Developing a Coaching Culture at TaylorMadeadidas Golf: An Exploration of Lessons Learned

Blake McHenry, Cal Harrah and David Berry

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Developing a Coaching Culture at TaylorMade-adidas Golf: An Exploration of Lessons Learned
BLAKE McHENRY, CAL HARRAH AND DAVID BERRY

In this article the authors describe their experience in the establishment of a culture of development at the TaylorMade-adidas Golf Company through the implementation of professional coaching. Their intent is to share the critical lessons learned as they worked to establish and sustain an internal professional coaching initiative. Through the lens of these lessons, the authors examine the genesis of the effort, explaining the challenge that brought formal development efforts to the organization in the first place. McHenry, Harrah and Berry then explore the various phases and stages of the coaching effort, providing a historical perspective on how and why it took form and the challenges associated with the different phases of the work. Additionally, the lessons they share will highlight the outcomes and impact of professional coaching on the business.

INTRODUCTION
At the outset, it will be helpful to the reader to know our definitions of two key terms. We define a “Coaching Culture” as follows: “A belief that business results and individual development can and must coexist. It is a commitment to offer feedback, candor, support and encouragement with the intent of building a stronger organization by intensifying the accountability and engagement of each employee.” Additionally, we subscribe to the International Coach Federation’s definition of “Professional Coaching”: “An ongoing professional relationship that helps people produce extraordinary results in their lives, careers, businesses or organizations. Through the process of coaching, clients deepen their learning, improve their performance, and enhance their quality of life.”

This article is our experience of what works best in our business setting. Lacking a “how-to” manual at the beginning of our professional coaching initiative, decisions were made from limited information about the best way to initiate and expand coaching in the organization. While sharing our path for success and its attendant challenges, we are also presenting our story in the spirit of the single case design - it was our experience and we are hopeful that the lessons may be helpful to others.

The lessons in brief:
• Crisis is a catalyst for change
• Executive permission and support is imperative
• The value of context is massive.
• Effective coach selection is essential.

BACKGROUND
In the year 2000 the leadership team of the TaylorMade-adidas Golf Company was fractured and frustrated. There was an absence of trust, meaningful collaboration, and camaraderie.

Having experienced the impact of professional coaching and leadership consulting before, the CEO understood the potential impact an intervention could have. By working with the human resources leader and an outside consultant, he decided to step into this new endeavor, believing that this focus on communication and collaboration would illuminate a way forward.

The company had experienced a plateau in sales, and they had not grown in order to reach the $300 million mark. The team had grown larger in order to reach the $300 million mark, but what had not grown was its ability to share more, understand more, and work together in new ways. Team members were stuck in silos, splitting off one another to protect their turf, living in a daily mindset of individual rather than company success.

The CEO understood that for the company to take the next step in its development, his leadership team had to develop as well. Because a fractured team is not uncommon in today's corporate environment, it is useful to explore a fuller understanding of the context in which this particular executive team was attempting to function.

Having reached the $300 million mark, it was clear that what had worked before was not going to work if the team was to move past the plateau and into a significant expansion of market influence and leadership. Not surprisingly, the primary challenge was one of communication and collaboration. The team had not grown in order to reach the $300 million mark, but what had grown was its ability to share more, understand more, and work together in new ways.

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messages about his dysfunctional team. Participation came with significant resistance. However, the CEO led by sharing his own values, strengths and challenges. Team members followed his example and began to slowly change the old pattern of internal competition.

As a consumer products company, TMaG specializes in the manufacture of golf clubs, balls, apparel and footwear. Throughout much of its history the CEO has been an influence on the development of the brand and has shaped the company culture to reflect the core values of golf. Of primary importance has been faithfulness to the spirit and rules of golf. The authentic expression of golf’s legacy through the product architecture is constantly examined and reinterpreted with each new product. Executives are encouraged to master the game and participation in the sport is a significant, if unquantifiable, part of the executive selection algorithm. Being authentic to the game extends to personal authenticity as well. It is important to be yourself. As an old company motto expressed it, “find your game.” This emphasis extends far back into the company’s history and makes the culture significantly different when compared to our competitors. This difference has been repeatedly verified by those who have been employed by other organizations in our industry.

