

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: CASE STUDY 2

BACKGROUND

John is a senior manager in a large multinational company. He was responsible for an £800 million business that had been performing badly for some time.

We worked with him for some 18 months. During that time he worked on changing his leadership style and behaviour, building an effective management team and gaining increasing commitment to different business decisions. Towards the end of our period of working together he sent us the following email. It is a verbatim transcript:

“Please find attached e-mail with regards to the business I am managing. This year we turn it around completely and we will meet the company return expectations (remember we were very far away from this the moment we started to meet). A lot of changes have been made over the last 2 years both in Europe, North America and China and now we are seeing the benefits. The perception in the company has changed significantly and also the spirit in our team.

I sincerely believe that our sessions over the last 1.5 years added a lot of value for me to make all these changes. Your feedback and the way you acted as a sounding board helped me a lot to grow as a leader for the team and as a person. It is great that this is recognized by my manager, but it is even more engaging that the members in the team are providing me this feedback as well.

I like to thank you for all the sessions we had together and this was time very well spent for me. For our next session in London April 12th, I would like to spend time on the key learnings and areas for attention for the next years. I will use my Career Development Plan for this.

Looking forward meeting you again.

Regards – John ”

Attached email

“From: Susan (Main Board Director)

Re: Budget presentation

John,

Your business is setting a very good example of how to turn around a business and engage people at the same time. Your leadership is also a good example for others.

Susan ”

What did we do to enable this to happen?

Firstly, it was essential to get all the issues out on the table, and this took some time to establish.

Over the years, John had received feedback about negative aspects of his leadership style. He used his strong intellect and capabilities to analyse quickly to decide what needed to be done and then simply tell everyone what to do. He would then push for results in a commanding way. This had achieved good results in the past but as his scope got bigger and his responsibilities got broader this style wasn't working.

John had serious anxieties about trying to change. He was afraid of losing his power and looking foolish. In summary he didn't know what to do and was stuck in denial and self-limiting beliefs.

The attached Coaching Approach shows the stages we went through once the issues and opportunities had been flushed out.

Phases 1 to 4 .

It took some time to help John believe it was possible to change and that fundamentally it was not about changing John but simply some of his behaviours that were getting in the way. This he began to believe as he learnt more about himself and his confidence in his coach's ability to help him grew. He began to see the potentially huge benefits of maximising his strengths and opening up new possibilities. A very motivating factor for John was the confidential feedback from members of his team. They felt:

- Insignificant;
- Not listened to;
- Put down in public;
- Made to feel small.

Put to him in this candid way hit John very hard, as he had no intention to have people feeling like this.

Phase 5 – Learning by doing

We would look at what needed to be done in the coming weeks and explore different ways of doing them. The key was to make the new ways and approaches feel safe for John by discussion and role-play.

Phase 6 – Building the team

We had a number of sessions with John and his team together, using various techniques to open up dialogue and build trust. This was a challenge given the past. When the team were confident enough to put forward their views and debate issues, they were then ready to re-look at their approach to turning the business around.

Phase 7 and 8

Here the team created a new business plan by various sessions of co-invention and debate. This approach built strong commitment to face the tough decisions. It required 'best for the business' thinking rather than 'best for my area' thinking. Importantly in this phase

they assigned ownership to key goals and in reviews would challenge each other. Prior to this, the only challenge came from John.

Through all of this we worked with John to continued stretching the new behaviours, which John described as uncomfortable at first, but with practice he told me at a certain moment the new behaviours had become natural – eureka!

Postscript

John wrote this testimonial about his experience of being coached:

“Chris has been a very good and professional coach to me. He is applying a lot of pragmatic skills based on solid theory, but is not overloading you with this.

Chris is very good listener and provides pragmatic solutions and/ or pragmatic alternatives for issue/problems. He is a very balanced personality and a very nice person to talk with. His previous experiences and pragmatic style bring him a lot of credibility (right from the start). He is able to bring your motivation to change your leadership style to a different level. Of course it all starts with yourself, but he can get more out of you if you are open for this.”

CASE STUDY: THE COACHING APPROACH

| Phase | Objective | Techniques & Outcomes |
|-------|---|--|
| 1 | Increase self awareness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Values • Myers Briggs Preferences • Firo B Preferences • Dominant Leadership Style |
| 2 | Understand consequences of preferred style on others and self | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach elicits team feelings through confidential one on one discussion |
| 3 | Explore alternative styles and their impact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education around possible leadership behaviour styles |
| 4 | Gain commitment in client for change | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From feedback and what could be • Tackling limiting beliefs around change |
| 5 | Learning by doing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experimenting in small then bigger steps on the job. • Being aware of impact on others and results |
| 6 | Building the team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach with leader and team works on building trust and safe environment |
| 7 | Creating business plan with the team and gaining commitment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team co-invent by discussion, debate, what ifs, analysis |
| 8 | Implementing through the team Continual stretching of new behaviours | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership of specific parts of the plan established • Team hold each other accountable |
| 9 | Turnaround and business recognition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business meets plan and leadership acknowledged |