LEADERSHIP IMPROVEMENTS SWEEP THE MIDDLE EAST

INDUSTRY
Nutrition, Health, and Wellness

LOCATION
Middle East

DDI PRODUCT USED
Interaction Management®: Exceptional Leaders . . . Extraordinary Results® (IM®: EX)

BUSINESS NEED
As one of the world’s leading nutrition, health, and wellness companies, the organization operates with more than 400 factories in over 80 countries around the world, including a formidable presence in the Middle East.

Although the organization has recently experienced substantial organic growth, increased EBIT margins, and improved invested capital efficiency, the nutrition, health, and wellness industry is becoming increasingly competitive.

In response, the organization has sought greater speed and flexibility and has raised the bar for their workforce to be the leading nutrition, health, and wellness company in the Middle East. The organization plans to double their business and revenue in the next five years as a result. This ambitious target and desire for a high-performance culture are anchored heavily on the ability of the organization’s leaders to inspire people, add value, work with others, and master their own skills. To create a high-performance culture, these leaders need the skills to effectively coach and manage their employees’ performance, which has made leadership development a business necessity for the organization.

SOLUTION
Partnering with Development Dimensions International (DDI) to implement a Coaching and Managerial Skills leadership development program, the organization sought to provide its leaders with the skills and resources critical to enabling employee success and driving business growth. At this program’s core is a customized curriculum of courses from DDI’s Interaction Management®: Exceptional Leaders . . . Extraordinary Results® (IM®: EX) suite. The topics in the curriculum include:

> Essentials of LeadershipSM:
  – Organizational Leadership Imperatives for Coaching and Driving Performance
  – Key Principles and Building Rapport
  – Interaction Guidelines
> Setting Performance Expectations
> Reviewing Performance Progress
> (for leading managers only) Supporting Leadership Development

The organization’s Leadership Imperatives (coaching and driving performance) were incorporated to ensure consistency and alignment of course materials with the organization’s core business values.

REALIZATION RESULTS:
Leaders found the training to be valuable and applicable to their jobs.

Leaders rated their performance as being more than 10 percentage points higher after their training.

The observers of the trainees felt, as a result of the leaders’ training, that they too were more effective in their jobs.

Leaders reported their overall job performance improved by more than 15 percent.
Two sets of courses were created for two target audiences: a three-day Leading Managers program and a two-day Leading Others program. Leading Managers, unlike Leading Others, included the Supporting Leadership Development course. Figure 1 shows the percentage of leaders by program type.

Figure 1. Percentage of Leaders by Program Type

To evaluate the effectiveness of the Coaching and Managerial Skills Program, the organization also worked with DDI to ensure that leaders who participated in the program (trainees) were applying their new knowledge and skills back on the job. This measurement study focuses on the degree to which the trainees’ work behaviors changed as a result of the training program.

RESEARCH DESIGN

DDI’s Training CheckpointSM tool was used to determine the extent to which trainees changed their behaviors after the training as well as the program’s impact on the organization. Training CheckpointSM is an online survey focused on the behavioral objectives and specific goals of the training program. Program participants and their observers (i.e., their managers, colleagues, direct reports) receive the survey several months after the trainees completed the program to give the trainees enough opportunities to apply what they have learned. The trainees and their observers are asked to rate the extent to which the trainees engaged in these desired behaviors before and after completing the program. The survey also gathers viewpoints on the work environment and the impact of the program on other organizational outcomes.

Surveys were sent to 274 leaders who participated in the Coaching and Managerial Skills Program. Out of the total target respondents, 215 completed the survey, resulting in a 78 percent response rate.
The trainees also were asked to forward an observer survey to their colleagues who were in a position to observe their behavior both before and after they attended the training. In all, 1,283 observers were invited, 671 of which provided their responses, resulting in a 52 percent response rate. The majority of these observers (62 percent) were direct reports of the trainees (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Observer Relationships to Trainees**

Responses were received from leaders and observers in more than 15 international locations across the Middle East (Figures 3 and 4), making this one of the most widespread studies of leadership training effectiveness for a single organization.

**Figure 3. Percentage of Trainees by Location**
RESULTS
For each training course in the Coaching and Managerial Skills Program, at least three behavioral indicators were identified as critical learning objectives for evaluation. Both trainees and observers were asked to rate the frequency (i.e., never, rarely, sometimes, often, or almost always) with which trainees exhibited each behavior both before and after the training. The survey analysis focused on the percentage of trainees who displayed each behavior “often” or “almost always,” thus consistently displaying effective leadership. As such, the results of the study reveal the percentage of trainees who consistently demonstrated effective leadership behaviors before and after the training.

Overall Results: Evaluating the Impact of the Training Program
The impact of the training program can be seen in the before and after ratings. Just over half of the trainees (56.8 percent) said that they frequently displayed the leadership behaviors before attending the program. After going through the program, that number rose to an impressive 92.7 percent, which was a 63 percent overall improvement. Observers’ ratings supported those of the trainees. They reported that just 52.7 percent of trainees showed effective leadership behaviors before the training and 71.3 percent did so after the training—a 35 percent overall improvement.

Figure 5 presents the overall frequency of effective behaviors (across the training courses) observed by trainees and observers before and after the trainees attended the program.
Data illustrating the trainee and observer ratings of behavioral objectives are presented in this report by topic in order to understand the specific areas in which the training program was most effective. Figure 6a presents the frequency of effective behaviors displayed for each topic before and after the training as reported by trainees, while Figure 6b presents the frequency of effective behaviors as reported by their observers.

