

An aerial photograph of two red kayakers navigating a narrow, rocky river channel. The water is dark blue-green, and the rocks are light brown and layered. White water rapids are visible at the top of the frame. The kayakers are positioned in the lower right quadrant of the image.

Team Coaching Case Study

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‘The work we have done with TOWARD has had a massive impact on our Executive Team performance. The journey we have embarked on has ensured we addressed our team’s issues in an honest and unthreatening way.

This meant there was nothing festering and it has allowed the team to push through to being far more collaborative, challenging and effective. The TOWARD approach allows the sessions to flow and never feels that there is a generic process. Their approach feels like more of a journey that they adapt to the areas the team needs to focus on. I believe a critical factor in the success has been that they create an environment which builds strong levels of trust both within the team, and between the team and TOWARD.’

— Team Coaching Participant

This is a case study on TOWARD's
Team Coaching with the Executive Team
of a global active equity specialist.

Case Study
Team Coaching

What was the Client Request?

The client engaged TOWARD for a two-year programme, which focused on a number of factors including developing stronger behaviours as a leadership team, and becoming more skilled at positively challenging each other. The aims were to evolve Executive Team excellence, deliver cultural change and drive successful strategic performance for the business.

The client was poised for a period of rapid growth, and so firmly believed that if the Executive Team could learn quicker, faster and smarter than their competitors, it would contribute to the growth of the business and to long-term company success. The Executive Team had to be healthy, resilient and focused on strategic performance.

The team recognised a blame culture had evolved within the business and that this was stifling ambition, and therefore learning. They wanted to create an environment that allowed people to make mistakes for the right reasons and learn from them within a supportive framework. This focus on culture change was a key strategic priority for the business. The Executive Team realised both their own behaviours and the effectiveness of their team, were key to moving away from a blame culture.

Objectives

The key objectives for the process were:

- To engage in a journey where we moved away from being a disparate group towards becoming a stronger, more coherent Executive Team – an ‘Exceptional Team’.
- To build strong trustful, collaborative relationships across the Executive Team.
- To facilitate a stronger strategic focus and dialogue in the team which would facilitate the growth of the business and the required culture change.

Progress was tracked throughout the process through the delivery of our strategic and business plans, and also through the diagnostic and evaluation work we carried out. This allowed for focus on blockers and barriers as they arose. Progress was also tracked via the employee experience through regular staff engagement surveys.

What was the Agreed Approach?

This approach was a team coaching experience, defined by Clutterbuck (2009) as “the use of reflection and dialogue to help a team improve their performance, and to help improve the processes by which this performance is achieved”.

In total, the team attended 4 separate off-site workshops over a period of 2 years (between June ‘15 – June ‘17). Each workshop was specifically designed to build upon previous work and further integrate the collective and individual learning journeys. Each session stretched the team and moved them into uncomfortable places within a sophisticated and ‘safe’ environment.

We used a coaching methodology that moves away from an intellectual discussion about the strategic direction and operational plans of the team and toward a knowledge-based, experiential process that allowed the team to talk openly about the things they need as members of the team. We used our experience and skills as coaches to challenge the confluence that may exist in the team and support each individual to strengthen their ‘adult’ state.

The team initially consisted of 7 Executives, however reduced to 6 during the process.

Stage One – Diagnostics

In advance of each workshop, each team member completed a Semi Structured Interview with a TOWARD coach which explored a number of areas:

- Their experience of the team at that time.
- Challenges the team faced.
- Progress and change in between workshops (individually and collectively).
- Strategic, Logistical and Behavioural issues for the team at that time.

The data from these interviews was then collated and analysed and the emerging themes provided the underpinning aims and objectives of each subsequent workshop. This was signed off in advance by the programme sponsors.

Stage Two – Design

The content for each workshop was designed using experiential learning processes, underpinned by coaching methodologies. Whilst these provided a structure for the workshops, they were used flexibly and adapted to the needs of the team in the moment.

Stage Three – Delivery

Each workshop was facilitated by 2 coaches who drew on a range of coaching processes to work with the team. Some of the main areas explored were:

- Check in and Decoupling from the workplace and daily pressures.
- Somatic Team Sculpting Exercises to explore team performance and dynamics.
- Group Feedback Processes.
- Transactional Analysis and Developing the Adult.
- Team Purpose and Vision.
- State Management and Control.
- Clear Commitments and Action Planning.

Stage Four - Evaluation

Each team member completed an evaluation questionnaire after the sessions and learning attained and embedded was tracked through each subsequent set of SSI's conducted.

Results

Throughout the process, the team recognised a significant improvement within the relationships across the Executive and in the way they work together to deliver results. These improvements were articulated mainly as behavioural changes, such as “better, more mature conversations” and “giving and receiving feedback”.

As a result, team relationships are stronger, trust is deeper and more open and honest feedback conversations take place. The team surfaced things which remained unsaid for a number of years and had eroded trust across the team. Their decision making processes are more transparent and timely.

The team has now reached a point where they are sharing their individual values with each other, which again has moved them to a new level of trust. They understand each other’s motivations far more, and this has created a true sense of care for each other.

Through this improved and healthy team dynamic, the team has been able to address the strategic priorities of the business and has successfully delivered on their growth, consolidation and cultural change goals. They are now actively building a coaching culture across all levels of the business as a direct result of their own experience of coaching methodologies.

The organisation runs staff engagement surveys on an annual basis. Over the past two years, throughout the duration of this Team Coaching Process, they have seen a steady improvement in scores.

Part of the survey focuses specifically on the performance of the Executive Team and again they have seen a general trend of improved results, such as:

- The Executive Team communicates regularly in a clear and engaging way (+22%).
- I feel my team members work effectively together (+15%).
- I believe in the direction that has been set out by the Executive Team for the company (+15%).

Staff also indicated where they see opportunity for more improvement in relation to personal development opportunities and the ability to challenge the status quo. In 2017, new initiatives were introduced around building a strong coaching culture at all levels to further strengthen culture.

Staff comments include:

“The spirit of learning at the company has never been higher.”

“I have the sense that senior management listen to feedback and act upon it reasonably quickly. I have particularly enjoyed (and ‘got something from’) the external speakers that we had over the last 18 months and would certainly welcome continuation of this.”

Conclusion

Overall, the organisation has seen a positive improvement in their ability to challenge and raise issues with each other in an appropriate and respectful way. They have developed and embedded their learning culture across the business and provided an environment which allows mistakes to be viewed as opportunities to learn, develop and grow.

These factors, combined together, have encouraged a sense of pride within the company, and an upward move in the number of colleagues who believe they have a future with the business.

The client firmly believes the team coaching programme they undertook enabled them to evolve into a stronger leadership team, working as a cohesive, collaborative group to push boundaries and make a meaningful difference.

If you would like further information regarding any of our programmes, future dates or services, please contact us at:

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