

CASE STUDY | A Director Transformed into a Leader

Situation

- This Case Study tells the story of a key contributor who was a well-respected employee in the area of finance and who had received numerous promotions in his organization. In his most recent advance, he had been appointed to the role of Director, reporting to the CEO of this not-for-profit.
- Despite his excellent technical skills in his field, he had never focused on developing his capabilities as a leader, which he would now need for this promotion.
- Several concerns had been expressed to management by the people in his department, pertaining to his management style. For example, he was described as having a short fuse, as being an impatient listener, and as not always being tuned in to the feelings and needs of his employees.
- The candidate was also unaware of how to navigate the political waters of his organization, a critical skill set for this high-profile position.
- In addition the CEO had encouraged the candidate to develop his communication skills, particularly in presentations.
- Essentially, this new Director needed to add a number of leadership competencies to his repertoire.

Solutions

- With the use of several sources of information, including in-depth interviews with the candidate, 360° feedback, and psychological testing—specifically designed for leadership assessment purposes, the Director's coach helped him to see critical performance issues and counter-productive behavioral patterns, including the way in which he handled people and relationships, which surprised the candidate.
- Several key management and leadership competencies were identified as areas for improvement, while numerous and specific behavioral experiments were implemented, to ensure that substantial and sustainable behavior change occurred.

- More specifically, the candidate realized that he needed to connect more with his employees—as well as with members of the organization at-large, including development in the areas of communication where he was not comfortable; for example, develop a more polished and professional presentation style; establish more collegial and collaborative relationships; become a more active and involved team leader; and demonstrate more emotional control, not allowing himself to become disrespectful when the going got a bit dicey.

Results

- The Director made dramatic changes in his overall management performance, as well as in his many relationships with members of his team and with colleagues around the organization.
- He established regular group and individual meetings with his department, providing a forum for their work concerns, as well as for exploring their needs for self-development.
- He employed much more self-control during stressful situations, as well as improving listening skills in his everyday conversations.
- He developed relationships with key people in the organizations who, as a result, became committed to mentoring him through the organizational politics. He also chose role models from within the organization and from outside of it to emulate in his presentation style.
- The candidate in this Case Study now states that he actually feels like a leader. He is enjoying his new relationships and views the people in his department as part of his team, rather than simply employees. The CEO has expressed her delight over the tremendous changes observed in this Director's newfound leadership capabilities and has assigned even more responsibility to him.