



Case Studies

The two case studies that follow were undertaken by Ascentia, a Corporate Executive Coaching Company in the U.K., who can be contacted on info@ascentia.com

The Ascentia Briefing 1: Home Office - Case Study

Team Manager Coaching

Executive Summary

Individual coaching of a Regional Drug Strategy manager took place over a six-month period through a mix of face-to-face and telephone based coaching.

The impact of the coaching in productivity increases alone led to a Return on Investment of some 2500%. The manager and team felt more confident, operated with greater clarity, felt less stressed even though experiencing very challenging periods of change and exceeded the Central Home Office Drug Strategy Directorate requirements.

Introduction

Ascentia were engaged by the Home Office to provide Professional Development Support for a Regional Drug Strategy manager. Coaching was identified by the progressive manager as the development tool of choice and Ascentia were selected from a range of organisations.

Ascentia's engagement came some months after a Home Office reorganisation where accountability for the Drugs Prevention Advisory Service moved from the national DPAS office in London to a Regional HO director.

The goals to be addressed in the coaching included: -

- Building better regional partnerships
- Integrating the Drug Strategy team into the government office
- Building leadership capabilities
- To have a greater sense of work and personal purpose
- Delivering new ways of working

The programme agreed was a seven-stage intervention with a mix of face-to-face and telephone based coaching over a period of six months. The initial meeting was a three-way meeting with the director, manager and coach, the final session a review and consolidation of learnings.

What is the manager doing differently as a result of the coaching?

One of the key changes the manager shared was a sense of taking control of the regional drug strategy rather than waiting for deadlines and clarification from others.

This significantly different proactive approach has enabled the manager and team to set new ways of working, deliver new performance management tools, develop joint working and be a source of advice and support to others.

A key component of coaching is also looking at our personal ways of working, the beliefs and assumptions we have and how these translate into professional behaviour and decision-making. The manager embraced looking at such opportunities for change and as a consequence of being open, prepared to challenge assumptions and test new ideas, the manager reported the following.

“My energy has doubled and my drive for success has increased by 50%. I estimate my personal productivity is increased by 35% and my team report increases in productivity of between 25% and 60%. We are able to do much more in the same amount of time.

I tackle projects big or small with drive, energy and confidence and feel able to forge ahead even when the remit is vague and ownership confused.

The stress levels in the team have dramatically reduced and there has been very little sickness leave. This is despite the fact that 50% of the team have been dealing with significant and demanding personal life changing events that could have resulted in a serious and understandable depletion of effort and achievement.

The team has never been busier and the requirements on us have never been greater, however we are exceeding all the requirements of us by the Central Home Office Drug Strategy Directorate”.

This change in energy, dynamism, positive focus and “can do” attitude has been sustained over a 7-month period after the coaching completed (the last update on performance).

How do these changes translate into benefits for the Home Office?

Apart from having a manager and also team who are more confident, working with greater clarity and focus exceeding the requirements of them set by the Central Directorate, the coaching also delivered some key organisational benefits in terms of increased productivity.

- The productivity increases of the manager (+35%) and the team (range: +25% to +60%), translate to Returns on Investment in excess of 2100% (taking the lowest team increase of +25% only) or in excess of **3200%** (taking an average team increase of +40%). This is an annualised figure and takes into account the full cost of the coaching.
- The manager felt able to take control of the issues facing them as a department, and take proactive action to resolve. They were leading with more clarity and conviction.
- The Director reported that the team were very active in relation to shaping national policy and that without exception the work between the clients and the drug advisors has been positive.

What next?

Further individual coaching of other managers ensued in the Government Office as a result of this work. The philosophy, approach and effectiveness of this approach contributed to Ascentia being awarded the contract for a Leadership Development Programme for 30 managers within the organisation.

The Ascentia Briefing 2: Leicester Case Study Feedback

Group Coaching – Can it make a Difference?

Executive Summary

Group Coaching of a selection of Team Leaders took place over a 4-month period using a mix of initial presentation, one-to-one sessions and full day group coaching events.

The coaching impact in productivity increases alone led to a Return on Investment (ROI) of some 200% to 600%. The managers felt more confident and resourceful, more focused, less stressed and better able to manage time.

Those managers who did a significant amount of “overtime” were able to reduce those hours by between 4-15 hrs *per week* hence achieving a better work-life balance. By the end of the coaching, the managers were using new behaviours on average 40% of the time.

All managers reported being able to focus on more of the strategic priorities of the Council leading to additional potential ROI. The coaching intervention was rated as excellent.

Introduction

Leicester City Council engaged Ascentia to run a Group Coaching programme with a selection of managers, grouped according to needs identified through a 360° assessment. The Council was seeking to provide powerful and bespoke management development processes to deliver performance improvements across the top three tiers. The Council was also keen to move towards a learning culture and to break away from the limitations associated with traditional classroom based learning, which had a poor reputation amongst the managers.

Leicester was already aware of the benefits of coaching, though not directly within the council. They were also aware of the need to optimise value for the council. The Corporate Management Development function proposed an innovative approach that was further refined and developed by Ascentia to create an outstandingly successful Management Development format.

