

Leading Change: A CEO's Transformation

ABSTRACT:

A founder faces a unique set of challenges as he transitions from a selling a prototype to a few innovative clients to selling a standardized product to the mass market. The expectations on product quality, service responsiveness, compliance, supply chain and sales all increase by a quantum leap. Managing the exponential increase in complexity is something that would challenge the most experienced managers. It is therefore a monumental jump for a young leader of an entrepreneurial enterprise. This scenario was perfectly illustrated when we were approached for leadership coaching by the CEO of a U.S. healthcare start-up

SITUATION:

At ProMelior, an area of specialization is working with the leadership of early-stage, high-growth companies. Andrew is a young CEO of a healthcare start-up company based in the north-east of USA. Andrew's company was experiencing an inflection in growth and he was 'drowning' in the over-growing workload. Through our initial interview process, we quickly discovered that Andrew was still running the company as a 3-man show – the founding team – with a few sales agents stapled on to grow top-line. It was very evident that Andrew needed help in managing the new growth in business and going from a small start-up to a firm. Our Leadership Coaching services offered to take a holistic view of both the leader and his organization.

PROCESS:

We started by mapping out the workflow in the company and showed Andrew that he was deeply involved in everything from developing the product software to 'doing the bank-run' to pay the vendors.

A calendar analysis showed that he spent his daytime hours working with clients, his evenings working with the technology team and weekends catching up on admin. This was clearly unsustainable. To 'get his life back', we helped Andrew to design a simple organisational structure where all the functions that did not need his direct daily attention would be delegated to new qualified hires or service providers. Project managers were hired to manage the end-to-end client experience and financial matters were outsourced to a local 'partial CFO' and accounting firm. A Chief Commercial Officer was also hired to identify new opportunity areas, develop professional marketing collateral, and manage the sales agents. Andrew was finally able to spend time thinking about company strategy and raising much-needed capital. And, of course, he was happy to be spending more time with his family.

To hold the larger organization together cohesively, Andrew's individual coaching focused on transforming his professional habits. Andrew needed to evolve from being a manager of tasks to a leader of people. To drive performance, Andrew had to focus on defining roles, setting goals and holding people accountable to deliver them. However, this did not come naturally to him. Using some in-depth psychometric tools and 360 survey feedback, we helped Andrew to understand that his deep desire to 'be liked' was making him avoid conflict and shy away from the 'tough

discussions'. Andrew needed to become more assertive and use a wider variety of tactics to influence employees and clients. Through extensive role-playing with his coach, Andrew improved his ability to set clear expectations and follow through with the consequences of poor performance.

OUTCOME:

As we approach the third year of the coaching journey, Andrew is now running his organization more comfortably and has the 'space' to focus on enhancing his personal presence and stature. Andrew no longer has the luxury of knowing everyone in his growing organization. Therefore, his coach is helping him to learn how to communicate his vision and inspire followers by mastering the use of forums such as leadership team meetings, Town Hall sessions, and conference speeches. Leadership development is endless. However, ProMelior's pragmatic coaching model helps leaders to address their real-time challenges while also pursuing longer-term development goals. The combination of practical 'wins' and the development of genuine leadership skills is a potent combination for sustainable personal development.

For more information on leadership coaching, please email info@promelior.co.uk or visit us at www.promelior.co.uk to learn more about our service offerings.