In addition, the company has a strong track record of rejecting those who are inauthentic. The mandate to build a customer base through depth of connection informs every part of the culture. Early in his tenure the CEO recognized that to change the dysfunctional pattern of the executive team, collaboration would have to have priority over competition. The CEO rejected the notion of quick fixes to deeply challenging problems. He explained that anyone who avoided going deeper while attempting significant change lacked authenticity and therefore, effectiveness. In fact, the initial direction of the coaching initiative was strongly affected by the concern for depth. At an early offsite the team was given a choice to continue in the old pattern of “surface” relating or to change the pattern to foster greater depth. A useful metaphor was born at the offsite. The difference was identified as “diving rather than surfing.” We see this shift as the introduction of a new level of development and differentiation taking place in the team. It is a striking example that fits Frederic Hudson’s ‘Cycle of Renewal’ (Hudson, 1999). The team was ‘out of sync’ and instead of moving forward through a series of small tweaks and adjustments, the CEO enabled and instructed the team to do something quite different, challenging them to take a deeper look in order to re-purpose and redirect the group’s effectiveness for one another and for the business. To state it ironically, the leadership realized that in order to reach higher goals they needed to go deeper.

Out of the team’s initial interaction with the assessment and the challenge to ‘dive rather than surf,’ it became clear that a
small percentage of the team members were ready to challenge themselves to become more effective leaders of the business. Equally clear was that a larger proportion of the group wanted nothing to do with activities that required confronting and exploring the hard and personal questions raised through both personal assessment and the team discussions that followed. Those few who wanted to go further, however, were offered the chance to work one-on-one with a professional coach. These ‘early adopters’ made a decision that continues to resonate in the organization today. Their decision to embrace coaching as a way to move towards a more desired future marked the infancy of a deliberate effort to focus on professional coaching as a catalyst for leadership and team development and, of greater importance to the parent company watching from Europe, as a catalyst for better business results.

As stated earlier, at the time professional coaching was introduced to the executive team, annual sales revenue was $300 million. Today, the company is on track to reach a sales target of $1.2 billion. Clearly, the implementation of a professional coaching initiative is not the sole reason for this dramatic growth. Among other things, the company’s recent success is attributable to game-changing innovations, market savvy, single-minded belief in the way forward and a collaborative, spirited working environment sprung from a culture marked by the deeply attentive care of its people. However, the coaching initiative is an important contributor as it took hold during this period and has become embedded and regarded as a hallmark of the organization. While it is difficult to quantify the relationships between our coaching initiative and the bottom line, we are confident that this initiative played an important role. Furthermore, we know that we have learned important lessons from the experience of bringing coaching to life in our company and it is with great enthusiasm for our cause that we share some of our learning in these few pages.

LESSON #1: CRISIS IS A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

Formal leadership development activities like professional coaching, assessment, and team development had the chance to take hold in the organization because our senior leader, followed by some of the senior team, recognized that the challenge of ‘competition versus collaboration’ playing out at the executive level required a different approach, a new way of thinking and acting. This challenge was felt so acutely by the CEO that he made a decision to explore a new way to get at the old problems he and his team were facing. To use Freud’s analogy from archaeology, he saw that a beautiful layer has to be destroyed in order to get to the next level. There was a significant “want to change” on the part of the CEO that flowed from him to his team and, eventually, out into the wider organization. This is not surprising if you know that one of the ways in which the CEO excels is in
his willingness to ask for help, combined with his readiness to change accepted practices or people in order to get results. Just as a client’s strong intent is the fuel that drives an individual coaching relationship, so too it is the fuel for organizational change. It is recognition that in order to develop we have to do something different. The same approach will not get it done. In this case it was recognition that to get through the present layer, once beautiful but no longer useful, and down into the next level of opportunity, a careful but deliberate exploration had to take place. As painful as it had become, it took courage to destroy what had worked for so long based on the promise of something that could not yet be seen.

