

CASE 5

Go with the Leaders

Coaching in service and production companies

A well designed combination and parallel process of individual coaching of the CEO and the top management team has proven to sustainably affect the development of the whole organization.

by Imre Sivó

Individual and team coaching cross-fertilize each other and provide high flexibility in the change process. This leads to long lasting, trustful co-creative relationships. We have been involved in several major change processes in which I coached the CEO and the top management team in parallel. There lies an incredible strength in such an impactful intervention. We shall now share two examples showing how our team could support change at all levels with several different methods – for example, change workshops, large group interventions, individual coaching and action learning. We were working on various interventions at most levels of the same organization.

Coaching the top management team and the CEO for a longer period opens up many opportunities for supporting sustainable change. These processes are full of successes but have their pitfalls as well. It is not easy to split individual learning from team experience; special attention is needed for parallel processes in the team, and it is often hard to keep momentum of change without continuously being together with the team.

New culture

This is about a shared service department of a global service provider employing 600 people, still growing in functionality and having the potential to become the

global back office of the group very soon. We were invited to support their ambitious strategy to become a company-wide competence center. The first two years were spent on coaching the CEO while mostly enriching his managerial toolset. We supported him in creating a well performing team and by deepening his self-awareness in becoming a high potential leader. After he had selected his top team of six managers, we started with a systematic team development program. Team coaching mainly consisted of one to two days off-site training workshops, shadowing meetings, action learning sessions. In the meantime, I became the individual coach of three team members and my colleagues also coached some middle managers. Specific change management programs were run for the middle managers, and a talent process for the new potentials. Although our official coaching program with the CEO is now finished, we still take some time together every now and then to discuss his dilemmas and major decisions.

A deep knowledge of the company, as well as the consultants' personal involvement and experience in organizational development made the success possible in this process. Performance was enhanced and team coaching forced a cultural change. Today, the company focuses especially on resilience development throughout the whole management, as well as on stress management.



Coaching teams and CEOs in parallel has the highest impact.

Higher performance

The newly appointed CEO of a global company's major manufacturing site, employing around 1,000 people, asked for support in working out his leadership profile and building a new structure with a new team. After the whole management team had changed, and the seven new team members got together, we started to develop the top- and middle management teams. Initially, we gained a comprehensive picture of the cultural change going on in this organization that helped us in doing parallel coaching effectively. We were involved in strategy development and review, and we also hosted large group workshops for involving and empowering the key management. A leadership development program was set up and recently we have even conducted a management audit. Before that, we had been supporting the site's development of a lean culture.

As a result of the parallel coaching, team performance increased significantly, however we could not get through to the old fashioned middle management as yet. We established a team of three coaches working with eight different managers. At the beginning, we analyzed the organizational situation systematically and supported each other's coaching processes via common supervision. Now, there are plans for another team coaching program for the top team, as well as several action learning sessions. ●

Key learning points

- Parallel coaching of the top management team and the CEO can give a momentum in a leadership development process as both processes influence each other and have got high impact on the organizational change process.
- Working with such complexity requires very deep organizational and leadership know-how and experience, as well as an individual- and team-coaching skill set.
- ICG as a team can contribute to cascading change at all levels of the organization and provide an ideal, effective combination of parallel interventions.