**Figure 6a. Percentage of Effective Leader Behaviors by Topic (Trainees’ Perspective)**

- **Organizational Leadership Imperatives for Coaching and Driving Performance**: 82% Improvement
- **Key Principles and Building Rapport**: 53% Improvement
- **Interaction Guidelines**: 55% Improvement
- **Setting Performance Expectations**: 68% Improvement
- **Reviewing Performance Progress**: 69% Improvement
Leadership Behaviors

Of the topics covered in the Coaching and Managerial Skills Program, both trainees and their observers reported the greatest improvement was in the organization’s Leadership Imperatives of Coaching and Driving Performance. This topic was specifically designed to teach leaders how to build skills essential to leading effective interactions by sparking actions in others as a “catalyst leader.” Trainees reported substantial improvements (82 percent overall) in their behaviors in this area, while observers reported a 40 percent increase in the number of trainees consistently engaging in these behaviors.

Key Principles and Building Rapport

The Coaching and Managerial Skills Program also equipped leaders with the skills and tools needed to effectively address people’s personal needs and build rapport through the use of DDI’s Key Principles. Trainees reported a 53 percent increase in their use of these skills, while observers reported a 30 percent increase in the number of trainees demonstrating these behaviors.

Interaction Guidelines

The training program also provided trainees with the necessary skills and tools to effectively address the practical needs of their employees and achieve objectives in the interactions in which they engage. They learned to use DDI’s Interaction Guidelines for their various workplace interactions. The trainees reported a 55 percent overall improvement in this area, while the observers reported a 39 percent overall improvement in trainees’ behaviors related to this topic.

Setting Performance Expectations

The trainees reported a 68 percent overall improvement in their ability to establish clear performance expectations, work with others to determine how performance goals can be reached, and gain others’ commitment to achieving performance objectives. Observers supported these ratings, indicating a 34 percent improvement in the number of trainees demonstrating these behaviors.
**Reviewing Performance Progress**

Substantially more leaders are able to conduct effective performance discussions and provide actionable feedback to their direct reports because of the Coaching and Managerial Skills Program. In the Reviewing Performance Progress course, the trainees learned to conduct performance review discussions to address employees’ unacceptable performance or work habits and to provide the necessary feedback and ongoing support those people need to improve. As with the other courses, both trainees and observers reported improvements in all behaviors related to this course. In particular, trainees said they had the greatest improvement (a 102 percent increase) in using performance reviews to guide their team members toward success, while observers reported a 38 percent increase in this behavior.

**IMPACT OF THE PROGRAM**

Regarding the impact of the training program on the organization’s work groups, the majority of trainees and observers indicated improvements after the program in their employees’ engagement levels and productivity as well as in the efficiency of operations, their morale, and communication. Additionally, observers saw an 11 percent increase in their own performance because of the trainees applying their newly learned skills.

Leaders indicated that the Coaching and Managerial Skills Program addressed 72 percent of the total skill set they needed to be successful on the job (**Figure 7**). In terms of improvement in the leaders’ overall job performance from the program, trainees reported an improvement of more than 16 percent, while their observers reported an improvement of more than 11 percent (**Figure 8**).
Putting the Training in Context
Almost all the trainees (99 percent) reported that the concepts addressed in their training were important for their jobs, while 95 percent reported that the program was effective at teaching them job-relevant knowledge and skills. Ensuring training relevance and that new skills and concepts are being applied is important; however, equally important is the leaders’ motivation to apply their newly learned concepts and skills. Encouragingly, almost 100 percent of trainees indicated that they are personally motivated to apply their new skills in their jobs. Training relevance and leader motivation are major determinants of training transfer. If leaders believe their training was either irrelevant or inapplicable or they are unmotivated to apply new skills or concepts, they are less likely to transfer what they’ve experienced to their jobs. The positive responses noted here likely are indicative of a significant improvement in leader behaviors.

In addition to relevance and motivation, manager reinforcement is a particularly strong catalyst for post-training behavior change. If the organization—particularly the trainees’ managers—does not reinforce the behaviors learned in the training, then the trainees will be unmotivated to use their newly learned skills to the best of their ability. Moreover, if the skills taught are not feasible for leaders to implement at work due to a lack of information or other resources, little behavior change would be expected. Four-fifths of trainees (81 percent) indicated that their manager has indeed supported and reinforced their applying new skills and concepts at work; slightly more (83 percent) reported that their line manager has the knowledge and tools to support their development. However, only about two-thirds (65 percent) reported having a follow-up conversation with their manager to discuss the implementation of their Individual Development Action Plan. Creating action plans and ensuring accountability for applying new skills and concepts will help the trainees modify their behaviors and eventually become more successful leaders.

CONCLUSIONS
This study demonstrates that the Coaching and Managerial Skills Program has had a positive impact on leaders. Both the trainees and the observers agree that leaders who completed the program have displayed effective leadership behaviors much more frequently than they did before the training.

In addition to improved behaviors, both trainees and observers reported improvements in higher-level outcomes such as employee engagement and morale, efficiency of operations, and communication. Moreover, the program is very much aligned with the organization’s business objectives, including the Leadership Imperatives for Coaching and Driving Performance.

Overall, the Coaching and Managerial Skills Program had a very positive impact on the ability of the organization’s leaders to consistently engage in effective leadership behaviors, which has resulted, and will continue to result, in numerous team- and organizational-level improvements and a high-performance culture.