The focus remained on the senior team during the following three years, what we will call “Phase One” of the coaching initiative in the organization. A series of interventions, off-sites and one-on-one consulting and coaching were focused primarily on helping both individuals and the group deal more effectively with the existing and recurring conflict (competition versus collaboration) in the organization. What was clear early on was that the group rarely, if ever, took time to reflect, think, absorb and discuss what was going on with them as individual leaders and as a team. “They” were never the subject matter of their discussions; rather it was always about the actions necessary to move the business forward. This orientation toward action (the ‘maleness’ of the culture), absent of reflection (the ‘femaleness’ that was needed), was the working style of the team members and represented their most significant challenge. The success of this period was both the sharing of a slowly evolving common language of development (the values, strengths and challenges mentioned earlier) and the ability to remain in the tension of ‘action vs. reflection’ in spite of some vocal and ongoing resistance to the work. The fact that the group, in a sustained and consistent way, stayed in this conversation, both set the tone and gave permission for development through coaching to begin to unfold in the larger organization.

This unfolding evolved in fits and starts with plenty of challenges along the way. First, and most significantly as will be discussed later on, it included the decision of the VP of HR to attend the Coach Intensive Training program at the Hudson Institute of Santa Barbara, a rigorous nine month curriculum. Secondly, and as a result of participating in the Hudson Institute experience, it included the invitation of a small number of external professional coaches to begin to work with members of the company’s expanded leadership team—a group of approximately 60 directors and vice-presidents. This marked the first opportunity for company leaders beyond the executive team to be introduced to coaching as a significant vehicle for their development and, furthermore, it marked the first chance to choose between an internal or external coach. That said, there was limited accep-

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tance from the senior team to expand the availability of coaching beyond the executive level and that skepticism threatened our effort to move forward. Skeptics saw both dollars and time being invested in and connected to this effort, and they didn’t understand what the return of investment could be regarding this coaching initiative.

LESSON #2: EXECUTIVE PERMISSION AND SUPPORT IS IMPERATIVE

While the coaching initiative appeared to many as an organic outgrowth of the senior team work, this initiative was, most significantly, an aligned decision by the CEO and the HR leader to optimize and extend into the organization the development work being done with the senior executives. It was believed that individuals who hold leadership positions in the company need to be better equipped to lead their teams and functions well and, in some cases, get ready for more senior roles. Clearly this perspective was formed through the experience of the senior team as they confronted their own challenge of ‘competition versus collaboration’ and it led to the creation of both a mindset and a mandate that we will “develop leaders from within the company.” In hindsight this is both an obvious and simple directive, but in the context of the time it marked a significant shift in the attitude of the organization that we would now take responsibility for developing the leaders of our organization. And, with that responsibility, came the permission and support to extend coaching into the ranks.

The wisdom of the decision to supportively and purposefully extend coaching beyond the executive team is proven in the way coaching has served to retain key leaders and provide support during times of organizational strain (increased contribution targets, reorganization and so forth). The absence of reflection or, put another way, the opportunity to safely and creatively explore new possibilities for old problems, was as much a need for the wider leadership group as it was for the executive team. In this way, coaching has provided a supportive harbor for the affected, which is to say that the opportunity for repair is built into the culture. While they may not have described it this way when the coaching initiative was just taking hold, there was and is recognition by the senior leaders that the TaylorMade-adidas Golf culture is, like Harry Stack Sullivan said, “more human than otherwise” (1968, p. 7). This willingness to see the culture from the perspective of a wide lens – that it is all things – as opposed to a more narrow and limited point of view, is the admission that the leaders of the company will experience a full range of emotional reactions and developmental challenges as they work within our four walls. Through coaching, we want to help them navigate that terrain as successfully as possible so that they can reengage stronger and more fully equipped to move themselves and the organization forward.