The final programme run with Leicester City Council consisted of the following steps: -

- 360° assessment to identify common themes amongst the managers.
- Initial presentation to all the managers to agree expectations for the coaching and answer any queries.
- Agreeing the top goals for the coaching group in the group format – the managers set the agenda for the coaching.
- Individual one-to-one sessions with each manager to identify their individual requirements in the context of the group goals – setting specific goals by manager

- Creation of a Group Coaching programme addressing the specific needs identified by the managers. There were four group sessions, each spaced one month apart, with agreed activities between sessions.

Feedback from the Managers

“The coaching was exhilarating and really made a difference”

The managers’ feedback was firstly that the coaching was excellent, with average ratings of 4.5 (out of a total possible score of 5). Secondly, the professional and personal benefits ranged from: -

- Feeling more confident and resourceful
- Being less isolated
- Working more productively
- Having greater focus and more enjoyment.

Half the participants felt their productivity increased by a weekly average of 4 hours; the other half significantly improved their work life balance by reducing the *weekly* “overtime” by between 4 and 15 hrs! The productivity of their teams also improved.

The managers are using new behaviours on average 40% of the time and they have a new range of tools, skills and ideas to use in their work and with the confidence to apply.

What did the managers expect?

Initially, the managers’ expectations were unclear, though the process of setting goals to identify the coaching needs and designing a programme to meet them resolved this.

“What really helped was building on strengths and not beating on the head over weaknesses”

The combination of real practical goals and a process to move towards those goals significantly contributed to the success. A mix of questioning, brainstorming, role playing, sharing frameworks and using the knowledge of the coach and the managers was used.

The positive forward focus of the coaching approach created an environment where the managers were free to explore ideas and different ways of working.

Why did the coaching work so well?

Group Coaching involves sharing concepts and using practical knowledge to find solutions to real issues. Coaching has been shown to raise productivity by 88%, where training alone achieved 22% increase.

The following factors contributed to the success of the coaching:-

- Having a small group (4-6) meeting regularly over time.
- Trust and support created in the group.

“I didn’t feel so isolated and we could pool ideas to resolve common issues”

- The managers setting the issues for the coaching and the coaching focusing specifically on those issues identified.
- Having a format for the whole process with written goals, reviews, reminders, taking actions between sessions and commitments.
- The practical focus and working on real live issues as well as the fluidity to spend time on the key issues as they arose.

“It was open, encouraging and enabling”

- Utilising the tools and frameworks shared in the sessions on real issues – giving the confidence to use outside the sessions.
- Interactive training style using different learning styles.
- The benefit from the experience and input of the other managers.

What are the managers doing differently as a result of the coaching?

The key finding is that *all* the managers said they were using new behaviours significantly in the work place (30% to 50% of the time).

In the goals setting session, four key areas were identified to work on. The outcomes in these four areas include: -

Delegation

Being able to let go and delegate more with confidence.

“My staff feel able to make more decisions and they welcome this”

Giving more feedback and praise to staff

Self Leadership

Feeling more confident and being more honest with themselves. Being more open to try out new ideas. Feeling of having more resources and being able to be more proactive and focused.

Feeling much calmer and reacting better in stressful times. Reduction in negative self talk.

Leading Others

Leading by example, working more collaboratively with the team and having more fun. Focusing more on others and their needs.

Focusing on the Important

Liberating time to focus on the strategic issues, rather than only focusing on the detail.

Delivering much better time management that also helps the team.

The ability to leave work earlier and arrive later – achieving a much better work life balance.

“I am less of a perfectionist and my staff find me easier to work with.”

How do these changes translate into benefits for the council?

Apart from having managers who are more confident, more relaxed, more focused, better at prioritising and managing time, the group coaching also delivered some key organisational benefits in terms of increased productivity.

- The productivity increases of both the managers and their teams, translate to Returns on Investment in the order of 220% to 600%.
- Improved work management processes enabled those managers who were doing significant levels of additional and unpaid “overtime”, to experience a better work-life balance and reduced stress levels.
- The managers felt they were able to contribute more to the strategic issues facing them as a department; they were clearer on their goals and had stronger management teams.
- All the managers reported feeling more confident to tackle key projects that would lead to significant benefits for the Council, including better use of people and resources, earlier resolution of issues and even revenue generation. Some of the examples included:
 - Getting involved earlier in potential disciplinary processes, reducing workloads and stress by taking earlier interventions.
 - Being involved in potential redundancy situations earlier and finding more creative solutions and perhaps alleviating the need for redundancy.
 - The department taking on responsibility for chairing more meetings liberating time for managers in other departments.
 - Being able to focus on an inner city regeneration project likely to lead to more revenue for the Council.

Conclusion

The Group Coaching approach aligned with setting group and individual goals was a powerful development format for the managers. They not only achieved their goals identified through the 360-feedback process yet also benefited in many additional areas.

All managers were unequivocal in recommending the Group Coaching approach to other managers and emphasised that the numbers need to be kept small to build the trust and openness.

Ideally one to two topics to be covered in any Group Coaching full day session to give both breadth and depth to the intervention.

What next?

Leicester City Council are delighted with the impact of the Group Coaching programme and are keen to extend it to other managers as they progress through the 360^o-feedback process.