

Becoming a Successful Leader

Executive Coaching | Client Success Story

Background

With five offices and a team of over 250 specialist lawyers, this leading national law firm provides specialist legal advice to four main sectors.

The HR Director selected eight partners from offices around the UK for high impact coaching around career development issues.

Our Approach

We designed an accelerated programme comprising four sessions and including a three way meeting between the client, the client's manager and the coach. All of the subjects had very similar presenting problems around transition from subject matter expert to practice leader as well as the need to focus on skills development and their personal career development. Coachees were given profiles of prospective coaches and made their decision on whom to work with following a chemistry meeting.

How Did We Help?

Case Study 1

A successful partner leading a large team was exceptionally busy and did not have enough time to think about his path to promotion. He tried on several occasions to become more strategic in his thinking and to give himself more space and time to lead the team more effectively.

In the first two coaching sessions he and his coach focused on gaining an understanding of himself and what the organisation was looking for in those with potential for promotion. This was then linked to his current behaviour so that he was able to identify the new behaviours required to enable him to achieve the promotion.

He worked hard on identifying the triggers that stopped him from being more productive and he identified the new habits that would enable him to free up time from day-to-day tasks. To achieve this, he got the buy-in from his stakeholders including the Managing Partner and his direct reports.

Over the course of six months, he rearranged his diary and spent more time out of the office to concentrate on the more strategic aspects of his role. He was then able to present his strategy to the Board and gain buy-in from his team, allocating appropriate actions to each team member.

Outcomes For Case Study 1

With the support of his coach, he created coping strategies to counter these triggers and was successful in delivering against the strategy. He is now taking a coaching leadership approach to his direct team members and his stakeholders. He also has a better understanding of what his senior stakeholders expect of him rather than simply assuming or guessing what they need.

Key Learning

The key learning from this coaching assignment was that it is important to understand the future prize in detail and, therefore, justify the short-term pain in behavioural change needed to achieve the long-term goal.

We successfully identified the triggers and worked on them to create positive behaviour change.

Case Study 2

Recently promoted into a leadership role with a large team of lawyers, the client (although confident in her ability to deliver as lawyer) was less confident about her ability to move into a leadership role. She assumed that certain behaviours were required as opposed to just being herself and leading in an authentic manner.

The client also took on too much work and did not create enough space and time for herself.

Additionally, she had never really received any feedback on her performance and was reluctant to seek it for fear of receiving negative feedback.

During coaching sessions, we focused on her key strengths as a lawyer and looked at these in the context of her role as a leader. To help build confidence, we agreed that she would tell key stakeholders what she was working on and ask for feedback, in the moment, about her progress.

Concluding Remarks

It is not uncommon for professional services firms to promote to leadership roles those who have excelled as technical experts.

However, the competencies required of those in leadership often are not natural behaviours to subject matter experts.

Coaching provides the individual with insights into their strengths and helps them learn new behaviours to become successful leaders and to maximise the effectiveness of their team.

Outcomes For Case Study 2

She was pleasantly surprised with the feedback and was able to act on constructive suggestions in a way that enabled her to lead her team more effectively.

After four coaching sessions, she felt more confident in her ability to lead the team and also to manage key stakeholders who had an interest in the success of a team. As a consequence, she also improved her decision-making capability, and this instilled more confidence in her team.

Key Learning

The key learning from this coaching assignment was that confidence building leads to more effective decision making and high performing teams.

The client built her confidence by courageously seeking feedback and acting upon ideas that would help her to become even more effective.