“What goes on behind the closed door of a coaching relationship?” This question, left unattended, foments the insecurity-based assumption that somehow coaching is a replacement for the manager’s role.
This carries with it the challenge of translation: to continually define the relevance of coaching to the greater culture, and in the context of the original and continuing mandate to “develop leaders from within the company.” We have found that the coaching initiative is at greatest risk when people begin wondering, “What goes on behind the closed door of a coaching relationship?” This question, left unattended, foments the insecurity-based assumption that somehow coaching is a replacement for the manager’s role, which could be seen as a direct assault on the power and authority of that leader. Alternatively, we have seen leaders welcome coaching as a stand-in for their role in developing individual team members, leading to a form of benign neglect. We have to recognize that these scenarios represent new twists on the old challenge of ‘competition versus collaboration.’ Leader and coach can co-exist, if not collaborate, in the support of an individual employee’s (and hopefully future leader) development. This type of collaboration in support of development, however, leads to another kind of twist which is that of the relationship between accountability and confidentiality. If you have more people involved, more people collaborating for the benefit of the individual’s progress through coaching, does that somehow diminish or threaten the client’s ability and willingness to dive as deeply as they may wish to go in the safety of their coaching relationship? It is with all of these questions in mind that we find that the value of having internal champions cannot be overstated. The most important role these individuals play is the continual reinterpretation of the ways coaching is helpful in light of both the current business environment and the ever-intensifying expectations of results.

Finally, we would like to offer a comment about the need for demonstrating a ‘return on investment.’ It is reasonable to expect that the support of internal champions, especially the CEO, would come at the price of having to prove how any of this really impacts the bottom line. We’ve explored the question at length, reviewed the literature and attended conferences on the subject to arrive at this conclusion: we don’t have to validate anything if we have highly competent and connective coaches. The clients will validate the impact of coaching and, in our experience, they are not shy about doing so. The CEO has never requested proof that the coaching initiative works because he hears about its impact consistently enough and in a way that is directly related to his primary concern: getting the right people in the right jobs working together to grow the business.

LESSON #3: THE VALUE OF CONTEXT IS MASSIVE

After attending the coach training program at the Hudson Institute and inviting some of that organization’s alumni, our first external coaches, to begin coaching relationships with senior leaders, the human resources leader decided to expand
the number of internal coaches by sending seven members of his team to the same training program over a three-year period. This decision, taken in 2004, led to an equal number of internal and external coaches serving the business. This would shift permanently in 2006 when it was decided that, with the internal capacity now at a sustainable threshold, external coaching relationships would be discontinued below the executive level in order to take full advantage of the investment made in an internal coaching group. Apart from the VP of HR, a Master Certified Coach through the ICF who has clients at the executive team level, the other internal coaches work at the vice-president/director level and below. Overall, we have sent fourteen individuals through the Coach Intensive Training at the Hudson Institute with the number of internal professional coaches now at nine. Accounting for this drop-off is that two members of the group were promoted into higher level jobs in the company and no longer serve as coaches; one individual left the company and now serves as an external coach; and three individuals have left the company to pursue new opportunities in other organizations.

With some limited but important experience with external coaches it was determined in our case that the value of cultural learning and awareness held by the internal coaches outweighed the pure coaching technique and experience of the external coaches. The rationale behind this decision is the belief that, in the coaching relationship, the value of context is massive. Since the internal coaches know the language of the company they don’t have to have it translated, allowing them to be more effective more quickly. Our experience to date tells us that internal coaches with both competence and the context of living day-to-day inside the organization are more effective, get more buy-in, and have more intuitive initial empathy than external coaches.

While we believe that being immersed in the culture allows you to feel the forces at work we also recognize that it can make you blind to new possibilities—which is why it is also important to explore the downsides of our internal coaching effort. First, we recognize that confidentiality and objectivity are two factors that might have been lessened because of the decision. For a variety of reasons—a leader wanting to set the agenda for their direct report’s work with a coach; the reliance on coaching as a way to help someone be more effective; the pressures from the business to get someone or something “fixed”—both positive and negative, there are stated and unstated efforts to influence the coaches. After all, these individuals are peers of other company leaders and, in most cases, direct reports of executive team members. It is not uncommon for the coaches to hear something along the lines of, “I know you’re coaching so and so and you can’t say anything, but...” Another challenge is that while living in the organizational dynamic there is a predisposition, tied to
objectivity, to want to commiserate or collude with clients about the most recent conflict, reorganization, market shift, etc.

We believed that the value of context overwhelmed other factors. Why did we believe that? One answer is, of course, that “the self is the best tool for help.” We trust that if the coach, regardless of internal or external status, sets the table for the ‘self’ of the client to do the heavy lifting in the relationship, the relationship will be more effective.

