



Case Study

Manager Covering Maternity Leave

Kate is a Marketing Manager in a fast growing UK based B2B supplier of software and parts. She had been in position for 2 years when her Manager took 6 months maternity leave and asked her to deputise in her absence. She had previously worked in a variety of Marketing roles in other firms.

The company had a strong recent track record and ambitious targets including a major new product launch. Marketing had been seen as a function that prepares and distributes promotional materials and was not well resourced.

The coaching relationship with the Kate started with her manager asking our coach to support Kate through the maternity cover period. The coach and Kate discussed the business performance and behavioural outcomes Kate was looking for in terms of the department and the individual, the frequency and length of coaching sessions, confidentiality and monitoring and reporting.

For Kate, the Manager was looking for support in keeping focussed on the business objectives, achieving co-operation within the management team and developing the Marketing function's competence. Our coach and Kate talked through her latest Job Description, and Performance Review and the strengths and development areas identified there.

The first meeting with Kate was structured as an "expectations setting" session. It included a discussion covering the aims from the Manager's point of view, our coach's philosophy on coaching, the commitment required, timing, length of sessions, role boundaries, confidentiality and note taking arrangements, as well as surfacing any concerns that Kate may have about the programme. Our coach and Kate discussed the reporting arrangements, and review points that would form part of the programme. They also discussed the context in which Kate was working, the skills and knowledge she was bringing to the role and resources available to her. Our coach left Kate with some questions around her aims for the maternity cover period, her preferred learning styles and the strengths she had that she'd like to build on.

The aim here was to establish trust and respect in the relationship, and a clear set of expectations about what the coaching programme would include. Kate was excited at this stage, felt engaged in the process and committed to put the thinking time in to preparing goals for the coaching programme and developing herself.

The second meeting focussed on defining the target outcomes that would form the structure of the coaching programme. Ten statements were identified, describing how Kate would like the department's performance and her own behaviour to be when her Manager returned.

For each of the ten statements, Kate rated the current status out of 10. Specific actions for improving each area were defined over the next coaching sessions and the prioritisation of these actions noted.

The Insights Profiling tool had already been used within the company and we used this information to develop strategies for gaining co-operation of Kate's new colleagues.

This provided a great deal of information to improve not only self awareness but a deeper understanding of what styles of communication would work most effectively with colleagues. The sections on "How to motivate me", "How to influence your opposite type" and "The ideal environment" were particularly useful in creating detailed strategies.

At each session, Kate referred to the notes she had taken of the goals and actions she and our coach had discussed previously. This allowed them to stay on track on the areas where she felt she needed most focus.

Each time we reviewed the achievement of goals, Kate took a note of what had been effective and the learning points. The increasing scores out of 10 against the defined outcomes proved to be motivational and provided a clear priority for the areas that still needed most attention.

At the end of the coaching programme, Kate rated each of the ten outcomes and was delighted with the dramatic improvement in certain areas of the department's performance, the feedback from colleagues and her own level of competence, particularly in taking a more structured and planned approach to her work. She was able to use this information to provide a detailed progress report to her Manager, and to set out her ongoing personal development objectives.

"Thanks especially for the help you've given me over the last six months. I've really enjoyed the sessions and they have helped think about what I want to achieve in my role and how best to achieve it."

For more information on how Business Jigsaw can help in your organisation, contact Hilary Young at hilary.young@businessjigsaw.com or on 07960 536188