

CASE STUDY

Group coaching

This HR leadership team were so successful leading and a very good team that service and quality levels began to suffer. Coaching opened their eyes to the issues and convinced them to change processes, consult more with internal clients and deliver better leadership and customer service.



HR team - Regional university

Client feedback is essential for good service and great leadership

In recent years the university sector has experienced very trying times, putting particular pressure on university HR teams. Such was the case with this small but very busy HR department led by an executive director and two senior managers.

Managers and leaders across the organisation were increasing their demands on the HR team for greater support. In fact, the HR professionals were increasingly being asked to take on tasks that should have been the responsibility of university management. Managers were delegating personnel issues to HR because the pace of change was overwhelming them.

Initially the HR team revelled in this increased attention, having invested considerable effort over previous years convincing the management team that their team was ready and able to support them in personnel management.

Proud and capable professionals, the HR team members were keen to maintain end-to-end control over the issues they were delegated. As the number of issues increased and complexity intensified, the HR team became inundated with demand. Growing the team size was not possible so clients began to experience delays whilst quality of service suffered.

All along the HR team was so focused on completing tasks that they did not notice their lowering of service standards. In fact, to manage the workload, they became more rigid in their demands of the clients before new work was accepted.

The Vice President responsible for HR realised that concerns were growing, so asked Ryk to provide group coaching to the leadership team with the aim to assist changing behaviours and improve service. Ryk interviewed the three HR leaders several times to fully understand their attitude regarding the HR team's performance. This was also an important part of the process for achieving buy-in from them regarding the need for coaching, before embarking on the formal program.

Due to the lack of understanding within the team of exactly how far their service levels had fallen, Ryk commenced the coaching process by interviewing a range of client managers to receive feedback about the performance of the HR team, and to gain some ideas about suitable solutions for the delays experienced.

Feedback pointed to satisfaction with the quality of solutions provided by the HR team but significant dissatisfaction with the

quality of the process of engagement. Excellent suggestions were offered for possible solutions.

This feedback was presented to the HR leaders, for whom the key challenge was their blind-spot about their performance as professionals. The HR Team's key criterion for success was to be in demand, and armed with positive feedback about the quality of solutions, they believed there was no real problem, but just a few unreasonably disgruntled clients.

More than three sessions and careful presentation of client feedback was needed for the HR leaders to fully accept that there was a problem. A further two sessions were required to process the information and the solutions offered, with a final session required to devise an action plan.

The group coaching program resulted in the HR leadership team committed to change and to working more closely with clients in the future, including regular customer surveys in order to continuously improve engagement and service quality.

This process was an example of a genuine "AH-HA" realisation, in that excellent service requires diligent attention and true leadership requires a real understanding of client expectations.

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