**LESSON #4: EFFECTIVE COACH SELECTION IS ESSENTIAL**

As the coaching initiative gained in popularity, the addition of qualified coaches became a necessity. An early goal of the program was the inclusion of coaches outside the HR team in order to insure the spread of coaching in the larger culture. Long discussions by the VP of HR and the coaching team revealed the challenge of selecting candidates who had the ability and passion for coaching and who were strategically placed in the organizational structure. It was reasoned that even if the extension of the program might mean some risk to quality, then an eventual benefit would be the added visibility.

At the same time, the pace of growth was discussed. The group was aware of a similar tension between organic growth and a more active push to extend the program. In the former, those interested in coaching would reveal themselves as they became familiar with the coaching effort. A more active approach would be to try to identify and select coaches who would help insure the viability of the program. In all of the discussion, there was a concern that the need for internal coaches would outstrip the company’s ability to provide coaching for those requesting the service. This led to a discussion about the limits of a fully functioning program. Would it be better to limit coaching to director-level and above or open the program more widely? The initial plan led to the narrower focus but early success led to a somewhat greater inclusion. Currently, due to those successes, the program has reached its upper margins and is straining to fulfill demand.

In retrospect, two of the most difficult questions to answer during the course of establishing coaching within the culture have been, “How should the coaches be selected?” and “How many internal coaches are enough?” As we looked to internal coaches to carry the greatest share of the coaching work, we had to face the challenge of finding a sufficient number of coaches from within the business. The first and most obvious group to invite into this new role was the leadership group within the human resources department. These individuals were closest to the new initiative given their daily involvement with the VP of HR and, as stewards of the company culture, were already proven to be trustworthy and reliable in supporting employees and maintaining
confidences. This group continues to form the backbone of the coaching initiative, both in terms of experience and number of clients in relationship. We can attribute this reliance in large part to the role of human resources in the organization. The mandate of the group is to care for the employees of the company as comprehensively as possible, making leadership in the coaching role both a natural and logical way to formalize and extend their impact.

Once we began to look outside of HR for additional internal coaches, we believed that to successfully follow our mandate of “developing leaders from within the company” those leaders required coaching by someone at or near their level in the organization. This narrowed the list of potential coaches to about 60 people, the directors and vice-presidents of the company, few of whom had declared any formal interest in becoming a professional coach. An invitation was sent to this group of people to attend a meeting at which the opportunity to pursue coaching was discussed and offered. From that initial invitation, a handful of company leaders expressed interest in moving ahead with professional coach training but only one line manager outside of HR would actually begin and complete the Coach Intensive Training program at the Hudson Institute. Over time, as coaching became more accepted and its impact more fully realized, additional information sessions were held revealing more interest and leading to four more line managers (again, outside of human resources) completing the coach training curriculum at the Hudson Institute.

Fueled by their belief in the power of coaching through their experiences as clients, the group of five line managers who decided to serve the organization as professional coaches brought their understanding of development as well as their business context to the role of coach. Missing from the equation, however, was a formal ‘vetting’ process or a set of standards to guide coach selection. We opened the invitation to the company leadership because we believed that those who stepped forward would come from a place of conviction and that with the addition of competence, both existing and learned, we would have strong coaches to offer to the company. While true in most cases, we didn’t realize the political dimensions that would also lead someone to declare interest in becoming a coach. That someone might see the coach designation as a way to gain more organizational power, for increasing prestige, or as a distraction from their functional job responsibilities was not articulated. If unstated, it was understood that no one would put themselves through all of the work of professional qualification for reasons that did not consider the needs of the company to be primary.

As mentioned previously, to select coaches capable of coaching the existing and emerging leaders of the company meant

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concentrating on the recruitment of director-level and above. Criteria consisted of the organizational level of the candidate plus the willingness to enter a long and continuing involvement. Capability was assessed by personal interaction, assessment and feedback from organizational follow-up. It was a formula of self-selection with both peer and management feedback.

After several graduating classes of coaches, additional criteria became clear and have now been put into place. For the purpose of preparation and selection, a minimum of 50 hours of experience as a client is required. In our estimation, the best preparation for coaching is being an active and consistent coaching client as it provides an additional measure of commitment and trial learning. Also, a demonstrated ability to coach as a manager, even in short unscheduled sessions, is now a prerequisite. This type of informal coaching is evidence of the manager’s ability to distribute responsibility (and create accountability) among his or her direct reports.

