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TalentQuest News

- **September 4:** [TalentQuest Named to Inc. Magazine's 5000 List for Second Consecutive Year](#) New partnerships, service offerings land HR consulting firm among fastest-growing private companies in U.S.
- **September 18:** [New TalentQuest White Paper Illustrates Importance of Competency Management in Tough Economy](#) "Creating Competencies That Matter" now available from HR consulting and software solutions firm.
- **September 19:** [TalentQuest Establishes Strategic Partnership with HR Strategies & Solutions](#) New relationship expands TalentQuest's reach and enables HRSAS to offer comprehensive, fully integrated talent management solutions.

In last month's [newsletter](#), we looked at Dr. Karl Albrecht's "S.P.A.C.E." model of social intelligence and discussed how, in theory, coaching can be used to develop social intelligence. This month we look at a real-life example to illustrate the use of coaching as a tool to identify, assess, and reduce social-intelligence-related competencies.

In Practice: Using Coaching & 360° Feedback Surveys to Develop Social Intelligence



by Eric Roth, Ph.D.

When the senior vice president of operations for a major telecommunications company referred one of his team leaders for coaching, it was a last-ditch effort following an embarrassing incident with a customer.

The coaching candidate was a vice president responsible for building the company's wireless relay system. Although he was a top-notch performer who consistently delivered superior results, he had an aggressive and even abrasive manner of interacting with others, including superiors. His boss' breaking point came after a particularly appalling incident. He had taken the individual along for a lunch meeting with one of the company's biggest customers. In the middle of the meal, the individual confronted the customer, citing their failure to "live up to their end of the bargain." The SVP considered terminating the individual on the spot but elected to give him an opportunity to develop his interpersonal skills and align them more closely with his strong tactical and operational skills.

As you might expect, the candidate was not exactly a motivated coaching prospect. He made it clear from the beginning that he believed there was nothing wrong with his behavior, and that "if other people would do what they are supposed to do," everything would be fine.

Dr. Roth initiated a 360° Feedback Survey process to evaluate the individual's leadership skills utilizing feedback from his

direct reports, peers, and superiors. Even the previously offended customer agreed to provide feedback, which would prove to be invaluable.

Next, Dr. Roth conducted a personality assessment. As part of this effort, he constructed several real-world simulations designed to observe the individual's behavior in typical work situations. The individual's competitiveness score was among the highest Dr. Roth had ever seen, even as compared to other executives. Conversely, his scores related to empathy and consideration of others were among the lowest.

The comprehensive report generated from the 360° Feedback process confirmed the results of the personality assessment and provided insight into the impact of the individual's behavior on others.

Although he received high marks across the board with regard to performance results, he received very low marks related to a variety of social-intelligence-related competencies such as interpersonal skills, team work, and communications.

The combined results had a strong effect. It was one thing to hear the occasional complaint and grumbling about his leadership style; it was quite another to see how more than a dozen people with whom he worked with on a daily basis felt about it. Their brutally honest, open-ended comments were even more telling. The individual began to see how he approached every situation as a power struggle, and as he put it, he "felt he had to win every hand." His attitude towards coaching shifted dramatically. He realized his competitive nature, which served him well when it was appropriately directed, was getting him into trouble when it was inappropriately directed. Having seen himself in a new light, he overcame his resistance to modifying his behavior. In fact, he began to see coaching as the professional—and arguably personal—growth opportunity that it is.

Over the next several months, Dr. Roth worked with him on very specific behaviorally-based assignments designed to begin altering and adapting his reactions to situations that were most problematic. They discussed and practiced more positive responses to each. Eventually, the individual was able to redirect his energy towards more positive and productive interactions with others and to channel his competitiveness more appropriately (mostly into rugby-playing, a personal passion of his).

In Conclusion

Change does not come easily, but its effects are lasting. Awareness of one's self and the ability to objectively assess the impact of behaviors on others—both positive and negative— is the critical first step in a life-long process that requires commitment.

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