expectations, goals and standards of performance. It creates an environment of communication, feedback and dialogue about roles, expectations, goals and performance. The process also identifies employee skills, competencies and potential areas for growth and development. With this information, employees can build career development plans that focus on empowerment in their current roles and development for roles in the future. These plans, Individual Development Plans (IDP), are the focus of this capstone.

The IDP form is the vehicle for this interaction between the supervisor and the subordinate. The IDP provides an opportunity for individuals to take responsibility for their own learning, professional development and growth. The IDP process has the capability of providing the basis of a coaching relationship, established by the supervisor, ensuring reflective guidance, support and consistent dialogue to help an employee set and achieve documented goals and maintain, enhance or improve performance. This capstone will focus the IDP as a part of the performance management process.

A significant part of the performance management process is the act of one's establishment of clear goals – both personal and professional in nature – and documenting these goals in the form of an IDP. Completing the form is the start of the performance management process and allows for individuals to take responsibility for their own learning, professional development and personal growth. However, the more significant part of the performance management process is the ongoing coaching

relationship established by the supervisor to ensure reflective guidance, support and consistent dialogue to help an employee set and achieve documented goals and ultimately enhance or improve performance.

In 2006, the U.S. Coast Guard demonstrated its commitment to training and professional development by mandating the use of IDPs for first term enlisted members and junior officers, assigned to a permanent duty station. The IDP was made optional for other military members, civilians and auxiliaries. The IDP Commandant Instruction (CI) on IDPs specifically states that the IDP program and the IDP forms are designed to:

aid in the effective integration of new personnel into our Service; enhance job skills; reinforce expectations of the chain of command; and promote focused communications on career personal development to support every individual in reaching their full potential. (U.S. Coast Guard, 2006a, p.1)

The instruction clearly lays out roles and responsibilities for unit Commanding Officers (COs), supervisors, individuals, Command Master Chiefs (CMCs), and specialists focused on development, transition and education. The instruction is five pages long and includes four enclosures.

In reading the CI and All Coast Guard personnel message #533/08 (Alcoast 533/08) which updated and modified the original instruction, goal setting and career planning through the use of the IDP, became mandated not only for first term officer and enlisted, but included the mandated use for all enlisted ranks of First Class Petty Officer (E6) and below, Chief Warrant Officer 2 (CWO2), and all officers Lieutenant Commander (04) and below (U.S. Coast Guard, 2008). However when the instruction and the use of the IDP was implemented by U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters in 2006, there was no formal training to accompany the instruction or the attached IDP forms, nor was there any training provided when the Alcoast 533/08 was distributed. Additionally,

the requirement for the IDP in 2006 and Alcoast 533/08 came out in the form of message traffic – an online Coast Guard tool many junior enlisted and junior officers may not have been granted access, let alone using it on a regular basis. For example, at my last unit, there were no formal announcements made on the usage or the importance of the IDP tool, nor was there any added training for supervisors on how to help implement the tool. Throughout my last tour, it was a mandate that members of my unit ignored.

After conducting my interviews, I gained a sense of how the IDP process is followed and how Guardians think the process should apply in managing performance. A common sentiment held by many interviewees was that tracking IDPs and making sure the “box is checked” for those requiring an IDP seemed to be more important than actually counseling a member. The CI states that Commanding Officers are responsible to “track IDP counseling for military personnel...Monitor participation and program compliance” (U.S. Coast Guard, 2006a). It does appear that most Commanding Officers are focusing on the IDP process by tracking the metric for compliance without ensuring that the IDP program is actually followed. Several first IDP experiences that I documented for personnel was the absence of completing an IDP, as several members had been checked off in the database as having completed one and counseled on it, without either step of the process really having occurred.

Since IDP implementation in the U.S. Coast Guard, the spirit of the IDP process has been lost by focusing more on metrics to achieve unit compliance, rather than the why and the what of how the tool should be used. A small part of the formal IDP process is to complete the actual form. By completing this task, personnel consider what they want to accomplish by establishing short-term goals within the course of one to two years,

or before a tour is complete (anywhere from two through four years), as well as reflect on planning their careers. Specifically for junior enlisted, the Coast Guard developed the tool to allow junior enlisted members to consider all the parts of their personal and professional development, and included in the IDP: a sheet documenting the chain of command, advancement checklists, and goal setting forms for personal, professional, educational and financial goals. For officers, the form is much less specific and allows the user to easily document any type of goal in yearly increments. The version of the IDP that the Coast Guard has developed is an exemplary model in relation to other IDP in the literature, however completing the IDP form is only a portion of the overall IDP process.

Another reason that the overall process may be broken is that front line supervisors and personnel are just not familiar enough with the IDP process and the tool. Very little training on the IDP process is provided at boot camp, enlisted rating school (A-schools), additional job and collateral duty specific training (C-schools) and all leadership professional military instruction offered by the Leadership Development Center (LDC) at the USCG Academy. The LDC offers the following courses offers a number of leadership and professional development training courses. However, the primary Coast Guard courses include:

- Leadership and Management School (LAMS)
- Chief Petty Officer Academy (CPOA)
- Chief Warrant Officer (CWO) Professional Development
- Senior Leadership Principles and Skills (SLPS)
- Senior Enlisted Leadership (SEL)

Chief Petty Officers attending the CPOA do receive a significant block of training on using the IDP; however my research did not indicate usage of coaching and IDP counseling in the field by Chiefs on a consistent basis. There has also been very little, if

any, accountability for all personnel to understand and adhere to the IDP process. The lack of understanding and accountability has stalled any progress on having the IDP become a significant part of the Coast Guard's professional development and performance management culture.

Based on my interviews, front line supervisors at all levels in the organization may appear to not be receiving adequate or comprehensive instruction on coaching competencies to effectively use the IDP to coach subordinates and set goals, plan careers and subsequently track set goals to ultimately achieve them. Therefore, follow up coaching conversations to review the IDP are not occurring consistently even though they are mandated by Commandant and is perhaps the most prominent supervisor responsibility:

Act as a coach and mentor to help individuals reflect on their potential, set goals and explore career options. Review and discuss the person's strengths and areas for improvement in the current work assignment; identify and prioritize specific activities to address any gaps in competencies. When the individual drafts the IDP, check to ensure it is realistic and achievable. Once the IDP is finalized, be available to provide timely feedback and pinpoint areas where the individual could take great responsibility. Be alert for changes in mission or equipment and make changes as necessary. (U.S. Coast Guard, 2006a, p.3)

What seems to be occurring in the field is that employees are being required to complete the IDP form without follow up to ensure that the goals of the IDP process are achieved. Supervisors do ensure that an IDP is completed, then enter the information into a database without counseling and then file the IDP forms away. Oftentimes, there are some junior personnel who did not even receive a copy of their own IDP after they filled it out.

Problem Statement and Goals

The expressed goal within the Coast Guard is for *all* personnel, to annually and routinely identify strengths, weaknesses, personal and professional goals, attributes to improve, and adequately career plan for either their Coast Guard career or beyond and document this information in an IDP. The second phase of this desired state would be for all supervisors to review and coach their subordinates to help develop an IDP and then coach throughout the year using the IDP as a vehicle to manage performance, build on strengths, and support members to achieve their set goals and plan for future career moves appropriately. The problem in the Coast Guard is layered: the IDP process is not properly taught throughout all levels of the Coast Guard; there is not enough time spent teaching junior members, both officer and enlisted, about the importance of the IDP to subordinates and supervisors as a development tool; and there is not enough time spent teaching first line supervisors throughout the Coast Guard about what coaching is, what coaching looks like, as well as the competencies associated with coaching. The focus is on completing the form and “checking the box” rather than the spirit of the IDP process – to provide a process for supervisors and subordinates identify growth development opportunities and strategies to accomplish them.

Limited resources – funding, time and focus – all are additional problems that limit potential training and leadership development. When more training is added to any of the leadership curriculums, other training blocks get cut. In addition, LAMS, which would be an ideal platform to teach both the IDPs as well as solidly cover coaching competencies is just too short (one week only) to adequately learn these practices as intended. Having individual units assume the responsibility for IDP utilization and professional development, allocating time, moderators, facilitators and teachers to teach

the core of front line supervisors might help solve this problem. It starts with the commitment of senior leaders to recognize the importance of accommodating this type of training into a command's overall mission. Otherwise, the Coast Guard will never achieve the desired state of a solid performance management cycle and it will remain choppy and inconsistent.