To prepare the leadership level for the coaching initiative, the VP of HR and the Director of Coaching and Leadership Development educated the client group regarding appropriate expectations. The teaching was formal and informal and explained the most helpful uses for coaching to leaders and reports. It was a crucial step in setting the stage for the “roll-out” of the program. Unfortunately, it was difficult to expand the education to clients added to the program on an informal basis due to time and employee constraints. As a result, we attracted clients to the work who weren’t educated regarding their obligation and responsibility. As we now realize, we risked some ineffectiveness. In a related way, we also felt the pressure for each coaching experience to be successful, particularly at the beginning. Because coaching was not yet understood by the larger culture, at times we felt that we were “one failure” away from risking the viability of the program.

These coaching challenges have appeared in at least two ways. A key aspect of coach/client preparedness is building a business case for the process. Whether coaching for skill, performance or development the target needs to be business-relevant, translating appropriately to the overall company goals as well as the needs of the individual. When lacking the overt support of bosses or supervisors, coaches have been denied a supportive framework for the important work of challenging the client’s purpose, intent and patterns of behavior once they are in the relationship. Conversely, when the boss is included in the discussion of the client’s goals, business relevance is a likely outcome and accountability can be a regular part of the coaching experience. It has been recognized that the beginning “coaching issue” may not be the eventual “coaching issue.” However, if purpose and intention
have been created on the part of those stepping into the relationships, the accountability of coach and client will appear equal, increasing the power of the coaching exchange.

A second challenge is the fast cycle of change, allowing minimal time for reflection at the group level. Coaching has become a touchstone for those in the midst of a high intensity, “move first, ask later” environment. Not infrequently, coaching is used to restore reflection and understanding when clients feel challenged by the corporate rhythm. As much as reflection is needed, it is not easily described in terms that are understood by the dominant culture or the parent company. This requires on-going and intensive effort on the part of the coaching “champions” to translate and interpret the importance and impact of coaching for the business.

Our goal is to become increasingly more transparent to the company about what coaching is, how to get involved, who the coaches are and how to become a coach, among other things. Also, we strive to enhance the perception of coaching as a special privilege reserved for those people who are developing and emerging leaders, those who are hungry for and intense about their growth and, finally, those for whom there is a sound and solid business rationale for professional coaching. We believe that these seemingly contradictory objectives – at once open and exclusive - are, in fact, perfectly matched. Taken together they will allow us to increase our effectiveness by helping both coaches and clients work together with greater purpose and direction. The fact is that we are not a commune, we are a business and, while we believe in and pursue coaching that is holistic and client-centered, we do so to advance the interests of the business so that all of our lives may be enhanced through its success.

LESSON #5: COACH TRAINING IS A FIRST STEP

Preparation for the coaching initiative was important in at least two major aspects. Initial and ongoing coach education was necessary for the best practice of coaching technique and ethical standards. The education of the coaching clients about appropriate expectations for themselves, their direct reports and bosses was essential.

To maximize the training experience of new coaches, the VP of HR and the Director of Coaching and Leadership Development determined that coaching experience needed to be a priority. Upon entering their training program, the new coaches are asked to actively coach as part of a coaching internship. The obligation to provide clients to new coaches led us to encourage them to work with those who were interested and available. As we learned, people interested in beginning a coaching relationship did not always come from the target group that was our mandate.

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to serve – the leaders and potential leaders of the company. While able to provide everyone with coaching experience, the larger challenge was matching the coach’s level of competence with the client’s need and leadership level. As a result, more clients were given the coaching experience which revealed a broad continuum of coach readiness to successfully manage an unprepared or uncertain client. In other words, individual ability strained to match the coaching need. As is common in many growth efforts, the number and type of clients stretched our preparedness.

As a response to this, and in an effort to secure the success of the coaching initiative, we began a coach supervision group to challenge and encourage the ongoing development of the coaches. This group was born out of the belief that the completion of a coach training program marked a true commencement for any coach and that the continuation of formalized learning opportunities was essential to build on their established foundation of competence. The group, meeting about eight times each year, became a forum for both skill development and the exploration of depth through connection, the discussion of coaching case studies, and learning about organizational and individual dynamics present in the coaching work. Additionally, it has allowed us to have an ongoing discussion about the current organizational context and themes so critical in helping us to serve our clients from a place of significant awareness and understanding. This early effort at supervision and the continuing commitment of the internal coaching group to meet on a regular basis is one of the most significant factors in sustaining the coaching effort in the company.

