High Praises for Coaching High Performers

In this interview, HR Director at Brand Expedia Group Dominic Mellonie illustrates Expedia's experiences coaching high performing leaders with GCG's Leadership Coaching.

> ***This has been the best experience I have ever had at work. I feel like I have learned so much, particularly in the last nine months, and now I am so different as a human being and as a leader. I can't believe that I was making so many mistakes before and no one told me! Thanks to the coaching, I am more relaxed, more strategic in my thinking, and probably a nicer person to be around.***
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> *Demi Kavaratzis, Expedia Air Commercial Director Oceania, shares at the end of the coaching progran.*



Dominic Mellonie, HR Director at Brand Expedia Group

1. Can you share some of the leadership challenges at Expedia?

'As with any organization that is growing, naturally there are some challenges that arise. At Expedia we're integrating businesses, we're managing teams globally, and we're constantly innovating our technology to meet customer and supplier needs. We have super-smart emerging leaders within the business who are hungry to develop, grow, and get promoted. We need to ensure that they know not only "what to do" but "how to do it".

Previously, we developed our people in a highly localized way. However, as we looked more broadly we sensed the need for a more global approach without losing the benefits of our local approach, so we chose to partner with Global Coach Group to offer top-notch leadership development for our leaders around the world.'

2. Why GCG Coaching?

'Test & Learn is core to our culture at Expedia. We're not afraid to make mistakes, provided we fail fast and move forward. We use technology to do a lot of A/B testing. Our values include being different; we are actively challenging the status quo in all our roles.

Global Coach Group applies this to a leadership development context. Feedforward in Coaching leverages regular suggestions from coworkers working with the leader to help that leader eliminate less effective behaviors and strengthen leadership styles that are working well. The aim of the coaching process is to tighten that feedback loop and use an iterative process of continuous improvement. With the support of a coach and GCG's very transparent process, leaders have the opportunity to develop new leadership styles, get feedback, and "iterate". Rather than focusing on more theoretical "know-how" (reading leadership books, going to seminars, etc.), feedforward is all about learning while doing, improve as you move—the same practical approach as Test & Learn.

One Expedia senior executive who went through the coaching program last year described his experience saying:

"It is clear to me that being a successful leader is a journey of continuous improvement that can be achieved through feedback and adjustment, e.g. a process of Test & Learn applied to oneself.""

3. What have the results been like?

'Excellent! Leaders across four continents have either completed or are currently going through the program, and we are seeing promising early results. The feedback from the individuals, as well as those whom they're interacting with, is very positive. We've already seen them reach and exceed the developmental objectives we've set in a short period of time.

As part of the coaching process, every month the leaders ask their coworkers (managers, peers and direct reports) for feedforward suggestions on how to become more effective as a leader. This very transparent approach requires having the courage, humility, and discipline to learn and move the business and culture forward as a team, which is what leadership is all about. When discussing the program with potential leaders I emphasize that unlike traditional coaching, this is an open coaching approach "with no place to hide". In any case this makes sense since leadership behavior is always open and visible to coworkers all the time. This commitment to ongoing coworkers engagement is one of the key components to the program's success.

"The design of the program has forced a degree of discipline, to be receptive to feedback and to genuinely improve. Plus, the support of an incredibly insightful coach has resulted in this twelve months being the best professional development I have had the opportunity to be part of."

Senior Executive coached by GCG.

What distinguishes GCG's Leadership Coaching is measurement. Every quarter they measure how the leader is developing in the eyes of their coworkers (manager, peers and direct reports). Then at the end of the coaching, they have a No-Growth, No-Pay guarantee. We pay the coaching fees only if the leader has reached measurable growth in the eyes of their coworkers.'

4. What about impact?

'Coworkers of the leaders being coached are telling me how well the program is working. The leader and coworkers are not only involved, they are committed right from the start to contribute positively in the process. This has resulted in not only increased effectiveness for the leader, but a strong ripple effect in the surrounding team.

I like that GCG's approach is very data- and process-driven, which falls in line with what we are as a data driven organization. And what is even better is that it's more than the results to date. The coaching process gives us leadership tools to apply our Test & Learn strategy to our people and organizational culture. Those leaders who have gone through the program have become advocates and use it with their team members.

The Return on Investment for coaching is also excellent: No-Growth, No-Pay is great. Paying for results rather than number of coaching hours is a breath of fresh air compared to many other coaching approaches.'

5. Before we go further, tell us a little more about yourself and Expedia

'As HR Director for Brand Expedia Group, I support the Global Retail Organization and Global Corporate Strategy and Services functions of the Brand Expedia Group (Expedia, ebookers, Wotif, Orbitz, and Travelocity).

Expedia is a technology company that offers travel solutions to the global population. We're the world's largest online travel company, offering discounted fares on more than 475 airlines and a directory of more than 320,000 properties. We have a portfolio of over 35 leading travel brands including an airline joint venture.'

6. And what is Global Coach Group like to work with from an HR Director's point of view?

'As an organization, they are very easy to work with. Partnering with a centralized organization that has given us a choice of coaches in every city we've asked for, has met our requirements perfectly.

The transparent, systematic process gives us a standard, centralized process while empowering our local managers. The transparency also provides HR visibility into what leaders are working on and where they are at in their coaching journey.

Overall, we are keen to develop a wider relationship with Global Coach Group to build on these great results.'

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