Capstone Statement

The IDP is a critical element in the USCG performance management process. It is designed as a tool for supervisors and subordinates to set professional development goals and strategies to accomplish them as well as create a vehicle to coach and communicate. The Coast Guard needs a solid coaching model to teach at the different levels of military professional development instruction, in addition to strongly focusing on the competencies associated with coaching. Therefore, included in this capstone project is a model that can be taught to effectively demonstrate to personnel what coaching is and how it can be used to manage performance. Personnel of all ranks have expressed a desire to use an IDP and need the coaching piece of the cycle to be managed appropriately so that they can achieve their goals. There are many junior personnel who are left to fend for themselves to figure out how to get where they need to be in the next phases of their careers, often causing disillusionment and frustration. The same applies for mid-level and senior personnel who often need effective coaching to transition from mid-level to senior level management or beyond the Coast Guard into retirement. The direct correlation between utilizing IDPs and coaching to improve performance and achieve set goals begins and ends with training, understanding and accountability and

therefore leads to a highly motivated and charged organization, ultimately creating a high performance and coaching culture.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Performance management has many definitions and is described in a number of ways. Napier and McDaniel (2006) think that the heart of performance management is about “helping people become successful in doing their work. It should be about coaching, not blame, about supporting and developing more than criticizing and reprimand” (p. 313). Campbell and Garfinkel (1996) think that successful performance management is to “measure what really matters and to foster open communication among employees” (p.1). They explicitly define performance management as, “the cyclical, year-round process in which managers and employees work together on setting expectations, coaching and feedback, reviewing results and rewarding performance” (p.1). Martone (2003) breaks down performance management even further by defining competency based performance management:

A competency based performance management system is a formalized way of establishing the skills and behaviors that employees need to be successful in their present roles and for future growth in their organizations. It is a way of informing employees of company expectations, and it sets them on a clearly defined path toward achieving specified goals. (p.1)

While these three definitions for the same term are described differently, they are the same in that the authors clearly explain that performance management includes coaching and that the reason for performance management is to provide feedback. There are many pieces of performance management; however, in my opinion the critical attributes include: coaching, individual development plans, goal setting, dialogue, and adult learning. These attributes are the focus of this capstone project.

Coaching

Coaching is the focus of this capstone project. O'Connor (2002) defines coaching as:

a collaborative process whereby managers and employees continually set short and long term performance goals; listen actively to each other in reviewing results that achieved or exceeded performance expectations; and ask questions, share views, and negotiate solutions upon reviewing results that did not achieve performance expectations (p.39).

Silsbee (2004) defines coaching quite broadly as “that part of a relationship in which one person is primarily dedicated to serving the long-term development of effectiveness and self-generation in the other” (p.14). Without coaching, performance management and professional growth cannot be adequately achieved; it is *the* major piece in both processes. Coaching is a very dynamic act, is naturally collaborative in nature and it appropriately supports the performance management process. Landsberg (1996) accurately describes the aim of coaching:

Coaching aims to enhance the performance and learning ability of others. It involves providing feedback, but it also uses other techniques such as motivation, effective questioning and consciously matching your management styles to each coachee's readiness to undertake a particular task. It is based on helping people to help themselves through interacting dynamically with them – it does not rely on a one way flow of telling and instructing (p.97).

Coaching is the critical piece of the manager as coach relationship and places high value on employee development and growth as both a professional and as an individual. My interviews with the staff at Headquarters, as well as with instructors from the Leadership Development Center and the Chief Petty Officer Academy, all clearly reflect that coaching or counseling is the only way we can truly get solid performance, commitment and trust out of our people. However coaching and coaching competencies are not broken down and reviewed in enough detail at all levels of professional military and leadership instruction within the Coast Guard to adequately achieve this goal. As I

uncovered in my interviews, people do not feel confident in the counseling and coaching support role they provide, as they indicated that they did not receive enough training or education on the supervisor as coach responsibility. In turn, coaching may often be ignored as a major part of the management process letting personnel slip through the cracks without proper coaching.

As coaches, supervisors should give feedback to help set and pursue specific goals, as well as guide subordinates to see what they must start, stop or continue to attain set goals. Additionally, a coach should help increase self efficacy (i.e. task-specific confidence) that attainment of a high goal is possible (Latham, Borgogni, and Pettita, 2008, p.295). However, not all managers are willing to take the time to coach their employees. The primary reason is because there are too many other tasks, administrative or operational in nature, to accomplish.

Individual Development Plans (IDPs)

The IDP has been described as a tool to help “facilitate career development and enhance the quality of training” (Reyna and Sims, 1995, p.1). However, IDPs are one part of the multi-layered performance management process, of which completing and using an IDP has many benefits. Writing about the framework for individual management development in the public sector, Reyna and Sims (1995) list several of these benefits, including:

Employee retention and moral development. Those public sector organizations which fail to provide such individualized development efforts often lose their most promising employees. Frustrated with the lack of opportunity, achievement-oriented employees often seek employment with other agencies outside of government that provide more incentive with individual development and training for career enhancement.

[IDP] efforts can increase an employee's level of commitment to the agency and improve perceptions that the agency is a good place to work. By developing and promoting trained employees, public sector organizations create a competent, motivated and satisfied work force.

[IDPs] provide the employer and employee with a systematic long-term plan for employee development...Improvement areas are outlined in advance with the employee as they relate to increasing the employee's ability (p.2).

Research indicates that IDPs are consistently used throughout various government agencies, as well as other military branches. IDP forms and user guides are available online and there is a similarity of form between the Coast Guard, the U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Navy, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for new managers. It is helpful to know that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security is also using an IDP similar in nature as this should help bring support to embedding the IDP process into part of the Coast Guard's culture, knowing that it is utilized within the Department.

Additionally, IDPs are excellent tools that supervisors can use to develop and motivate their staff (Jacobson, p.1). Jacobson recognizes that IDPs should be used as a tool to leverage employee strengths/talents and provide new skills and knowledge to help employees perform better in their jobs. He offers the following questions for an employee to ask himself/herself in order to accurately prepare an IDP before reviewing with his/her supervisor/coach:

1. What direction is my organization going and what will the organization need from its employees in the future?
2. What are my goals over the next five years?
3. What are my greatest strengths and how can I build on them more effectively?
4. Do I have any serious weaknesses that make it difficult to do my job or will prevent me from achieving my goals? (p.2)

As part of the coaching process, the coach/supervisor can help answer these questions, and review them with their employee. This part of the process is the starting point of a coaching relationship and the start of the performance management cycle. The IDP helps set the stage for solid coaching relationships within the Coast Guard. However, it is important to recognize that IDPs are only the piece of paper to back up the dialogue between a manager and a coachee, the coaching piece should be the primary focus of the process.

Goal Setting

Goal setting is a crucial aspect in preparing and reviewing an IDP. Goal setting may not be the focus of coaching, but it serves as but one reason for an employee and his supervisor to get together. Goal setting theory first established by Locke and Latham (2006) in 1990 is a key element in this capstone as it establishes why goal setting is imperative within the IDP and performance management processes (p.1). The theory states that high goals lead to greater effort and/or persistence than do moderately difficult, easy or vague goals (p.1). The key moderators of goal setting are:

Feedback, which people need in order to track their progress; commitment to the goal, which is enhanced by self-efficacy and viewing the goal as important; task complexity, to the extent that task knowledge is harder to acquire on complex tasks; an situational constraints (p.1).

In a recent study conducted by Latham, Borgogni and Petitta (2008), employees who participated in setting their goals versus those who had their goals set for them performed significantly better than those who were assigned goals, despite the fact that the goals were the same (p.388). As a high performing organization, this is important to the Coast Guard because members should be setting their own personal and professional goals, rather than letting the organization and circumstance drive them and their careers.

Latham et. al (2008) describe Locke and Latham's "High performance cycle" model (1990) as the model where:

specific difficult goals, plus high self efficacy for attaining them, are the impetus for high performance. In turn, high goals, and high self efficacy energize people to search for strategies that will lead to goal attainment. The effect of high goals on performance is moderated by ability, commitment, feedback, situational variable, and whether the characteristics of the job are perceived by an employee as growth facilitating. High performance on growth facilitating tasks is typically a source of both internal and external rewards. These rewards lead to high job satisfaction (p.388).

High job satisfaction ultimately means that employees are more likely to remain with an organization and subsequently seek future challenges (p.399). The authors' ideas have significant implications for the Coast Guard to support the IDP process including goal setting and coaching, in order to sustain high performance and conduct appropriate performance management.

Doran (1981) developed a useful way of setting goals and objectives, which is not always an easy task. In my interviews and office discussions, many Guardians feel that setting goals and writing them out is difficult task to do and rarely does anyone have adequate time to document goals properly. Many feel that it is a useless, administrative burden and often feel stressed out when it comes to "IDP time". In the instruction, the Coast Guard provided guidelines on how goals should be documented in the IDP, but many individuals still feel that it is still too difficult a task and would rather not be bothered. Doran (1981), however, established a very easy way to set out and measure goals by using his S.M.A.R.T. method. S.M.A.R.T. goals are:

- Specific – target a specific area for improvement
- Measurable – quantify or at least suggest an indicator of progress
- Assignable – specify who will do it

Realistic – state what results can be realistically achieved, given available resources.

