

Executive Coaching and Leadership Support for Change

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There is a lot at stake during times of stress and change. Leaders are challenged to positively represent the organization's character and culture during tough times. Yet they are experiencing the turmoil personally and we sometimes forget that they also need some help and can benefit from some leadership support. Leaders of organizations often find that it's lonely at the top. They're charged with many difficult responsibilities as the company undergoes change. Who do you, as a leader, talk to? Do you have a trusted confidant? As Tom Landry said: "A coach is someone who tells you what you don't want to hear, who has you see what you don't want to see, so you can be who you've always known you can be."

In this market, leaders are in critical situations and are making big decisions under intense pressures. Investing in people – making sure they are doing their jobs well, that they're still motivated, and retaining them in tough times – is important now more than ever. That's why, even when budgets are tight and businesses are trying to maximize their efficiency, executive coaching can be one of the most effective paths for an organization to take. In fact, a recent 2-year study by Bersin & Associates showed that the #1 best practice that drives the highest business impact was "Coaching: Formal or well established coaching programs for employees."

In tough times it is fair to ask: "Are we getting the results we want from the organization and from our people?" If not, what do you need to do about it? Well integrated executive coaching can be an essential element of any organizational development, change management or leadership program.

An investment in executive coaching can lead to improvement in:

- Bottom-line profitability
- Top-line sales
- Retention
- Cost reductions
- Quality of products and services
- Overall Productivity
- Customer Service

Best in Class Leadership

Executive coaching happens within the context of building confidence, so leaders feel that they are in a safe environment to receive feedback, give and get perspective, and look at choices and consequences. Coaches don't try to "fix" you; they often actually see more potential in the leader than the leader can see in him or herself. Coaches provide leadership support that helps leaders find clarity, identify blind spots and take an honest look at how they operate.

Not only are leaders dealing with everyone in the organization, they're also dealing with their inner dialogue, which can be complex and conflicting. Being highly effective and able to self-manage are key to succeeding in the management of change. There is a great opportunity for leaders to learn and grow during this current economy.

Some leaders say “I like my style; why should I change?” With no felt need to change, prognosis is poor on personal learning and growth. But if you’re not getting the results you want, it may be time to look inward and ask yourself why.

Great News for the Organization

The payoff from self insights can be impressive. One leader, for example, who was outstanding at what he did, realized through executive coaching that his style of leadership was dictatorial, which did not leave room for people to expand or be creative. He was able to recognize not that “I’m right and everyone else has to listen to me” but “What can I do to help people succeed?” Coaching provided new models and tools and he practiced using real examples. He experienced success in softening his approach so he could have real dialogue, which led to new ideas and more empowered and committed people. He came to the conclusion that it wasn’t just about communicating what he knew; it was about coaching his team, which had a huge impact on how the team performed during critical times. Performance was better and both he and his team were happier.

It is especially important both in the current and future economy that leaders have support to be at their best. Through our leadership engagements we have seen the following benefits of executive coaching:

- Enhanced leadership and organizational effectiveness through laser-like focus
- Development of emerging leaders
- Enhanced morale, motivation and retention
- Accelerated results by coaching towards critical success factors and away from derailers
- Development of leaders as effective coaches, creating sustainable success throughout the organization

So, especially during times of stress and change, it is important for leaders to be in touch first with themselves, and then with their teams and employees throughout the organization. Coaches can help leaders become more effective in tough times, and can also help them become better coaches themselves.

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