

Leveraging Coaching to Manage Explosive Growth and Change

Overview:

Samsonite is the worldwide leader in premium travel bags, luggage and accessories. Rapid changes in consumer tastes, shifts from brick and mortar to e-commerce, decreasing margins, and global competition threatened to derail their future success. As a series of acquisitions thinned upper management ranks and key senior managers now headed up new companies, leadership bench strength became the top priority, particularly as many managers were also approaching retirement. Samsonite's new president made several strategic changes, including restructuring to a matrix, to support future acquisitions and build competitive advantage.

Achieving Sustainable Business Results

Record-setting revenue while going through major acquisitions

Objectives:

- Shift the leadership culture from “command and control” to using coaching as a strategic tool for building an engaged workforce, fully aligned around Samsonite’s corporate vision for success.
- Focus on continuous improvement of employee performance, with all levels of managers capable of leading and coaching with high emotional intelligence.
- Maximize the value of their matrix structure, supporting new working relationships across teams when people volunteer to go through training with historical “us vs. them” dynamics.
- Break decision-making bottlenecks, equipping employees to solve problems jointly, effectively manage resources and resolve previously “unsolvable” challenges.

Management scores improving from worst to first on engagement surveys

Created considerable competitive advantage with outstanding improvements in Product Life-Cycle Management

Challenges:

As a result of acquisitions and streamlining of internal functions, many leaders were either new to Samsonite or taking over responsibility for broader organizations. To get more consistent results and keep pace with a fast-moving marketplace, leaders needed to get more yield out of their conversations with employees and empower them to solve problems. The company also wanted to create a unified culture to bind the various companies together under a single concept of leadership.

Solutions:

Lou Cimini, Samsonite's Vice President of Human Resources, turned to Integrity Coaching as a way to create a common culture while equipping managers to maximize the results and impact of every employee interaction. Five senior human resources leaders were certified in the program in the third quarter of 2015, followed by an initial rollout to the senior leadership team that November.

A follow-on session was implemented in January of 2016, including a train-the-trainer program for senior leaders that went deeper into business issues and practices. Over the next two years, 150 managers participated in Integrity Coaching.

A "coaching council" of middle managers identified the initiative's next focus: helping senior-level professionals enhance cross-functional communications and influence. Integrity Solutions worked with Samsonite to tailor the Integrity Communications program around their specific communications issues, and the program was rolled out to key product and marketing teams in March 2017. Four human resources leaders completed the train-the-trainer, and post-program surveys include questions to identify what other individuals, groups and project teams should participate in the course.

Organizational Impact:

The combined implementations of Integrity Coaching and Integrity Communication has helped Samsonite leadership develop a positive Growth Mindset culture, where employees are able to thrive and grow, despite constant change and the obstacles they face.

Samsonite's managers and their teams are better equipped to tackle and solve challenges, previously perceived as unsolvable, due to increased levels of:

Emotional Intelligence: Understanding others' behaviors, mindfully adjusting how to ask better questions and listening without bias.

Collaboration: Working with Shared Purpose, focusing on maximizing value.

Innovation: Planning strategically for important conversations with key stakeholders.

Influence without Authority: Fully uncovering others' point of view, priorities and needs.

Behavior Change: Learning through self-discovery, expanding belief boundaries on what might be possible to achieve.

"When my leaders are working with their team, they have to get the maximum output from their interactions and empower people to act as owners of the organization, product line or their function so that we can make changes swiftly."

"With coaching, leaders can have these conversations in a comprehensive, positive way and make sure employees have the tools and motivation to create the output that's needed — and if there is an obstacle, the employees feel empowered to resolve it or go back to their boss with potential solutions."

"The energy generated from the programs is obvious. When we ask at the end who they would recommend that we invite to the next scheduled program, the endorsements, frankly, are too much for us to meet. We have a long waiting list. That tells you you're doing something well."

— Lou Cimini, Vice President of Human Resources, Samsonite

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