Time related – specify when the result(s) can be achieved (p.36).

It should be recognized that not all personal or professional goals will need to meet or include all five criteria, however the closer one can come to accurately listing these criteria, the more attainable the goal actually becomes. Supervisors and employees should be aware of the S.M.A.R.T. criteria which will aid in the establishment of goals, which should help make the IDP and goal setting process less of an administrative chore and one that is more results driven.

Dialogue/Feedback

William Isaacs (1993) quotes Martin Buber's definition of dialogue "to describe a mode of exchange among human beings in which there is a true turning to one another and a full appreciation of another person, not as an object in a social function but as a genuine meeting" (p.30). Napier and McDaniel (2008) embrace this definition and feel that through dialogue, "this is where personal change starts and that it is the centerpiece of performance management where individuals feel supported in their efforts to improve, change and grow" (p. 318). Dialogue is a key facet to effective coaching within the performance management process. Through dialogue, and by using the IDP as a vehicle to start a coaching dialogue, supervisors and employees can discuss expected performance dimensions, help in the recognition of desired behaviors, evaluate performance, provide meaningful feedback, as well as guide in goal setting and tracking (London, Mone, and Scott, 2004, p.333). Setting goals and then receiving feedback work together to affect employee goal accomplishment (p. 326). Through the Commandant Instruction, the Coast Guard demonstrates its sincere and excellent intention to have

members set goals and implicitly pushes people to achieve set goals, but has done so without the dialogue or the coaching piece of the practice, and thus lacks a robust performance management process.

If managers expect their subordinates to improve, employees need feedback that focuses attention on performance goals that are important to both the organization and the individual (p.326). So often managers do not meet with their subordinates to review IDPs or review performance until it is too late and evaluations are due or past due. Employees and their supervisors need to ensure that time is scheduled to have this dialogue. Deep conversations will help drive employee motivation, as well as grow trust of supervisors and of the organization.

Managers need to have an understanding of what their people care about and want to achieve. Managers should gain insight to the extracurricular activities of their employees and how they might affect performance to achieve stated goals. Through meaningful dialogue, supervisors can discover what is unique about each person and capitalize on it (Buckingham, 2005, p.72). The sincere and authentic dialogue that a manager has with her employee will help build an open rapport for a strong manager employee/relationship. Through dialogue and commitment by both the employee and the supervisor to hold coaching conversations, the employee is more likely to embrace the values of their manager, as well as the organization and together build a viable and healthy coach/coachee relationship.

Adult Learning

Merriam (2001) believes that there are two pillars to the adult learning theory, both of which are valuable in the performance management perspective: andragogy and

self-directed learning. She cites Malcolm Knowle's (1980) definition of andragogy as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (p.5). There are five assumptions associated with andragogy in which she lists the adult learner as one who:

- 1) has an independent self-concept and who can direct his or her own learning
- 2) has accumulated a reservoir of life experiences that is a rich resource for learning
- 3) has learning needs closely related to changing social roles
- 4) is problem-centered and interested in immediate application of knowledge and
- 5) is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors (p.5).

The relevance of andragogy within the performance management context lies in that adult learners are motivated to solve problems and/or gain knowledge to immediately apply their newly acquired information. The IDP process then becomes critical to helping adults learn by first identifying performance gaps, skill deficits or knowledge shortfalls so adults will then know where to take action to improve or apply new skills or knowledge. In addition, through inquiry and dialogue a coach can connect to her employee's life experiences of which both she and her coachee can draw on these experiences to help set and build the stage for solid learning. Furthermore, supervisor coaches can help their employees discover or achieve their goals by recognizing that mistakes are learning opportunities for further dialogue and continued learning.

Added to the foundation of the adult learning theory is self directed learning which:

refers to the degree to which a person prefers to be independent and direct his or her own learning activities. The degree of independence in any given learning situation will vary from teacher-directed classroom settings to self-planned and self-conducted learning projects. It is the desire, attitudes, values, and abilities that will ultimately determine the degree of self learning that will take place" (Guglielmino and Murdick, 1997, p.10)

This information is important for a supervisor coach because as she becomes familiar with the types of goals her subordinate wants to achieve as it pertains to a type of learning (i.e. skill acquisition, personal change, educational, etc.), she should recognize what kind of learner her employee is and how much she should involve herself in this process. Without coaching, a supervisor may not recognize how he can best help his direct report. It is important for coaches to prompt reflection and dialogue for their employees as this is what allows for learning to take place.

The idea of action learning is also very applicable as it pertains to the IDP process. Action learning is a form of “learning through experience, by doing”, where the job environment is the classroom” (Smith and Peters, 1997, p.4). Therefore, the relevance of action learning in the context of supporting the IDP process is that coaching is and can be learned via action learning. Action learning enables supervisors to develop:

an understanding of and a feel for factors such as organizational politics and culture, the art of influencing others, the ability to delegate, the skills of timing, presentation and selling ideas, not just having them. These are qualities that we expect from organizational leaders, and without a development strategy for gaining such qualities, the emergence of effective managers will continue to be a hit-and-miss affair (p.4).

In an action learning environment where managers are encouraged to practice coaching by the organization, managers will learn to train, teach, guide, support, counsel, inspire and motivate – all very important communication skills, vital for coaching. Smith and Peters address that leadership and managerial success cannot depend solely on acquiring technical knowledge and management concepts, rather there are broader and more human qualities that organizations need from their front line supervisors and managing base.

Supervisors learning to coach should be given some sort of coaching base to learn from. If coaching is part of an organization’s culture, it is implied that the manager

should have the responsibility to learn the material and attend necessary training. However, learning to coach truly can only take place by practicing. Since there is no traditional coaching training program within the Coast Guard currently, the organization should emphasize and support coaching by encouraging and allowing for supervisors to exercise the practice and reflect carefully by “making sense of the lessons, and working through how the learning can be built on and used next time around” (Smith and Peters, p.4). This type of environment promotes learning at all levels of the organization. As supervisors become more proficient coaches, employees will also garner a sense of confidence to practice, grow, discover and learn in a safe and supportive environment.

A solid coaching culture is one that consists of trust, energy, support, fun, confidence, personal growth, and is blame-free and is an environment where people believe in each other and encourage risk-taking; all qualities of an environment that will aid employees to become self-directed learners (Wilson, 2008, p.27). A coaching culture and a supported learning environment encourages members to take responsibility for their decisions and actions, enabling them to become high performers and sincerely valued members of the organization. This is what the Coast Guard should strive to achieve and what the culture of the organization should encompass.

CHAPTER 4

INTERVIEW FEEDBACK

Thirty one interviews with individuals of all ranks from E-4 through O-6 were conducted for this capstone project. Table 2 describes the breakdown of rank and the number of interviewees. A standard list of questions (see Appendix A) to initiate the conversation was used. These questions were not tested but were designed based on IDP literature are and how IDPs are used. These questions were selected in an effort to gain a sense of what Guardians understood about the IDP process as well as their practice of the tool, both as a user of and as a reviewer. In addition, interviewees were given a chance to provide feedback on how the IDP can be better utilized and if and how the process can be improved. Feedback on positive experiences was also sought. Interviewees were selected randomly based on availability and interest in talking about the IDP and coaching. In addition, I sought out the Leadership Development Center staff for their knowledge and Coast Guard experience with this subject. Specifically, I sought out the Chief of all Coast Guard Leadership Programs and the Branch Chief who leads the Coast Guard Leadership and Management School.

Once most of the interviews began, interviewees openly shared their thoughts and ideas without having to be prompted by the list of the questions; all interviews included the core questions. Information from individuals across all mission areas of the Coast Guard was captured; it is reflective of the IDP and performance management activity throughout the Coast Guard. After reviewing and analyzing the feedback, five key themes emerged and are highlighted in the following pages. In addition, interviewees

who had positive experiences and are shared anecdotally. Table 2 presents a summary of interviewees broken down by rank.

Table 2. Number of interviewees broken down by rank.

Group	Rank	# of Interviewees
Junior Enlisted	E4, Third Class Petty Officer E5, Second Class Petty Officer	8
Mid-level Enlisted	E6, First Class Petty Officer	4
Senior enlisted	E7, Chief Petty Officer E8, Senior Chief Petty Officer E9, Master Chief Petty Officer	8
Chief Warrant Officer	CWO2, CWO3, CWO4, Warrant Officer	3
Junior Officer	O1, Ensign O2, Lieutenant Junior Grade O3, Lieutenant	3
Senior Officer	O4, Lieutenant Commander O5, Commander O6, Captain	4
Civilian	Civilian	1

Themes

Understanding (Who? What? Why?)

