

Leadership Through Peer Coaching

The Story

A leading pharmaceutical company was poised to launch a new product pipeline considered by analysts to be one of the strongest in the industry. To capitalize on current and new product opportunities, the company planned to aggressively build its sales and marketing capabilities. This would require the on-boarding of 5,000 new sales force members over a three-year period.

To quickly and effectively get new sales representatives performing, the company decided to engage its senior sales representatives as coaches. The challenge came in getting the senior representatives excited about taking on this new role and in providing a coaching model – including the tools and resources that would foster consistency in the coaching process throughout the organization.

Our Engagement

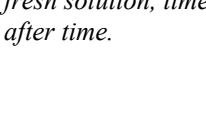
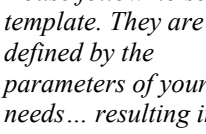
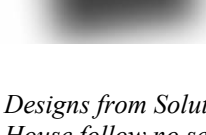
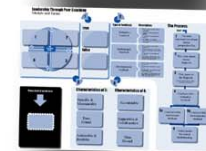
Solutions House partnered with the Company to develop an eight-hour, active-learning leadership and coaching program.

Our design for the *Leadership Through Peer Coaching* program includes a look at the big picture of the company's changing landscape and its challenges and opportunities. It starts by building the case that there is both personal and business opportunity awaiting the senior sales representative who is willing to stretch and step up to the "leadership plate."

The major program focus is on an understanding and practical application of the coaching skills and modeled behaviors needed to help new sales representatives become proficient in developing competencies.

We highlight the unique challenges and opportunity for impact that are inherent in a coaching relationship without report authority. We address unique ways to lead and coach by example and through a more peer-based relationship.

Because District Sales Managers (DSM) wanted to coordinate and perhaps capture the details and results of these relationships, the course explores the relationship between the senior sales representative coaches and their DSM. We add enthusiasm by letting the participants discover the personal and career benefits of developing effective coaching skills.



Ultimately, the program enables the representatives being coached to be all of the following:

- Aware of organizational politics and culture
- Appreciative of the value of networking (and networking in this sense means recognizing and learning from the people at the company who are most likely to help him/her grow professionally)
- More proactive in approaching their tasks
- Eager to learn and self-diagnose
- On the lookout for ways to move toward “expert” status
- Sensitive to the importance of an attitude of “advocacy”

Why an active learning program?

The activity of coaching is a challenging one, involving the “whole person.” It is a deeply relational skill... and, as such, merits a learning approach different than traditional classroom instruction. Such a skill is best encountered and explored through the learner’s *experience*.

Active learning requires that the learner participate actively in the learning process rather than passively receiving knowledge as if an empty vessel to be filled by the facilitator.

It supports the belief that knowledge can be constructed by the individual rather than received from a higher authority. Active learning is based on the assumption that learning is a process, not a set of facts.

The chief advantage of active learning is that questioning and solving problems without expecting someone to give the answer enables one to develop confidence in the ability to handle problems in this area, which in turn encourages one to go further.

Active learning puts the responsibility on the learner. When one is placed in the position of having to figure out a problem, one is much more likely to take charge of his/her own learning.

Designs from Solutions House follow no set template. They are defined by the parameters of your needs... resulting in a fresh solution, time after time.

Active learning also has the following benefits:

- [1] While you are participating, you are paying more attention.
- [2] The activities focus your attention on the key ideas or techniques that are being examined.
- [3] Active involvement forces you to construct a response and this results in processing of information deeper than mere memorization.
- [4] Discovery learning provides you with an opportunity to get early feedback on your understanding, i.e., gaps in your understanding cannot be ignored.
- [5] Active learning results in "episodic memory," a deeper kind of memory specific to an event so that if you cannot at first remember the idea or technique, you can reconstruct it from the event.
- [6] Active learning can be more motivating, incorporating the pleasures of solving puzzles and controlling an environment.

Active learning is considered more meaningful because:

- [1] It makes use of your own personal associations as a basis for understanding vs. parroting back the instructor's version of a concept.
- [2] Figuring out the process rather than just following directions results in a solution unique to the learner, one ultimately easier to reconstruct.
- [3] You are forced to confront your current ideas about the subject, many of which may be misconceptions, and reconcile them with what you now observe to be the case.
- [4] Because you are able to see the principles actually at work, you have a better grasp of the ideas.
- [5] Because you learned in a context similar to the eventual context of use, you will be able to recognize an opportunity to use the information more easily.
- [6] Because you began connecting the information to the "real world," its value is clearer to you.

The Rest of the Story

The program pilot and implementation were successful. To date, *Leadership Through Peer Coaching* has been translated into multiple languages and is rolling out in the Company's affiliates world-wide.

Since the implementation of the *Leadership Through Peer Coaching* program, Solutions House has developed and launched six additional active learning programs for the Company.

To Learn More

We'd love to tell you more about this and other solutions that we have developed for our clients. Please email us at engagementstories@solutionshouse.com.