

Supporting business strategy with the reinforcement of executive coaching



The company

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The problem

One of PwC CEE's major strategic goals for 2016 is to increase business, promote inspirational leadership and improve on PwC experience both for external and internal clients (employees). So, our initial question which provided the focus for this project was on how to support business strategy with the reinforcement of executive coaching.

The journey begins

Looking at market trends (SHERPA research) and financial effectiveness within the business, we decided to invest in our people; to train and educate them as internal executive coaches rather than relying on external coaches.

This idea led us to select and assess people with high potential for being executive coaches - for example those already in different roles within the organisation such as internal trainers, Human Capital Advisors, Practice personnel – with the intention of preparing them through our internal training for Executive Coaches and working with an accredited external training course partner which we needed to source.

Research

Before we made a decision about which external partner to work with to provide proper coaching education we carried out research around what kind of providers are available in CEE – accreditation was vital and the key element in our decision making process.

Selection criteria

Our key selection criterion was that our training partner's course included ICF and EMCC accreditation.

As far as the content of the program was concerned, we were looking for:

- a selection of coaching models presented and taught rather than only one;
- a holistic approach;
- therapeutic techniques used in coaching;
- business environment contextualisation;
- lots of practice;
- and, most importantly, a course that offered self-discovery and awareness of your identity as a coach and developing your own coaching model.

We chose these criteria because as a business we believe that to be an effective executive coach you have to:

- go through your own transformation in order to be able to help transforming others;
- have business context experience if you are working for clients who are executives;
- go through the proper accredited coaching education;
- have at least basic knowledge of the therapeutic techniques in order to be aware of where coaching ends and therapy starts and be ethical.

Through a rigorous selection process we came to the conclusion that the Practitioner Diploma in Executive Coaching course delivered by very experienced and passionate AoEC facilitators would be the best fit to allow us to meet these criteria.

“The programme run by the AoEC was the best I have had in my 17 years professional career. It was simple in form and challenging in its basic assumptions and questions I had to answer, questions we ask at the start of our adult life but somehow forget later on: Who I am? What are my values? Who/what sources influenced me into the person I am now? It was a life-changing experience for me.”

Marzena Konieczny,
Assurance Director
PwC CEE

Why choose the AoEC?



The process

So far we have trained two groups of internal coaches through the accredited AoEC Practitioner Diploma in Executive Coaching course, one in 2011 and the second group in 2012. Now we have 36 executive coaches trained by the AoEC that are operating for the whole CEE region in PwC.

After the first group of executive coaches were selected (Partner candidates) and went through the initial executive coaching project in 2011 they rated the value of the coaching received as 4.5 out of 5 points. This success made us decide to increase our coaching capacity and train another group of 16 coaches in 2012.

During the training period our coaches were very committed and fully engaged in the process. In the meantime they contracted for their training coaching process so they were able to use their reflections during the tutorials. After graduating, employees continue with mentoring and group supervision which will be followed by their CPD program, carried out internally.

Participants from both groups confirmed that for them it was a big transformational process with the benefit of payback both for them personally and for their clients.

PwC CEE Assurance Director Marzena Konieczny took part in the training. She said, "The most significant learning for me relates to the individual coaching model and how I coach. I made a few discoveries that:

- the coach is on a constant self-development journey;
- coaching can be flexible - it was useful to see different models but with awareness that I do not have to follow any of them;
- uniqueness of my coaching model - linking who I am and my values with how do I coach;
- feedback from practice sessions and video - confirmed that I am on the right career path.

"I had two specific objectives: to get familiar with coaching tools and models and to understand if coaching is my calling - through practice, feedback and learning from others. Both were covered and experienced - even exceeding my original expectations.

"The facilitators' role was also very important – it created the common ground and culture for the whole experience. Coaching demonstrations were most valuable, and feedback from coaching observations was critical. Both facilitator and presentation skills were demonstrated at the highest level."

Conclusion

Our lessons learned:

- Internal executive coaching function can be at least as effective as external if not even more effective - feedback received proves it.
- Executive coaching can effectively support the business strategy as both business results and Client and Employee satisfaction surveys show improvement in CEE.
- During the global best coaching practices audit and alignment done in PwC this year the process for educating and developing internal coaches in CEE has been distinguished as the best global practice in our organisation.

If you would like to comment on this case study or would like any further information please contact:
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