There is a lack of clear understanding with who should be completing an IDP. One senior officer was quick to state that the Commandant Instruction is extremely out of date and should be more explicit. Some Chiefs and all the junior and mid-level enlisted members did not even realize that an updated IDP directive had been issued in 2008. One E6 currently stationed onboard a cutter stated, “All of a sudden the IDP became mandatory for everybody and I hadn’t ever done one before”. With 14 successful years in and on a clear path to be promoted to the rank of Chief, he was bothered that he had to complete an IDP. At one shore unit, a Master Chief stated that last year that his boss told him that the Captain was requiring that all members at his unit were going to have to complete an IDP and did not provide any additional information as to why. He stated, “I

was told I have to do it". This Master Chief did not know if the Captain was requiring it because she thought it was pertinent or if she was being tasked by her boss. In any case, he did not appreciate having to do an IDP and did not think it should apply to him as a senior member having over 24 years in the Service. This was a similar sentiment for at least two-thirds of my interviewees with a solid career track and who were on a path to retirement.

There were also major differences among the ranks when asked who should be required to submit an IDP. Some senior members stated that the IDP should be mandatory for everyone, while some believed that the IDP applied only to junior members. Senior enlisted members felt the same in that they should not have to track their goals. As the backbone of the organization, the rank of Chief is a rank of stature, knowledge and maturity and therefore most of the Chiefs who were interviewed felt that they should not have to be required to submit an IDP. However, almost every Guardian who interviewed thought the IDP should be required for first-termers (ensigns and new recruits) as well as personnel of any rank with performance problems.

In general, there is a very good, yet broad understanding of the IDP program. Interviewees were able to define what an IDP is and how it should be used. Everyone understood that counseling should take place after an IDP is completed, although this is one aspect of the IDP program that is almost universally left out in the performance management process. However there were a few senior officers who used IDPs for first termers reporting aboard, but did not think it got used after the check in process was complete.

For at least half of the interviewees, there was a lack of understanding as to why the IDP program was started. In fact, several members asked me if I had the answer. One chief stated that when the instruction came out in 2006, the IDP became mandatory at his unit without any sort of warning. This led to a lot of confusion, then frustration, and finally the IDP was ignored, "People filled them out, but no one ever checked them". However, one Warrant officer with almost 30 years in the Service commented, "The IDP program is not new and that in fact, we have been doing IDPs for years. The IDP form is new in the sense that as an organization, we are more corporate than we ever have been and it is keeping us in line with our modernization efforts."

Most interviewees stated with confidence that they knew the IDP was important, but if their supervisor did not think it was important, then neither did they. One junior enlisted member made the observation in which his supervisor did not seem to know what to do with the IDP after he turned it in, "Pretty much, my section's IDPs got filed into a locked filing cabinet and I didn't see it after I turned it in". This was not an uncommon story for several junior and mid-level enlisted members whom were interviewed and had been stationed onboard cutters and at small boat stations. Several junior and mid-level enlisted members, though did state that both they and their supervisor kept a copy.

The more junior enlisted members saw the IDP as another mandated form of training that they have to do. There was little connection made to the importance of the ongoing coaching piece of the IDP. For many of my young interviewees, the primary focus of the IDP process was to write their goals down, with very little attention given to the follow up coaching aspect.

Usage (How? Why? When?)

The three junior officers interviewed stated that they only completed an IDP because it is mandatory, not because they found it to be useful. They indicated that very little time and effort was spent on completing their IDP. One senior officer indicated that she was not as honest in her IDP as she could have been because she was concerned that her supervisor would not value the importance of her goals and would perceive them to be not in line with a “perfect job track”. The junior enlisted personnel felt “annoyed” at having to complete one, but thought it was useful to document the schools and/or any training that they wanted to request. The Chiefs and the Warrant officers who had to fill out IDPs recently also did so because it was required of them, not because they thought it would be a useful task. All but two of the interviewees, one Master Chief and one Warrant officer, actually completed the IDP for themselves. One senior officer said he had never had to complete an IDP until this year; however, he does keep a running list of goals “in his head”.

There are several different ways that the IDP is being used as a counseling tool. There was a commanding officer who thought the IDP was a great tool to use when new people reported aboard and she therefore used it in this way. However not everyone who reported aboard had their IDP completed by the time this commanding officer had met with them. There were also two Master Chiefs who were adamant about having all their direct reports fill out IDPs and both Chiefs used the IDP as a tool to get to know their people better. One Master Chief stated that he might not refer to the IDP during the “IDP conversation”, but at least he could use it as an excuse to get together to talk with his staff as a “BS” session. He stated that he lets his direct reports get as personal as they want,

but it is not his place to “make someone discuss their personal goals or personal life”. Another Master Chief felt the complete opposite in that he reviewed the document in its entirety and felt it absolutely necessary to get personal in order to gain an understanding of the member as a whole. One mid-level manager felt that while the IDP is a great tool, rarely did he have time to follow up and provide the coaching piece unless he thought the member really “needed it”. He thought that reviewing the IDP is too micro-managing, and similar to one Warrant officer, thought that counseling and coaching should be “organic” in nature and the IDP should not “force me to talk with my direct report” to review the form. He went on to explain that since he checks in with his direct reports daily, he is doing his job as a coach.

With most of the junior and mid-level enlisted members who had previously completed an IDP, rarely did they feel they received adequate, if any, counseling or coaching after turning it in to their supervisor. The same went for the junior officers who submitted an IDP. One Lieutenant stated that she showed her IDP to her boss and after he read it, he handed it back to her. She did not think that she had ever been formally counseled on her IDP, but knows that she is “checked in the database” annually. In most of these cases for the junior officers and the senior enlisted, it was very rare if they received any counseling or coaching after submitting it. Two Warrant officers told me that they filled out the IDP listing goals of a joking nature and when their boss reviewed it, nothing was mentioned about the job indicating that the form may not have been read in its entirety.

Reflective in all the interviews was the point of view in that there was not enough time to complete the IDP or follow through the process. The IDP form itself is “too long,

too daunting, and confusing”. The junior enlisted members felt that the form they have to complete expects too much information out of them and “there just isn’t any time left in the work day to fill it out properly”. They were quick to state that they would write down some easy goals such as listing Coast Guard schools or outside education they want to complete, but did not get into writing down family, personal or financial goals. These members also stated that having to actually write their goals down, instead of doing it online, was a major drawback to the process. Most were immediately turned off by the paperwork. The junior officers also spent very little time writing out their goals. One Ensign mentioned that she was not sure what she should put on her IDP, so she took about 10 or 15 minutes to type it out. After she showed her supervisor, she never pulled it out again that year and her supervisor never asked her about it.

A few senior enlisted members and senior officers shared that they thought the Coast Guard should allow more time for IDP review. They thought that commands should support the IDP process and specifically make time throughout the year to make the IDP review happen. Other members stationed on Coast Guard cutters stated that there it was unlikely that their commands would make time for the crews to do IDPs and hold IDP counseling because “the operational mission dominates everything”. Overall, the interviewees felt that the organization as a whole is too busy to use the tool and practice the IDP process, which is the primary reason as to why the tool is not valued and the process broken. One interviewee stated, “Supervisors are too busy with administrative tasking that there is no time to lead and actually supervise direct reports anymore”. Another Chief stated, “I am already too busy and the IDP is yet another thing added to my workload.”

IDP Training

The interviewees indicated that there was little, if any, training dedicated to the IDP and the IDP process at enlisted boot camp, A-schools, CWO professional development training, as well as in leadership training at the Academy and at Officer Candidate School. It was not clear what depth of training (if any) the IDP is stressed at senior levels of professional military training such as at the Senior Enlisted Leadership, Senior Leadership Principles and Skills, or at prospective commanding officer (PCO) or prospective executive officer (PXO) schools. Many interviewees could not remember if they had ever received any type of formal training on the IDP. Most indicated that they printed the form and filled it out without any help from their supervisor; most help to complete the form was received from peers, especially the most junior personnel, both enlisted and officer. The junior and mid-level enlisted members felt that if they were going to fill out an IDP then they should get an understanding as to why they were filling it out and guidance on how to use it properly.

The most training that is provided on the IDP is at the Chief Petty Officer Academy where there is a solid block of time dedicated to teaching Chiefs how to review the IDP and why it should be used. IDP training is covered during the teaching block dedicated to counseling. Chiefs are taught about goal setting and feedback, in addition to using the IDP and enlisted evaluations as coaching tools.

IDPs are briefly touched on at the Leadership and Management School (LAMS). According to the school's Branch Chief, a 20-minute training block is dedicated to discussing the IDP. Training at LAMS includes what the IDP is, who has to fill it out and why it is completed. She stated that this training block is not meant for instructors to sell

the IDP process to students, although oftentimes instructors find themselves warding off heated debates and controversy over the IDP.

