

BECOMING A LEADER OF LEADERS

THE COACHEE

The client is a highly talented individual. A technical expert with an impressive track record in his industry. He'd been asked to lead an enterprise-wide quality and improvement programme in a FTSE 250 company. It was recognised that improving his personal approach would increase the probability of success of the programme.

PRESENTING ISSUES

We used personality profiling and interviews with key stakeholders to help the coachee in raising their self-awareness and in framing the issues we'd be working on together. In a 3-way meeting involving the business sponsor, we agreed that we'd prioritise the following:

- A transactional approach to relationships with peers and team members – the coachee sought them out only when a task needed to be completed.
- Reactive in managing key stakeholder relationships.
- As a consequence, trust was being impacted.

INTERVENTIONS

The coachee's transition from leader to a leader of leaders role is a relational turn requiring behavioural change and the development of skills in emotional intelligence. Simply offering him tools, techniques and tactics would have been an over-simplification as there can, as in this engagement, often be resistance or an immunity to change. And some of the very strategies that he had used to build his career were no longer helpful to him.

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It was therefore important to work at greater depth, exploring the vulnerabilities and anxiety that often need to be addressed to operate at the most senior levels around; doubt tolerance, realistic, responsibility taking, decatastrophising, fluidity in thinking and risk-taking.

We explored in our work:

- The trust equation – considering the important part that intimacy and informal communications play.
- How collaborative leadership is about openness and fluidity rather than rigidity and control. And;
- Understanding how influence requires us to bring others along on the journey with us – by being curious about others' feelings, motivations and concerns.

OUTCOMES

- Right first time improvements – record level of quality across a number of key product lines.
- Key stakeholder feedback confirmed that he'd earned the trust of the business's top team.
- He established a much stronger relationship with a key stakeholder, where previously this had been adversarial
- His time prioritisation shifted fundamentally – focusing on relationships vs. being in the weeds of the detail.