

Executive Coaching

Effective influencing can be hard but
is SO important..



The Scenario...

Along with his 2 fellow Directors, Alex had been joint owner of a successful professional services business for several years when he came coaching. The business had grown considerably in turnover, market share and employee numbers, it was winning some great contracts and people agreed it was a really good place to work. Though he was proud of what had been achieved to date, Alex recognised that the business was still being run in a similar way to when it first started. If the growth plans the Directors desired were to materialise, he appreciated that the current set up was no longer fit for purpose. Whilst he was certain of the need for change, having attended lots of networking events with other business owners and immersed himself in articles and podcasts on business growth, his colleagues didn't have the same priorities.

The coaching experience...

Alex initially presented his coaching challenge as getting his team to change and work differently, so we started his coaching journey exploring how his various team members were currently operating and what he needed them to do differently. Not too far into our conversations it became clear, that Alex had already started a process of developing and empowering his team and they were taking on many tasks that only he would have done in the past. This was exactly what Alex needed. He found it liberating and it was freeing him up to take on more strategic work. His fellow Directors were less happy about this and wanted Alex to still be the 'face of the business' to all clients. They were also concerned that Alex didn't always have all the information they wanted close at hand, as others were now carrying out the day-to-day work. They also weren't keen to follow suit with their teams.

When questioning Alex about how he could monitor his team's progress, so he did have all the key information to hand when needed, a new issue emerged. Directors and Senior Team Members alike were all resisting Alex's desire to put in place more processes to monitor progress on projects, to ensure the quality of work was where it needed to be and to keep track of the important Key Performance Indicators. Even some regular meetings to keep the full team informed about business performance were resisted with the common cry of them being 'too corporate.'

Having seen this issue many times before in growing businesses, I was prepared to challenge Alex, when he was ready to back down to changes, he was totally convinced were necessary. Careful exploration made it self-evident that improved processes and increased professionalism in the way the business presented itself to the larger clients it had now started to deal with were critical to achieving the corporate objectives and future plans agreed by the 3 owners. It soon emerged that Alex's coaching needed to focus on how to develop the confidence to influence his peers about such changes, which meant working out different approaches that would resonate with each of them due to their different styles and motivation.

Coaching reflections...

As is often the case, the initial coaching issue presented turned out not to be the real issue when further exploration took place. Alex came across resistance to transformational change that he wanted to lead in his business and was a little 'floored' when much of the resistance to that change came from his fellow business owners whom he initially felt a little powerless to influence. However, exploration of his motives with a fair dose of challenge soon helped him to appreciate that he was genuinely trying to make changes in the business that were as much for the good of the other owners as they were for himself. Getting comfortable with this helped Alex to make great strides forward and together the team have agreed on some practical processes that will give their business what it needs and won't be like the overwhelming bureaucracy found in many large organisation. They all believe that improved decision making has already been a valuable outcome from the initial changes made.

Experience has shown me that being able to successfully influence others is so often at the root of issues faced by Senior Leaders in organisations. Taking time out for coaching to think about how to influence others, particularly peers or those who are senior to you is well worth the time invested....

If you want to know more about how executive coaching works with Azure drop us a line at info@azure-consulting.co.uk , call 01924 385600 or check out our website