Buy-in

During the interviews, when asked about how the Coast Guard could improve the process and better utilize the IDP, the conversation almost always leaned towards “get buy in”. However, when asked for a more specific description of “buy in”, there were many different answers. Some interviewees stated that they need to get buy in from senior staff and in order to do that, “they need to practice the process and use the tool themselves”. Also, “principals need to get started early” and this is done through training. One Warrant officer stated, “The only way we can get buy in is for supervisors to understand the process, so they will engage me first. If my boss doesn’t engage me, then how can I engage him with my goals? And then, how am I supposed to get buy in from my subordinates, if my boss is disengaged? It’s a never ending incomplete cycle that needs to start and end at the top.” Another interviewee offered, “We need to sell the coaching piece in that it is our job as supervisors to coach and to follow the IDP process”.

There were several individuals who felt that it was up to all levels of the organization to “buy into” using the IDP and understanding its process. Almost all of the Chiefs who were interviewed thought that the IDP needed to be learned at boot camp, reinforced at A-school, and then again reinforced at Leadership and Management School. One Chief Petty Officer CPOA instructor was quick to point out, “There is so little IDP training given to the junior ranks that it is often neglected, disregarded or just forgotten when recruits and junior enlisted work at their first few units; then it can be anywhere from 8 to 10 to 15 years later until they get solid training on the IDP at the Chief’s

Academy. Even after graduation from the Chief's Academy, then they might not actively practice it because the IDP is still new and they never had to use it before". Two Chiefs agreed and one stated, "We hardly teach the IDP at the beginning of a young person's career and then we focus on it towards the end of their career. If we keep doing it this way, it will never become part of the Coast Guard culture."

Many agreed that teaching the IDP and the process should be a critical training block at LAMS. It was agreed that LAMS would be the best place to reinforce the IDP because all junior officers and enlisted E6 and below have to attend LAMS once in their career. In fact, attendance at LAMS is a requirement for junior enlisted before promoting to the rank of E6. Teaching the IDP at LAMS by focusing heavily on the tool and teaching coaching practices would start to embed the IDP into the Coast Guard's performance management culture using the junior and mid-level ranks to make it happen.

Coaching Competencies (Training, Understanding)

Another prominent theme among the interviewees was that they did not feel that they were given enough training on coaching competencies. When asked what coaching competencies were, the interviewees provided similar responses that included feedback, listening, asking questions, time and support. These competencies are not taught at LAMS explicitly and many thought it would be a good forum where coaching competencies could be added to the curriculum. One Chief told stated that "Soft skills are under appreciated in the Coast Guard and we need to start teaching these skills, especially to our young people. People are forgetting how to communicate with each other, mainly because of the invention of email and now instant messaging. I often see supervisors instant messaging their direct reports who are just a few feet away!"

One senior officer stated that she thought that “the Coast Guard too often misuses the terms coaching, counseling and mentoring and that the organization as a whole does not understand the differences between the terms. She felt that “some supervisors do not know how to mentor because the organization has changed so much over the last few years that mentoring looks different than it did several years ago”. In addition, she felt that “We don’t teach counseling skills to first line supervisors and it is a necessary skill that everyone needs to develop”. When asked about these counseling skills, she replied that counseling includes, “really listening and asking good and relevant questions”. She did state, however, that she has received counseling training, which was the major aspect of training she attended as a suicide awareness counselor. She also stated it was the best training she received as a Lieutenant. This training is limited and not something everyone will normally attend.

One Master Chief thinks that coaching and counseling training often gets overlooked by the Coast Guard because, “The Coast Guard is just trying to stay afloat with everything we have going on”. He feels that there is so much focus right now on the modernization effort and the stress of dealing with the organization’s declining assets and resources to continue to meet our missions. He stated “Now, there is not enough time or money to focus on people”. Like several of his peers and junior enlisted members, he believes that the Coast Guard should invest in a “train the trainer course”. He offered, “We need to teach our supervisors to be better coaches. Once a solid core of us are trained then we can teach each other and on down the line”. He also thought that by focusing on coaching direct reports, it will make it easier to manage one another. He felt that the Coast Guard has gotten too big and too layered, “The growth of the organization

and the speed of how we have grown has made it too difficult to manage everyone. If we move towards a coaching way of supervising, we'll be able to catch everyone".

There is not enough coaching instruction and practice taking place in the Coast Guard within the lower levels of professional military training. One Lieutenant stated that the only leadership training she can remember when she attended OCS was doing team building exercises. From what the junior enlisted members stated, they could not remember being taught about feedback or dialogue as a supervisor. In addition, very few junior members could remember if they received any training on goal setting. When asked about teaching coaching at LAMS, the Branch Chief stated that the LAMS teaches basic leadership competencies and focuses on a member's capacity to fill a supervisory role. No coaching model concepts are taught and there are no blocks of instruction dedicated to coaching competencies specifically, as training is focused on situational leadership.

When talking about coaching and what a coach might look like for junior members, it was surprising to learn that many of the younger interviewees sought more professional development training in this area. Like the Chiefs and officers, many shared the opinion that more professional military training is needed for the young workforce to specifically address softer skills. The junior members enjoyed talking about coaching and what a good supervisor coach would be like. Some were currently frustrated with their supervisors and joked that the officers on their ships needed this training.

Positive Anecdotes

While all interviewees were asked to share any positive stories or experiences about using the IDP, only two stories were offered. One Master Chief stated that he

enjoys the IDP because he feels it is a good and consistent way that he can get to know his people. He likes it, he uses it and he finds “common ground in areas where people want to consider different career paths, get married, start families, save money, pay off debts, buy houses, get healthy, etc”.

The second anecdote was from an E6 who had one of his direct reports fill out an IDP in its entirety. This supervisor, who admitted that he does not force the IDP on everyone he supervises, decided to randomly make one of his new direct reports fill out an IDP. He was glad that he did because had he not read the IDP, “I would not have known that my new direct report was trying to get status as a U.S. citizen and was about to bring his family over to the U.S.”. This new direct report filled out the IDP thoroughly and was very descriptive with what he wanted to accomplish. Subsequently, this E6 had a higher level of respect for his new report and could tell by reading what was written, “the new guy was serious and I had the impression he was going to be a solid performer”. The interviewee stated that he was glad the IDP got filled out because without it he “would not have known about these goals and I was able to help him throughout the process when we were underway, since I knew exactly what was going on. In the end, he got his citizenship and brought his family over”.

CHAPTER 5

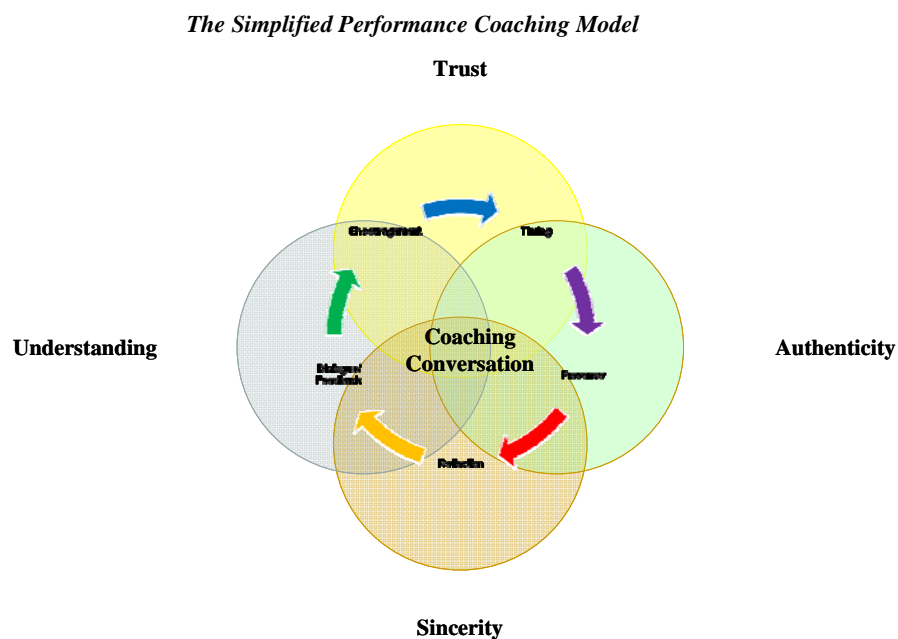
SIMPLIFIED PERFORMANCE COACHING MODEL

According to the literature on performance management, the IDP is a key element in the effective management and development of employees. The core of the IDP is goal development, goal achievement and career planning. However, without a coaching relationship it is nearly impossible for employees to establish personal and professional goals and steps to achieve them; supervisor support is critical in this process. Coaching facilitates the IDP process; with a good communication process and the utilization of best coaching practices, it is possible to utilize the IDP to achieve effective performance management and employee development.

Based upon the results of the Coast Guard interviews conducted for the capstone, there appears to be a vacuum for consistent coaching relationships and coaching conversations between managers and their subordinates which appears to contribute to the lack of support the IDP process. There is little, if any, coaching instruction within the Coast Guard leadership curriculums offered to personnel. Because of this vacuum indicated by the interviews and based upon the literature review, I developed a model that encompasses key elements of effective coaching and communication in order to facilitate the IDP process. As such, the Simplified Performance Coaching Model (Figure 1) is suggested in this capstone as a potential strategy to support the Coast Guard IDP process and ensure effective communication, helping build coaching relationships at all levels. The model provides supervisors with a solid foundation of how to start and move a coaching conversation along in a more facile manner. It is simple to follow and remember.

