



Adler Coach Approach to Leading and Managing: Success Stories at Financial Services Organizations

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Brief Overview

Like many other industries, financial service organizations face increasing challenges to be competitive, customer focused and adaptive in a rapidly changing environment. They recognize that success depends on people – attracting and retaining the best people, as well as supporting them to perform to their highest potential. A coach approach to leading and managing is a powerful way to address this challenge. Adler Corporate Services partners with organizations to develop programs for embedding such an approach in their culture.

A coach approach to leadership involves an intentional focus by the leader or manager on using a coaching mindset, coaching skills, and coaching tools to strengthen their employee's skills, performance and sense of fulfilment on the job. It involves having both regularly scheduled and in the moment conversations with employees, and being intentional about the quality of their relationships with employees. A distinctive feature of the Adler approach is a huge emphasis on the coach's mindset and self-awareness. As a result, developing the ability of managers and leaders to adopt a coach approach promotes leadership development on a broad front.

Adopting a coach approach achieves significant outcomes for organizations. Organizations that have systematically and thoughtfully invested in a comprehensive coaching approach to leadership have consistently reported outcomes in the areas of better relationships, better conversations, and better results in several critical areas.

The Adler Approach to Developing Coaching Leaders

In our experience, it is important to take a multi-level approach when partnering with an organization to help them embed a coaching culture. Three key levels that need attention are:

- Strategic positioning (clarify desired outcomes and measures, determine how to position a coach approach to leadership in their context),
- Building of capability (provide coaching skills training to managers and leaders)
- Providing support for implementation (through follow up coaching and support tools).

The following briefly summarizes key elements of the Adler approach to developing coaching leaders.

Coaching Mindset

- At the core is adopting an appreciative and strength-based perspective geared towards development and learning, rather than seeing coaching as a feedback process to overcome deficits or to close performance gaps.
- Approaching the coaching role with a coaching mindset and enhanced self-awareness for the coach is essential to the success of the approach; this is much more important than skills, tools and techniques.
- The locus of enhanced performance and learning is clearly recognized as being internal to the coachee, linked to their own level of awareness, of being at choice, and their self-trust.

Focus on Quality of the Relationship and the Conversation

- The primary thrust is towards building the quality of the relationship and the effectiveness of the conversation between coach and coachee, and not on processes and structures.
- By highlighting the power of focused attention, clear intentions, collaborative thinking and problem solving, the learning about coaching conversations extends far beyond coaching.
- The approach enables a much broadened understanding of what coaching can accomplish beyond what leaders initially assume, which further build leaders' motivation for coaching.

Skills and Application

- Key skills, particularly listening, questioning, observing and reflecting back, are explored and developed at a deep level.
- A broad range of coaching interactions are recognized (situationally appropriate, formal, informal, scheduled, unscheduled), providing flexibility in application and implementation.
- Since the program is fundamentally about personal and leadership development, the learning is relevant beyond the coaching context, and indeed beyond the work context.

The following are the typical elements of an Adler designed program to embed a coaching approach to leadership in an organization:

Research – to determine the link to strategy, desired outcomes, and positioning of initiative.

Pre-workshop Self-assessment (on-line) - to raise participants' awareness of their current practices against the practices of effective coaching leaders.

Workshop – a highly interactive blend of activities, supported by high quality participant materials, focused on motivation, mindset, knowledge, skills, tools, and implementation plans.

Post-workshop support – including group coaching tele-learning labs and/or individual one on one coaching, and customized resources (e.g., Toolkits, Competencies Resource Guide, Conversation Guide, Job Aids).

Key Success Factors

This approach appeals in particular to:

- Knowledge based organizations where old style management practices are not considered effective.
- Organizations that are committed to high performance and/or successfully navigating a significant change.
- Organizations that see developing people as a key to business results and to leadership effectiveness.
- Organizations that recognize that a shift to a learning culture is a long term investment – not a quick fix – to create sustainable business results.

Impact of the Approach

Organizations that have embraced this approach to leadership have experienced significant gains in a number of areas. Some specific categories of benefits reported include:

- Achievement of performance goals
- Increased engagement and satisfaction of both coaches and coachees
- Increased employee productivity
- Improved employee performance
- Better communication and relationships facilitating better strategies, solutions and overall success

Specific examples and quantitative results to substantiate these points will be provided during the presentation.