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Strategies for Success

Published by HANYS Solutions, Inc.



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Leadership and Business Coaching: *Leading Edge Thinking for Competitive Edge Results*

By Leta Beam, President, Vantage International

In recent years, business coaching has become one of the most effective ways to cultivate professional business teams and high performing professionals. Coaching has proven bottom line results. Fast Company magazine reported that up to 40% of Fortune 500 companies hire coaches to improve their businesses, with a proven, significant return on investment.

According to executives and upper-level managers polled by Fortune magazine, 77% of the executives reported improved working relationships with direct reports as a result of coaching, 71% with supervisors, and 63% with peers. They also noted a marked increase in job satisfaction and in organizational commitment. A 2001 Manchester Review study said that the output of executives involved in coaching partnerships averaged nearly 5.7 times higher than the initial coaching investment. Motorola's well-documented experience with coaching found that the company routinely invests 7% of payroll in coaching. This has resulted in a 20% productivity improvement. For every dollar spent on coaching, Motorola gets a \$29 return in incremental revenues.

This article explains the ways health care organizations can use coaching to create a competitive advantage.

Coaching One to One

When most people think of coaching, they think of the one-to-one experience (often called *executive coaching*) in which a coach works with a business professional to help that person be at their personal and professional best. Coaching is a partnership co-created between coach and client to achieve success. It is all about and only about change. The reason that coaching is such a powerful business tool is that the change that occurs is done through the will of the client. It is about client-generated solutions that emerge through a collaborative inquiry process. This robust discovery process offers up fresh alternatives, unique vantage points, focused insights (or blinding flashes of the obvious, as we affectionately call them), and inspire actions that propel a client forward.

Sometimes, the impetus for engaging in executive coaching is performance improvement. However, often, it is about the best getting better.

Consider the competitive advantages that executive coaching may provide your organization. Using coaching:

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- newly promoted leaders or those in transition have the support that they need to succeed from the start;
- physicians, nurses, and other extraordinary clinicians can experience that same level of achievement in their management roles;
- you can cultivate top talent by identifying your stars and turning them into superstars;
- clinical and operational leaders can more easily “get out of their own way,” have an objective sounding board for ideas and strategies, and take full advantage of a confidential source of unvarnished feedback; and
- incident coaching, a brief and highly focused intervention, allows you to interrupt a potentially harmful pattern of thinking or acting before it gains a foothold with your executive.

Coaching One to Many

While working one to one may be the expression of business coaching with which most professionals are familiar, coaching one to many, or team coaching, also yields significant results. Team coaching relies on the same art and skill as one-to-one coaching; it is simply applied on a broader organizational scale. It allows the organization to identify the critical gap between where it is and where it wants to be and then harnesses focused and inspired action to move forward and close the gap. That change is all about sustainability, accountability, and celebration.

Whether coaching a leadership team, department, project work group, or board of trustees, team coaching effectively improves the organization’s ability to deal with challenges, recognize and then seize opportunities, and tap into a reservoir of creative energy. The lynchpin is a new way of being; a realization that the whole organization can be at its best and focused on what is right; and an entirely new way of communicating through active listening, truth telling, and powerful questioning.

Consider the competitive advantages that team coaching may provide your organization:

- your leadership team becomes a highly effective team with “silo busting” as its collective mantra;
- truly think and act strategically as a team and get head and heart behind your collective vision;
- levels of trust increase among team members, resulting in creative solutions to long-standing problems and communication patterns that get results;

- your board lives up to its “brain trust” potential;
- it becomes possible to truly connect your mission, vision, and value statements with behavior changes;
- meetings are productive gains rather than energy drains that consume your schedule and your spirit;
- your culture is re-imagined as you manage things and coach people;
- positive change is sustained and “snap-backs” (to old thinking and behaviors) are less frequent and less severe; and
- clinical and operational leaders cross-pollinate regularly for more effective decision making.

Bassett Healthcare in Cooperstown, New York has used business coaching as part of its success strategy for almost three years.

“We are always looking for innovative ways to grow and develop leaders at all levels,” says Bertine Colombo McKenna, Ph.D., Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at Bassett. “From our point of view, this involves quantum change in how leaders work. The success of the operation depends on the leaders’ willingness to improve their abilities to meet the organization’s needs and goals. Leta Beam’s brand of coaching allows one-on-one work, team coaching, as well as ‘incident’ coaching. The breadth of her skills has allowed us to use her expertise at all levels of our organization and on any number of issues that require this type of expertise. Leta has helped us to operate in a more intentional way, to collectively improve our performance, and to sustain positive change and momentum. Without a managed program of developing leaders, we believe organizations will fall short of the complex needs that leaders must provide.”

“Leta has helped us to operate in a more intentional way, to collectively improve our performance . . .”

HANYS Solutions, Inc. (HSI) has collaborated with Vantage International, a premier leadership and business coaching firm, to offer HANYS’ members access to result-oriented individual, team, and organizational coaching services.

Leadership and business coaching is the latest addition to HANYS’ Workforce Solutions, a comprehensive array of advocacy, education, and marketplace solutions offered through HANYS and HSI to help improve the quality of the workforce and retain qualified health care workers.

To learn more about leadership and business coaching and HANYS’ Workforce Solutions, contact Michael Ilnicki, Vice President and Chief of Operations, HANYS Solutions, Inc., at (518) 431-7829, at milnicki@hanys.org, or go to www.ehanys.com/operational_efficiencies/executive_coaching.cfm.