The primary context of the Simplified Performance Coaching Model is for managers to communicate with their employees in order to achieve employee reflection, engagement in purposeful dialogue and create an opportunity for the manager and employee to provide effective feedback. Most importantly, it provides a clear structure to create a conversation with employees so that they understand actions, goals, desires, capabilities, attitude, knowledge, intent, and background – all crucial elements essential to providing good feedback. The model supports informal dialogue to allow for a more comfortable, free-flowing conversation. The supervisor coach can use the model to prompt themselves to take advantage of opportunities to teach, develop, guide, and instruct their employee to achieve goals, plan careers and overall improve or sustain high performance. The Simplified Performance Coaching Model (see Figure 1) consists of five phases: timing, presence, reflection, dialogue/feedback and encouragement. There are four qualities that overlay the Simplified Performance Coaching Model to help create an environment conducive to effective coaching: trust, authenticity, sincerity and understanding. These qualities should be demonstrated by the coach and are necessary to a successful coaching relationship.

Figure 1. Simplified Performance Coaching



In an environment characterized by trust, authenticity, sincerity and understanding created by the leader-coach and the employee, the Coaching Conversation uses timing, presence, reflection, dialogue feedback and encouragement.

Why Use this Model?

Based upon the capstone interviews, there is clearly an absence of a solid coaching model taught to all levels of the Coast Guard that supervisors can refer to when thinking about coaching their subordinates. There is no direct structure that is given to Guardians on what a coaching conversation should look like. It is proposed that when used appropriately, this model serves as a trigger to build or sustain the foundation of a solid relationship between a manager and her direct report. A positive, well-rounded and healthy relationship between a manager and employee reaps benefits for everyone involved, as well as supports the idea of using the IDP as a vehicle for coaching.

Broadening the scope, if a manager is able to use this coaching model as a structure for dialogue and conversation, the employee will feel satisfied knowing he has a supervisor who cares and is looking out for them, which plays a significant part in overall employee satisfaction. The fall-out benefits include content employees who strive to work hard and excel at their work because they feel valued. This is an idea that the IDP encompasses – that if a member completes an IDP and is coached as part of the IDP process, members will feel appreciated and cared for. Holistically, managers who take the opportunity to coach by using this performance model will see their relationship with their employee flourish and become self sustaining. These reasons are best captured by Landsburg (2003) who lists why managers should coach to “reap many unexpected rewards”:

- Create more time for yourself: having developed the skills of your people, you will be in a position to delegate more.
- Enjoy the fun of working with a band of colleagues who actually relish working with you!
- Achieve better results, as a team, more quickly.
- Building your interpersonal skills more broadly – which often means you become better at interacting with your customers and even with your family and friends. (p. xi).

There are further benefits for the manager when this model is used effectively. As a professional, a manager-coach improves his communication and listening skills. This model allows for the manager to do most of the listening by asking creative and open ended questions, so that their employee can figure out solutions to problems or issues when talking through them.

From a managing standpoint, there are numerous reasons why supervisors should practice this model. By identifying problems with subordinates, the manager becomes skilled at identifying gaps in the processes and procedures to improve overall organizational structure or pitfalls. Addressing these gaps or performance shortfalls and by working with an employee, the coach can assist in rectifying shortfalls to eliminate performance errors with other direct reports in future similar situations. By spending time listening to employees reflect and provide input, managers become “armed with information,” to “develop priorities and plans for future development” (Gilley and Boughton, 1996, p.36). Since the manager has an idea about competencies for success, she will naturally observe and identify strengths and weakness as a necessary trait for being a great manager. Managers that encourage strengths and develop weakness become a source of breeding talent, a “leader-breeder” (Gantz, 2006).

This model was developed because it is a structure that will be most effective in teaching at all levels within the Coast Guard. This model is uncomplicated and focuses

on using the key components of holding useful coaching conversations. The Simplified Performance Coaching Model was not designed with the intention to confront or fault employees. It is not intended to be used to give negative feedback. This model works effectively when the coaching manager has a sincere and significant amount of interest for his subordinate and her work – something all Coast Guard supervisors should embrace. It is important that managers must remember that their employees' work and performance is also a direct reflection on themselves as supervisors. This model supports helpful and encouraging feedback since this model is founded on an open, trustful and appreciative relationship between a direct report and his supervisor. This model encourages the creation of coaching opportunities, regardless of whether it is to review an IDP or directly help someone achieve a specific goal. This model was designed to promote coaches to inspire others with their love of learning, helping, teaching and encouragement.

This Simplified Performance Coaching Model also serves another very important purpose, one that the Coast Guard should consider embracing with respect to performance management. This model supports slowing the pace of work down to allow for the employee and his supervisor to step back, focus, reflect and talk. This coaching experience allows for employees to take a moment to breathe and know that they are supported by their manager. The short amount of time it takes to coach someone, enabling them to step away from their pressure cooker world of work, will make a significant impact on how they perform.

Phase 1: Timing

Timing is about capturing the right moment to make the opportunity for an employee to learn the best it possibly can be. With proper timing, the manager captures the authenticity of the session that is about to take place. Whether it is during a quiet watch while underway in the engine room without additional watchstanders around, or whether it is a coffee break on the mess deck, the element to consider when to approach your employee is when the manager believes there is adequate time to give solid and effective feedback. This model is best supported during a time that an employee is ready to mentally engage. For example, approaching a subordinate to review an IDP after standing a long four hour watch on the bridge or after a stressful period of helicopter operations may not be the best time to meet with an employee. The bottom line is that the manager needs to set the stage correctly at the onset of the relationship and be sensitive to his/her subordinate's needs. Additionally, managers should look for opportunities when the learning potential is high.

With respect to utilizing this model to review an IDP, a scheduled session is an excellent way for the manager to prepare for a successful first meeting. Likewise, if the coachee is notified ahead of time, he/she can mentally prepare and ensure his/her IDP is prepared adequately. Conversely, if the coachee is struggling to complete the IDP, the manager could ask some questions to help him/her prepare prior to the meeting.

Phase 2: Presence

In the context of this model, presence is when the manager can engage at the exact moment that coaching is about to take place and sustain it during the session. It is the self-awareness of feeling physically, emotionally, and mentally ready to have a reflective and meaningful dialogue. Presence allows for a state of readiness to ask

questions that are going to engage the employee to allow for effective feedback.

Presence is being able to make the coaching moment about the individual only. Presence allows for the manager to be open and honest with their feedback, and in return, be willing to listen and sincerely ingest what the employee shares. Presence promotes the opportunity for the manager to share his/her presence, openness, and calmness. Presence is maintained throughout the session; it does not come and go. Presence is sustained throughout the conversation. By being aware and maintaining presence in the coaching moment, we are capable of living without fear, but with understanding and thoughtfulness (Silsbee, 2002).

Presence is the ability to let go of attachments and aversions that any of us may have. Some of these aversions may include, fear, anger or frustration. Being fully present and aware of these aversions enables us to recognize them and then let them go. Being present is not easy to do; it includes significant self-observation of thoughts, the physical and emotional state, and then addressing these issues directly. As managers, when we are allowed to let go of our aversions, we are better able to empathize, fully engage ourselves with the employee, be attentive, alert, energized and relaxed; we let go of our expectations and allow for possibilities (Silsbee, 2004, p. 87).

Managers need a sense of presence to utilize my coaching model effectively. It is for the benefit of the employee, because once the manager establishes good timing, presence is what lays the groundwork for developing an employee, which is ultimately the goal. Managers are able to listen with focus and give *full* attention to employees. It is important to maintain focus because when coaching managers are mindful, it makes it possible to serve others (Silsbee, 2004, p. 66). Additionally, with presence, managers are

able to demonstrate commitment and accountability to the employee. Authentic presence allows for a fluid engagement of the model and aids the manager to make the coaching opportunity valuable.

Phase 3: Reflection

The reflection stage is probably the most important piece of the Simplified Performance Coaching Model as it pertains to the employee. It is the stage when the manager as coach sets the stage for reflection and is able to get the employee thinking and focused on themselves, their attitudes, feelings and reactions. This is the critical piece of the model where the coach gets the conversation going and allows the employee the freedom to reflect on their IDP or any other topic the coach and employee wish to discuss. The coach is enabling the employee space to speak freely about their current work situation, future plans or goals.

