

## Coaching for Peak Performance

### In Theory & In Practice: Using Coaching to Bridge Gaps

#### In Theory

The creation and maintenance of a healthy, cohesive and successful company depends on its leadership's willingness to regularly assess what is working, what needs improvement and what innovations can be made to take the organization to the next level. For business leaders this is an often difficult, if not impossible, task to accomplish without the input of and guidance from a third-party professional. It requires a high level of self-awareness and the ability to get people within the organization to communicate clearly, candidly and completely.

By the time most people reach executive-level positions, they have already demonstrated a determination to be the best leader they can be. But even the most senior, seasoned executives need sounding boards to listen and challenge their judgment.

Once perceived as a tool to help correct deficits in performance, coaching has become widely used to support top-producing and high-potential individuals. Many organizations rely on leadership coaching programs to hone the skills of individuals who have been identified as future leaders.

Coaching does not have to be a daunting task, nor does it have to be a 'lofty' concept relegated to the executive suite or the football field. In fact, as a planned, focused performance management activity, coaching can energize teams and optimize efforts toward peak performance. Coaching is an invaluable tool that provides feedback and guidance in real time, developing leaders in the context of their current positions. It provides individuals with the tangible takeaways they need to drive optimal results.

#### Coaching 101

Coaching is a highly effective method that relies on a collaborative relationship between an individual and a coach who helps them identify specific personal, professional and/or organizational goals. There are many types of coaching, including:

- **Coaching for Skills** — Helping improve specific skills and competencies required in the current role.
- **Coaching for Development** — Helping an individual develop the requisite leadership skills for a senior management role.
- **Coaching for Performance** — Helping a derailing individual understand problem areas and develop improvement plans.

## In Practice

Several years ago, TalentQuest was approached by the CEO of one of the most prominent, well-respected and busiest hospitals in the Southeast. In his decades of experience managing people at all levels, he had come to strongly believe in the power of investing in professional development. Specifically, he had found that the benefits gained from coaching next-generation leaders far outweighed any associated costs.

In hospital environments, organizational leaders are most often medical professionals who have excelled in their disciplines. While they possess an incredibly valuable wealth of clinical expertise and research experience, these skills don't always translate well into effective organizational leadership.

Developing leadership skills has never been a core component of medical school training. Why would it be? If you are about to undergo heart surgery, is a surgeon's leadership ability at all meaningful to you? No, their knowledge and experience related to heart surgery is. That being said, there are many medical professionals who have the capacity and desire to expand their skill set to include effective leadership and collaborative partnering skills. It was this very population on which the hospital's CEO wanted to focus development efforts, as they would be ultimately responsible for the hospital's future success.

Recognizing that traditional development programs would not be appropriate or impactful for this level of professionals, he reached out to TalentQuest. Working closely with the CEO and the individuals who had been identified as high-potential candidates for future leadership positions, we created a tailored coaching program designed to leverage individual strengths.

In coaching sessions, participants were able to openly discuss issues they were facing and any related concerns with an unbiased party. In addition, the coaching sessions helped the individuals to more objectively reflect on their own behavior and how it impacts the behavior of others. Our decades of leadership development and executive coaching experience enabled us to provide leaders with the tools and resources they needed to become even more effective leaders. Within a period of several months, these leaders became more self-aware and conscious of behavior that contributed to their success, and even more importantly, behavior that acted as a constraint to their goals and objectives.



TalentQuest groomed one hospital's high-potential candidates for future leadership positions with a tailored coaching program that is designed to leverage their individual strengths.

## ABOUT TALENTQUEST

TalentQuest has been bolstering organizational performance and advancing leadership for more than 35 years by blending the art of consulting with the science of technology. Our consultants and organizational psychologists deliver fully-integrated Human Capital Management consulting and Talent Management solutions that span the entire employee lifecycle – from talent selection to leadership succession – enabling organizations to maximize the value of their investment in people.