

A Global Media Company Successfully Pilots a Customized Leadership Coaching Program

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The Challenge

A large, global multimedia company headquartered in New York City partnered with Sounding Board to develop and pilot a customized leadership coaching program. The program was tailored to team-leader employees spanning the globe.

To succeed, the pilot program needed to:

- Deliver coaching to leaders centered on the company's identified key leadership capabilities.
- Measure the progress made by each leader.
- Measure the impact of coaching on the business.
- Promote leadership development beyond the coaching experience.

The Solution

Sounding Board's coaching approach focuses on 15 leadership capabilities and relies on a technology-leveraged feedback approach to ensure that coachees are not only developing as leaders but also driving business impact. The feedback approach prompts managers to complete surveys at critical moments throughout the engagement, which is incorporated into the coaching conversations to ensure the coachee is developing in the right direction and understands how their growth is impacting the business.

Sounding Board customized its coaching program to focus on six leadership capabilities identified as important to the multimedia company: Communicate the vision, Develop people to achieve, Network to get stuff done, Adjust the course, Create a diverse and inclusive work environment, Spot gaps and seize opportunities.

To ensure the client could reinforce leadership development beyond coaching, Sounding Board further customized the coaching program to include manager alignment calls. These conversations were held with the coach, the coachee and the coachee's manager, and gave the manager a "live" opportunity to provide real-time feedback about their team leader's (the coachee's) development goals. These conversations helped managers gain insight into how their team leader wanted to develop early in the coaching engagement, and then provided both the manager and the team leader the opportunity to discuss how they could continue these conversations post-coaching.

Although coaching has been traditionally reserved for executives, the client saw an opportunity to invest in team leaders because this cohort has a high level of influence in aligning teams across the organization. As a global organization, the client also decided to select participants for the pilot across the Americas, Europe/MiddleEast/Africa, and Asia Pacific regions to ensure a scalable, high-quality coaching experience that would support individuals with specific language and/or cultural needs.

Coachees were matched with coaches using Sounding Board’s automated coach matching model. Coaches and coachees met biweekly throughout the pilot program. In between coaching sessions, coaches and coachees used Sounding Board’s technical platform to stay connected and discuss how coachees were applying their learning to their jobs.

The Results

The pilot had a high completion rate of 84 percent—this, despite an end-of-the-year kickoff and disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Sounding Board’s coach-matching technology had a 95 percent success rate, and coachees reported an 87 percent satisfaction rate with their coaches.

In terms of improving targeted leadership development areas, 92 percent of coachees and 68 percent of managers agreed or strongly agreed that the coaching experience helped improve those areas. In addition, 92 percent of coachees said coaching helped them make progress toward developmental goals, and 84 percent of coachees said there was greater alignment with their manager because of the coaching experience.

The Sounding Board approach to measuring development enabled the client—for the first time—to measure progress for each leader, for each region and the overall pilot group. As a result of the coaching experience, coachees and managers reported outstanding growth across leadership areas:

Leadership Area	Coachees % Growth	Managers % Growth
Communicate the vision	37%	26%
Develop people to achieve	28%	30%
Network to get stuff done	36%	43%
Adjust the course	50%	25%
Create a diverse and inclusive work environment	30%	39%
Spot gaps and seize opportunities	21%	27%

In addition:

- 76 percent of coachees said coaching helped them make progress toward achieving goals.
- 84 percent of coachees and 64 percent of their managers said coaching had improved alignment between the managers and their direct reports.

As an added benefit, nearly 30 percent of coachees also said that the experience had increased their job satisfaction. As one coachee said, “[Coaching] has helped me have a better understanding of where I enjoy working and developing most so I can continue to do so.”

Sounding Board provided a scalable, cost-effective solution for this client to invest in the development of their team leaders. Sounding Board continues to provide coaching for team leaders, kicking off an additional 50 coaching engagements with the intent to add coaching for mid-level managers.