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Client Story

Executive Coaching Builds Stronger Leaders at Delta Dental

"Our vision at Delta Dental provides clear direction for giving leaders at all levels of our organization the skills they need to perform at their highest level," says James Sigismonti, manager leadership development.

Delta Dental Enterprise Vision: To motivate and empower every employee so we're all inspired to take exceptional care of our customers, providers, and each other.

The leaders at Delta Dental understand they need to take excellent care of their employees so the employees, in turn, will take good care of their customers. They deliver SLII® training as the foundation of leader development because it aligns with company values.

"We were able to link the skills of SLII® with our values," says Sigismonti. For example, SLII® leaders:

Foster **TRUST** by creating partnerships with their teams

Take a **SERVICE**-centric approach by learning their individual team members' needs and flexibly shifting into the best leadership style

Cultivate **EXCELLENCE** by challenging their teams to be self-reliant and to master important tasks

Inspire **INNOVATION** by creating space for their team members to take appropriate risks and "run the show"



James Sigismonti

From the beginning of the leadership training initiative, Delta Dental measured the effectiveness of the training to be able to show ROI to the company. They partnered with Blanchard® and Dr. Paul Leone* of MeasureUp Consulting to measure six levels of impact. The Level 6, created by Dr. Leone, measures how participants' managers' involvement affects overall impact and ROI. Part of the study indicated that coaching played an important role. The data showed that when participants had strong support from their leaders as they went through the training, they were able to apply their new skills at a higher rate. The support could be as simple as having the manager check in with the participant to ask about their progress and talk to them about what they are learning and how they are putting it into practice.

"It's no secret that improved leadership skills relate directly to positive business impact. That's when we knew we needed to focus on coaching as a skill. It was needed not only to support the learning, but also because a uniform approach to executive coaching could help us produce consistent results across the enterprise," says Sigismonti. "The more emphasis we could place on effective coaching skills, the easier it would be to reach our goal of empowering our employees. The best place to start was with senior-level executives."



Sigismonti's team partnered with Blanchard® to develop their Purpose Driven Coaching initiative. The intent was four-fold:

- To provide a leadership foundation that focused on employee needs
- To influence positive employee experiences that would lead to excellent customer experiences
- To foster openness and learning
- To open up the organization to more innovation, points of view, and ways of doing things

The team worked with their internal HR business partners to identify candidates for the coaching initiative. Criteria included leaders whose role or scope had changed due to a promotion, new leaders in the organization, executives needing to develop stronger presence and credibility, leaders needing support in self-concept and expanding communication effectiveness, and executives responsible for a significant change initiative.

Blanchard Coaching Methodology

Blanchard's coaching methodology is based on the belief that leaders are more capable of greatness when they have the right counsel and support at the right time. Blanchard's coaching services provide personalized, one-on-one, and team leadership coaching to help executives, managers, and individual learners develop their leadership skills, build relationships, overcome challenges, accelerate their development, and achieve their goals. Delta Dental offers corporate coaching to their leaders as a powerful means of helping them with their most challenging and growth-oriented tasks. It also increases the impact of training dollars.

Throughout the coaching journey, the coach leverages a two-tiered coaching model that includes both coaching touchpoints and coaching skills.

Tier1: Coaching Touchpoints

Connect: Build a connection with the executive to foster trust and openness. This helps the executive feel comfortable sharing development needs and progress.

Focus: The coach and the executive identify areas of concern and development. The executive establishes short-term goals in support of their long-term goals.

Activate: The executive takes actions to achieve goals and, with the coach, evaluates their effectiveness in ultimately achieving the goals.

Review and Recap: The coach helps ensure accountability. Clear agreements are established to measure progress.

Tier 2: Coaching Skills

Listen to Learn: Listening intently to what is said—and what is left unspoken—helps the coach determine the executive's values, beliefs, goals, concerns, and more.

Inquire for Insight: The coach asks probing questions that encourage the executive to examine beliefs, behaviors, and assumptions. This leads to new perspectives and behaviors.

Tell Your Truth: Cut to the heart of the matter with "direct kindness."

Express Confidence: The coach champions the executive's efforts, often inspiring them to greater levels of achievement.

Enable leaders at every level to become the ultimate agents of progress and transformation for your organization. Visit us at www.kenblanchard.com to learn more.

Phases of Purpose-Driven Coaching Methodology

"We developed the coaching to roll out in phases," says Sigismonti. "The first step was to identify opportunities for us to use coaching with a leader to drive business impact. Once participants were selected, we matched them with coaches from Blanchard."

Each leader receives a custom coaching experience using the Blanchard Coaching Platform powered by CoachLogix. "Blanchard doesn't make their coaches accessible only during sessions. They believe coaching is an ongoing relationship that may be fostered during specified sessions but also continues between sessions. Participants have access to weekly check-ins and unlimited communication with their coach through the coaching platform."

With the program launched, next steps for Delta Dental include:

- Determining success measures beyond engagement with senior leaders
- Expanding coaching to select senior directors
- Integrating coaching methodology into succession practice
- Exploring future scaling of coaching platforms to frontline and mid-level leaders

"We are focused on organizational transformation; specifically, optimizing our business operations, maintaining our market position, and improving our customer service," says Sigismonti. "Coaching plays a critical role in helping us accomplish this transformation."

**Dr. Paul Leone created the 6th level of measurement, which won the 2019 Brandon Hall Gold Award for best advance in measuring the impact of leadership training. Level 6 is described in Leone's book, Measuring and Maximizing Training Impact: Bridging the Gap between Training and Business Result.*