

Case Study: Developing Leadership through Personality Assessment and 360 Degree Feedback

Overview

With an increased focus on teamwork, individual leadership, and collaboration, the use of personality assessment within companies has become more widespread. Personality-type assessment has proven valuable to both leaders and non-managerial employees by helping them understand their own personality styles and those of their co-workers so they can become more effective in work settings.

The Business Challenge

In light of the shifting economy and changing workforce our client, a Fortune 100 global pharmaceutical company, recognized a need to transform its leadership development program. They believed that making employees more aware of their own and others' work styles and preferences was critical for strengthening collaboration, developing management and coaching skills, improving team decision-making and learning to handle conflict productively.

One of the company's key leadership expectations is self development. So, helping employees understand how they interact with others in the organization would serve to strengthen this critical leadership skill across all levels of the company. To achieve this goal, the company wanted to offer a seminar that would provide participants with a work style assessment that would also relate back to other important HR initiatives.

The viaPeople Solution

viaPeople designed a customized training program for the company, using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator as the foundation. The MBTI is a popular work style inventory that identifies a four-letter personality type associated with a unique set of behavioral characteristics and values. To facilitate completion of the MBTI, team members completed the instrument online.

The program provided participants with an understanding of how they typically solve problems, make decisions and interact with others in the organization. Several aspects of this program were unique and atypical of a standard MBTI training session. For instance, it was essential that the program meet the business challenge of linking back to other HR initiatives. To achieve this, the program had to contain a number of customized activities.

First the program drew linkages between an employee's personality style and the development of competencies required for his/her job by focusing on an individual's style and his/her 360 feedback results. For example, each personality style is adept at developing certain skills/competencies. Likewise, each style typically has to work hard at developing certain skills/competencies as these areas may not come as naturally. By creating a connection between a person's style and the development of certain skills/competencies, we were able to provide more guidance on how individuals can strengthen certain areas for development as measured in their 360 feedback. To ensure that the training integrated with other HR initiatives, learning experiences were carefully linked to other company-specific HR programs.

The second unique aspect of this program was that it provided guidance and action planning for developing areas of each person's style. Each participant was able to identify areas for growth within his/her style and outline the implications of this change on his/her manager and team members. By evaluating the impact of one's style in the work environment, each participant was able to anticipate and plan for how to work more effectively with others in the organization. This in turn leads to a more effective and productive workplace.

The program consisted of a 3-hour session to review MBTI types and help employees better understand their unique style. viaPeople's approach included a variety of practical applications and unique interactive activities which clearly highlight personality styles, but also closely relate to

the workplace environment. The program was first implemented as a pilot so we could get feedback from critical HR stakeholders. The subsequent sessions have been offered on a monthly basis to allow all employees to enroll when convenient. The training was delivered simultaneously via company-wide Web Cast and in-person in order to reach all employees enrolled in the program.

Results

The program, while still in its first year, has been a tremendous success. Satisfaction surveys following the training indicated that employees found the program content very beneficial and extremely valuable for enhancing collaboration with their co-workers. An entire team participated together in one of the sessions and found the experience very useful for their interactions as a work group. Immediately after training, they actually went back to their department and began to apply some of the things they learned in the session to further increase their effectiveness as a team. "This is exactly what we hoped for in a training implementation", says Leah Groehler, Ph.D., VP of Consulting Services for viaPeople. "Ultimately, the success of our program is dependent on how it changes behavior in the workplace. When we see people taking what they learned in training back to their job, we know our program was a success", says Groehler.

Participant comments on the program were also overwhelmingly positive. Additionally, participants indicated that the linkage to other Company programs (e.g., the 360 feedback process) was extremely valuable.

This program allowed participants to be actively involved in the interpretation of their personality profile, as well as the opportunity to link their personality type back to their 360-degree feedback process. Participants in the program gained an increased awareness and understanding of how to leverage their own strengths in the workplace and how to maximize the strengths of their team members. Through guided discussions, participants were able to identify ways to make interactions with co-workers more productive and improve team decision-making processes. These exercises, when combined with the process of preparing personal development and action plans, contributed considerably to each individual's and his/her team's development and ultimately, the productivity of the organization as a whole.