Reflection also serves as the platform for the coach to collect the information and internally process and determine appropriate feedback to ask further questions. Again, reflection is not the point at which to criticize or interject the coach's thoughts and ideas; it is the stage where the manager is getting to know his/her employee and what that person's experiences are in the workplace. Managers should demonstrate empathy by asking questions and listening wholeheartedly. As good listeners, managers prove to their employees that they are interested in good conversation and demonstrate a genuine desire to help. This is a very important stage of the model because reflection allows for the relationship to prosper (Gilley and Boughton, 1996).

The reflection phase requires managers to already have an idea of what questions are appropriate and how they should be asked to achieve successful coaching solutions

and guidance. Open ended questioning allows for employees to think about how they feel. Landsberg (2003) provides some key questions from his GROW model that may help an employees engage if he/she does not seem responsive to an initial basic line of questioning¹:

- What would you like to achieve?
- What would you like from this session?
- What would need to happen for you to walk away feeling that this session was time well spent?
- What would you like to happen that is not happening now?
- What outcome would you like from this session/discussion/interaction?
- What is happening at the moment?
- What effective does this have?
- What have you tried so far? (p. 108)

These questions permit the manager to get a read on the situation and determine if there are extraneous factors that can be controlled, in addition to letting the employee start driving the conversation. The reflection phase helps the coach discover how the next stages of the model will be played out and should pre-plan before moving on. It is important for the coach to remember that if the employee suddenly feels free to open up about personal issues that are or are not affecting their work, the manager should use discretion on when, how, or if it is appropriate to come back to the original coaching issue.

Phase 4: Dialogue/Feedback

From the reflection stage, the manger should be able to skillfully move into the dialogue/feedback stage. This stage is the platform where the conversation moves back and forth fluidly between the manager and employee. The manager can achieve this by interpreting, paraphrasing and re-summarizing what was said during the reflection phase.

¹ Max Landsberg (2003) describes his GROW model in his book, The Tao of Coaching. The GROW (Goal, Reality, Options, Wrap up) model is a common coaching tool and provides structure to a coaching session. (p.30).

This is a vital stage for the employee because it is when most of the learning takes place. The feedback phase is not the phase for a manager to be angry or critical, it is the phase where the manager acts as a guide (Landsberg, 2003) for the employee to assist in coming up with solutions. The feedback should be constructive, helpful, and balanced. Balanced feedback is crucial to help keep the subordinate stay positive and motivated. Managers can achieve this by keeping feedback specific and focused on actions, not on the individual.

The sincere and authentic dialogue that a manager has with his/her employee will help build an open rapport for a strong manager/employee relationship. In a handout distributed to her DYNM 602 class, Dr. Russo (2008) states that, “rapport is essential to a process of self-discovery, growth, and change,” and offers qualities of rapport that coaches should foster to have a successful coaching session. Some of these qualities include:

- Mutual respect
- Body language which telegraphs endorsement, openness, and trust
- Safety to share personal vulnerabilities
- Minimization of differences in power and status
- Expressed and demonstrated personal interested in the success of the other person
- Empathy for the individual’s challenges, fears, and personal obstacles
- Absence of posturing and defensiveness
- Suspension of judgment (Russo, 2008).

These qualities are the backbone of this phase; when the coach exhibits these qualities, sincerity, realness, and authenticity radiates. The employee, in turn, is more likely to embrace these values in their manager and together they can mutually build upon a viable and healthy coach/coachee relationship. Some general guidelines for feedback which I have adopted into this model are taken from Landsberg’s book, The

Tao of Coaching (1996). He offers three specific topics using the acronym **AID** to address them:

A (Actions) The things that the coachee is doing really well, or poorly, in the area under review.

I (Impact) The effect these actions are having.

D (Desired outcome) The ways in which the coachee could do things more effectively. (p. 22)

Giving feedback is not always easy, especially when it is constructive. The manager should at no point place criticism or blame on the individual, but instead lay out the challenges that should be overcome, focusing on the realities of success and work from there. Managers should focus on small wins and sustainable change, followed by sincere statements about an employee's abilities and his belief in their employee to excel. The manager should feel at liberty to provide solution proposals and suggest collaboration.

Some of these questions might look like this:

How about something like this?

I've been thinking about trying it this way...Does this resonate with you?

What do you think about this?

Are there any barriers that I can clear to help?

When developing solutions or plans of attack, a manager should integrate valued abilities (Buckingham, 2005, p. 72). Managers can have a clearer picture for solutions by understanding how the employee learns best. Throughout the model, but in particular during the feedback phase, ensure that the employee is not experiencing anxiety or nervousness, for these feelings may restrict any learning. Managers should be gauging their employee through body language and speech to alleviate any anxiety the employee may feel. Again, empathy, understanding, and sincerity allow for this.

Sharing personal stories is often very helpful during the feedback phase.

Managers will better relate to their employee by using honest and personal experiences.

In addition to fostering a strong and healthy relationship, stories help employees see the big picture. In order to ensure employee understanding, ask the individual to give feedback on what their solutions are. Also, have the employee ask questions about processes or procedures and answer them without judgment. The feedback/dialogue phase should ideally wrap up with mutual understanding, clear outcomes and reasonable agreements.

Phase 5: Encouragement

While encouragement is often mentioned and stressed in books and articles on coaching, it is not normally focused on as a separate piece in the coaching process. I offer that it should be considered a phase of its own and not necessarily folded in to the feedback/dialogue phase. I agree with Buckingham (2005) that encouragement is a major part of what great managers do. Encouragement is different than praise in that praise acknowledges the specifics of what an employee does well. However, a great manager will know what makes their employees tick and will encourage that (Buckingham, 2005, p. 74). By taking the few extra minutes during a coaching session to follow through into the encouragement phase, the manager reinforces self-assurance and strengths. Managers should give the employee that added personal attention during a coaching session and tell them why he/she is a valued member of the staff and why his/her efforts are appreciated. By encouraging an employee, the manager will see optimism and resiliency. They will also observe empowerment and confidence. Employees will be more motivated and will often solicit feedback from their manager, rather than vice versa.

Encouragement demonstrates that a manager is sincerely committed to continuing to build a healthy relationship. Encouragement should include reassurance that the

manager will be checking back in. It also stresses that the goals that have been agreed upon are attainable and that the employee should continue to focus on working on things they can control. Encouragement is warm and positive and leaves the employee feeling valued. While the encouragement phase is the final phase in the model, it keeps the wheels spinning for the next coaching session, which moves the wheel again.

CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

Organizations exist because people exist. Bolman and Deal (2003) state, “People and organizations need each other. Organizations need ideas, energy, and talent; people need careers, salaries, and opportunities” (p. 115). Therefore, energizing, productive and mutually rewarding organizations should exist to serve human needs and not the other way around (p.115). For this reason, an organization can take care of its people by being responsible to their desires and supportive of their personal goals (p.324). As a result of this relationship, personnel will be committed, loyal, trusted and focused. I believe that by fully supporting the IDP process in the Coast Guard and by embracing a culture of coaching as the foundation of performance management, these practices will enable the USCG to maintain a superior and high performing workforce.

Recommendations

Focused Training on the IDP Process and Coaching Competencies

Embracing the value of the performance management process and training members on the process will be a choice investment in Coast Guard personnel. Currently, the IDP element of the Coast Guard performance management process is inconsistent and not widely practiced, primarily because of a lack of understanding. Re-designed performance management training will be an excellent way to start re-building the foundation of performance management by teaching coaching competencies, including dialogue, feedback, open ended questioning, listening and general communication skills. This training would also encompass learning about emotional intelligence, body language and motivation. There are blocks of training dedicated to learning about mentoring and

how to be a mentor, of which mentoring is often used interchangeably with coaching. This has led to some confusion in the organization about coaching and mentoring and what they should look like. Because there is a significant difference between mentoring, coaching and how coaching relates to the IDP process, I strongly propose that there should be dedicated blocks of training specific to coaching at all leadership classes offered by the Leadership Development Center.

Personal relationships are a cultural element of our daily work life (Bolman and Deal, 2003) and as a very social organization, it is recommended that the Coast Guard promote being exceptional at cultivating these relationships (p. 168). Thus, training, should be considered to help bolster and develop these supervisor/direct report relationships. Determined as a key theme in my interviews, training on elemental supervisory skills would clearly be a good first start. Therefore, it is recommended that a solid assessment of what is taught at all levels of performance management training be conducted by the Coast Guard's Leadership Development Center in order to determine where and how to implement teaching the IDP process with a primary focus on coaching and coaching competencies. Additionally, a review of this type of training should be considered at the basic training (i.e. boot camp) and subsequent A- and C-schools. For officers, a review of the leadership curriculum at the Coast Guard Academy and Officer Candidate School should also be examined.

