

Building Confidence Through Leadership Coaching



Background Jane worked as a senior manager in a large public sector organisation. Our coach started working with her during a 2 day development centre. This formed part of a leadership programme that included, in addition, 360 degree feedback and completion of 2 psychometric instruments (personality and motivation). Following the development centre, our coach worked one-to-one with Jane over a nine month period.

The Focus for Coaching Jane had been quickly promoted in an organisation that prized academic success; her own lack of a degree left her feeling marked out as 'not good enough'. She had not expected her recent promotion and seemed to be waiting to be found out as a charlatan. She knew there were expectations of her as a leader, but didn't know what those expectations were; her sense was that everyone but her was 'in the know'.

Jane hoped that the coaching process would enable her to more fully understand her strengths and weaknesses, and build her confidence as a leader.

Our Contribution The development centre process revealed Jane's key attributes to include clarity of thought and expression, being able to assimilate complex and diverse ideas and a strong, but warm and impactful interpersonal style. Her areas for development included some elements of strategic thinking, risk management, and a number of behaviours relating to personal confidence (for example, not communicating effectively with those higher up the organisation, taking challenge too personally).

During the nine months of coaching support, Jane had five face-to-face sessions with her coach, each lasting 2 hours. The process enabled her to crystallise her understanding of the unique contribution she made to the organisation and involved her drawing up a development plan. She set specific goals including going to two executive board meetings as an observer, reading a book on emotional intelligence, and attending a workshop on influencing and negotiating.

The coach's role involved encouraging and reviewing Jane's learning from these development activities. It also involved discussing with Jane the new challenges she was facing and exploring with her the range of approaches available for dealing with them.

The Outcome As a result of this coaching Jane was able to strengthen her relationship with senior managers, raise her profile and presence, and do things she wouldn't have believed she was capable of at the start of the process. As a consequence of her exposure to different and broad perspectives on business issues, she was able to clarify her vision for her own team. Some of the mystique about leadership that she initially felt also started to evaporate; for example, having spent some time talking with another senior manager reputed to be a great strategic thinker, Jane reported 'there weren't any tricks, there wasn't some secret way of doing it'.

With goals relating to work-life balance still on her agenda at the end of the nine month period, Jane acknowledged that her journey was only half way through. Reflecting on the coaching process she described the sessions as 'challenging but always thought provoking' and she experienced the process as 'invaluable'.

At the end of the nine month period Jane was offered a further promotion as a result of a personal recommendation from one of her board members.