More recently, we have expanded the opportunities for continuous learning by the coaches. We have created the following standards for coach development:

**Continuous relationship with ‘best possible coach’**. This stems from our belief that the best way to learn how to be an effective coach is through active participation and learning as a client. The coaches are not asked to focus this relationship on their work as coach but to make it about their own development as an individual and as a professional.

**Consistent participation in one-to-one supervision**. Building on the concept of the coach supervision group we have found that the coaches can explore their individual work with clients at a more intense and useful level through a one-on-one relationship with a supervisor or mentor-coach. These monthly meetings are an opportunity to explore specific client relationships and to evaluate approaches, ideas and possibilities to move those relationships forward with impact.

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David Berry is the Director of Professional Coaching and Leadership Development at TaylorMade-adidas Golf Company. He is responsible for the evolution of a “coaching culture” through two primary initiatives: building the competency of the internal coaching team to ensure maximum impact for the business; and designing and facilitating leadership programs that expand the “manager as coach” mindset throughout the company. He received his coach training at the Hudson Institute and is also certified by the International Coach Federation.
Understanding and application of ICF Core Competencies and Statement of Ethics for professional coaching. The coaching group meetings are typically the forum in which we discuss and practice the coaching core competencies and ethical standards as established by the ICF. This is done through a combination of teaching, discussion, triad coaching practice, feedback and debriefing.

Annual participation in outside learning events. It is an expectation that the coaches will continue their learning outside of the organization by attending at least one coaching conference or something of related and relevant subject matter each year. The coaches are challenged to bring their learning from these events back to the group and to assimilate them into their coaching practice.

ICF credential. Each coach is asked to work towards the PCC credential offered by the International Coach Federation.

If we look at these efforts at ongoing coach development from a developmental perspective, we believe we are deepening the development of our internal coaches by looking beyond the foundational certification and experimenting with and ultimately creating an in-house ‘gold standard’ for coaching excellence. We’ve learned as much from what hasn’t worked as what has and we’ve attempted to create the space and permission to learn from these ‘fits and starts.’ In so doing, we believe we are building a sturdy and reliable best practice approach to coach development.

CONCLUSIONS

As we have reflected on both the direct and indirect efforts taken in the organization to inspire and sustain a culture of development through professional leadership coaching, we recognize a handful of powerful lessons that may be useful to those for whom a similar endeavor is underway or for those whom are already living the daily opportunity and challenge of professional coaching in their organization. At the broadest level, the company’s early experiences with the challenge of ‘competition versus collaboration’ within the senior team were based on a ‘quick-fix’ approach and, over time and inadequate results, there was a growing sense that this was not enough to sustain the organization’s growth. This led to a deeper transformational approach spearheaded by the CEO and, only after this work had been initiated and sustained, was it possible to extend the developmental approach down into the ranks. As we have collected and considered the key learnings stemming from this experience, it has been an exercise in deepening our understanding of what is true about our work, including the positive and lasting impact of the effort as well as greater clarity about what we still aspire to achieve. Our work is, and will remain, unfinished and the
opportunity to reflect on these lessons has created in us a new resolve to take the effort to new levels of impact – to help each individual define and move toward their better future so that the organization may do the same. We offer these insights with both humility and hopefulness that our offering is generative and that it will encourage the good work of coaching and development being done in many organizations.

REFERENCES


Resource Center for Professional Coaching in Organizations

The International Journal of Coaching in Organizations (IJCO) is the signature publication of Professional Coaching Publications, Inc. (PCPI). In addition to this internationally acclaimed journal, PCPI publishes books on topics of interest to those in the coaching community, whether practitioner, decision maker, or end user. You can count on PCPI, Inc. to provide content that pushes the envelope — bringing theory, research and application together in ways that inform, engage and provoke. Visit the PCPI website, www.pcpionline.com, to view and purchase our growing line of products.

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