By embedding the IDP process in the USCG's performance management culture, the Coast Guard will achieve growing, sustainable and effective leadership practices, in addition to sustained followership and high performance. But before this growth can occur, members need to understand why the IDP process is so important. Growing,

improving and providing training on the process and shaping the training to provide some structure to performance management is two fold. Effective and dynamic training will develop the Coast Guard's managers and their leadership practices, as well as provide a framework to develop personal and career goals for all personnel. As a result of this training, all employees will gain an understanding of the IDP process. By practicing it and seeing the significance in it, members will eventually feel satisfaction, meaning and value in themselves and their work. Following the IDP process cycle routinely will ultimately give employees a sense of empowerment, worth and potential, "Self-mapping, career-path transfer, contract formation and the like are some of the external actions that help the individual achieve a sense of effectiveness" (Limerick, Cunnington, Crowther, 1998, p.139).

Collaboration with Leadership Development Center

In order to help the Coast Guard's Leadership Development Center as it moves forward to include performance management, IDP and coaching training in its curriculums for all its leadership training, I recommend the utilization of the Simplified Performance Coaching Model as a primary training element for use in teaching coaching conversations. By sharing this model with Guardians, it will help shape the types of counseling and coaching conversations the IDP program intended to occur. The Simplified Performance Coaching Model reinforces solid coaching practices as a means of effective performance management. Most importantly, I see an opportunity for collaboration with the Leadership Development Center staff to develop templates for action for each phase of the Simplified Performance Coaching Model. I offer protocol for the model in order to best teach supervisors what a coaching conversation should look

like, in addition to working with the staff to find the best teaching resources and coaching modules.

In many of my interviews, I heard that the IDP process is too time consuming and often times the coaching piece is left out as personnel promote and transfer to different units. I strongly believe that there is enough time to provide our subordinates with enough developmental supervision and coaching. With commitment and an understanding that it can be achieved in light of the Coast Guard's growing missions and responsibility to the American people, we must continue to first take care of ourselves by communicating:

Supervisory excellence is built on a foundation of regular meetings in which work is monitored and individuals are coached and supported in their efforts to improve their performance while developing personal and professional skills (Napier and McDaniel, 2006, p.313).

I propose that leadership training include an understanding that supervision and management can be measured and that there is time to conduct it effectively. The investment of time will pay off with a communicative and supported workforce. I use Napier and McDaniel's proposed allocation of a supervisor's time. For example, a supervisor with eight direct reports can be measured:

- Meetings with each of eight direct reports for one hour twice a month to review individual progress, to strategize, and to coach. *192 hours*
- Two hour team meetings every other week with eight direct reports to plan, strategize, problem solve, and review progress. *52 hours*
- Three hour Supervisory Dialogues with each of eight direct reports once a year. *24 hours*
- One hour follow up sessions to the eight dialogues four months later. *8 hours*
- A two day team-building and planning/goal retreat with the team. *20 hours*
- Estimated time for supervisory management processes over the course of a business year. *296 hours*

By including the Simplified Performance Coaching Model into leadership and training curriculums at all levels of the organization, the IDP process will become better understood and coaching will be seen as the focus of the process, instead of the completion of the IDP document as a compliance requirement. In addition, by including that coaching is a requirement of all supervisors as per the performance management system, instructors can provide context related to how much time supervision actually takes, demonstrating that supervision can be measured and can be achieved by all managers.

Development of Online IDP Tool

I recently learned that the IDP program manager at Coast Guard Headquarters has been tasked with updating the current IDP tool. A few years ago, there was a survey put out to a large span of Guardians requesting feedback on the IDP and usage across the organization. Within the last year, a more thorough survey was sent to 32 units requesting feedback and specific information particular to an online, user friendly tool. I believe that it is a much needed instrument and timely with the submission of this capstone. While I was not able to gain access to these results with enough time to review prior to my capstone submission, I offer that the online tool is one the ideas that an interviewee suggested and was willing to use. He explained that he would prefer an online tool because right now the current tool is “cumbersome, lengthy and hard to keep neat since it is hand-written”. An online tool may provide the incentive to practice the IDP process since it can be saved, goals can be tracked and supervisors can monitor progression and development. The recent initiative to produce the online tool provides

me with the opportunity to also collaborate with the IDP program manager and use the existing mandate to promote the IDP process and coaching throughout the Coast Guard.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION

The IDP process is an essential piece of performance management. The IDP process includes coaching as an essential element of the process and helps build and maintain personnel communication and value. I believe that the Coast Guard has already developed the foundation of a solid IDP process, but there are a few areas in which the process can be significantly improved. I firmly believe that more awareness via training is needed about the IDP process at all levels of the organization, especially within the lower ranks to make the IDP process part of our performance management culture.

This training should encompass teaching coaching and coaching competencies to achieve what the IDP program intended, which is to communicate and share goals, provide feedback and guidance, and help with career planning. I introduced the Simplified Performance Coaching Model because it is tried, tested and has been tried in my professional life. I use it daily and have shared it with my staff in order to give them an idea of what coaching might look like. The feedback was positive and my staff knows that coaching is an important element of their leadership and leadership development. They also recognize that the IDP is a useful tool to help their subordinates set and achieve their goals, in addition to providing them with some structure to start career planning. The model is clear, concise and structured to facilitate effective and valuable dialogue and feedback between a supervisor and his/her direct report. The coaching qualities that this model is grounded should be explicitly communicated via training with supervisors.

Lessons Learned

The most applicable lesson I take away from my capstone study is the fact that Guardians *want* to make the IDP process viable and robust. People want to practice it and recognize that it is an important piece of performance management. My interviews indicated that people are frustrated because of the lack of support from supervisors, but it is not because of will or intent. The lack of support comes from insufficient support in the upper levels of the organization, a poorly managed process and a lack of confidence to utilize coaching skills. My conversations demonstrated that people want to build their skills as supervisor coaches, and have not felt adequately prepared or confident to have goal setting, career planning or coaching conversations.

I also learned and am convinced that the IDP process will benefit Guardians in the long run. With better support and encouragement to complete the IDP process, the Coast Guard will make significant improvements in taking care of its personnel. We must and will learn to slow down to plan and create short and long term goals for ourselves and the organization, instead of scrambling to meet the shorter term goals without looking far enough ahead. One very wise Lieutenant Commander who looks at the core Coast Guard leadership competencies as a continuum offered, “Once we learn to lead ourselves, only then we will be able to achieve the other Coast Guard competencies: Leading Others, Leading Performance and Change and Leading the Coast Guard”.

Future work with the results of this capstone will include the development of an exact protocol for a coaching conversation utilizing the Simplified Performance Coaching Model. I would include a template for action for each phase of the model and include examples for each stage. Ideally, I would have initially worked with the Leadership Development Staff to design these templates, so as to have a good working draft for

future teaching modules. Designing these templates will serve as a good segue to design coaching instruction within the IDP curriculum.

Supporting the future utilization of this capstone, the literature review will relate goal setting and the pursuit of goals to the theory of *Flow*, a state of concentration with an activity, goal or situation as determined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. As a result of this Capstone, I see more of a direct connection between goal setting and adult learning which will reinforce the training and education elements of the process. *Flow* directly ties into these concepts and relating it to the process will facilitate the implementation process.

I believe that others should learn from this capstone just how vital coaching is to a successful performance management system. Coaching is at the heart of the IDP process and not many supervisors have been adequately trained to be coaches. It is a skill supervisors must learn in order to maintain healthy communication within the organization. I firmly believe that there are supervisors who may not have been competent or confident enough to coach or take care of their people and consequently cut careers short unnecessarily because subordinates became unfocused, frustrated, and disappointed in their management and the organization as a whole.

Additionally, mentorship as taught throughout the Coast Guard should be taught separately from coaching in leadership courses. There were a number of interviewees who discussed mentorship like coaching. The literature clearly indicates that coaching and mentoring are two different competencies. Coaching in the workplace is done with a supervisor who has access to his/her subordinate's IDPs, tracks progress and provides an overall performance evaluation. Mentoring is completely different in that a mentor

should not be in a member's chain of command. In fact, the process of choosing a mentor is more liberal and less restrictive. I am confident that once supervisors are comfortable with their coaching skills, the IDP process and communication throughout the Coast Guard will flourish.

Conclusion

Using the IDP as the focal point of performance management will allow for coaching to take place at all levels within the Coast Guard and will produce the professional and communicative relationships, the Coast Guard desperately needs in order to maintain a high performing workforce. As a result of this capstone, I honestly believe that the Coast Guard has the tools and a willing workforce to cultivate and nurture these strong relationships. The IDP should be reinforced as the vehicle to make this happen; they need to be part of the culture. As the Coast Guard grows and as the missions become more extensive, we need to make sure that these missions do not deny Guardians a vigorous personnel management system and that all personnel are taken care of and valued as they work to make the U.S. a secure country.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your definition of the IDP?
2. In your experience, how do you use the IDP? How have your supervisors used it?
3. How do you think we can improve the IDP process or utilize the IDP better?
4. Do you have any stories or personal experiences that will help improve the IDP or people's understanding of why we have it and how it should be used?
5. Do you have any positive experiences using the IDP?