COACHING FOR EADERSHIP AT MD ANDERSON



The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center

Recognizing a need to foster the leadership potential of professionals at every level of its institution, The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center made a pivotal decision in 2018. The Houston-based comprehensive cancer center launched the MD Anderson Leadership Institute as a way to provide ongoing learning opportunities for professionals at every level.

From the inception of the effort, MD Anderson sought to embed coaching throughout developmental programming available to all employees. The goal was to instill a coaching culture as a means to drive change, facilitate knowledge transfer to reinforce learning and set the institution apart from its organizational peers. In the process, the academic medical center entirely reimagined how current and future leaders could rise within the institution.

Since then, MD Anderson, the largest cancer center in the United States, has rapidly expanded its coaching program to provide numerous avenues for healthcare providers, researchers, administrators and staff to enhance their collaboration, communication and accelerate their leadership development. The cancer center reached more than 230 employees through coaching during the program's inaugural year. Enthusiasm for the program enabled it to nearly double that number the year after.

In early 2020, coaching also played a pivotal role as MD Anderson sought to equip its leaders with skills and tools needed to navigate the onslaught of changes arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic. By adopting on-demand coaching, the institution realized favorable operational gains by broadening the availability of coaching for all employees.

In recognition of its coaching program, the International Coaching Federation (ICF) named MD Anderson a Celebrated Nominee for the 2020 International Prism Award.

ICF's Prism Award program honors organizations that have achieved the highest standard of excellence in coaching programs that yield discernible and measurable positive impacts, meet rigorous professional standards, achieve key strategic goals and shape organizational culture. (Learn more at coachingfederation.org/prism-award.)

From Leader to Internal Coach

MD Anderson didn't have to look far as it considered developing an internal coach training program. The answer was right across the street. The cancer center sought support from CoachRICE, the ICF-accredited coach training program at adjacent Rice University's Doerr Institute for New Leaders, which ICF recognized as a Prism Finalist in 2017. The Doerr Institute for New Leaders provided MD Anderson with the curriculum, training, measurement tools and supervision to stand up an internal program aligned with ICF standards, including at least 125 hours of coach-specific training for internal coaches and a minimum of 60 hours of coach training for managers and leaders. A comprehensive look at ICF's Core Competencies

PRISM Award along with learning how to use coaching skills at work were elements of the curriculum.

Graduates of the training program go on to coach other MD Anderson leaders, enabling them to continually refine their skills and amass the required number of coaching hours to achieve an ICF credential.

A senior leader at MD Anderson credits working with a coach as invaluable for connecting with direct reports. "With coaching, you can become a trusted, authentic leader because the coach can ground you and help you to be better at soliciting feedback from others and ultimately internalize those behaviors."

The growth of internal coaches from its coach training partnership allowed MD Anderson to expand the reach of its coaching program. Today, the organization achieved a more than three-fold increase—going from 15 to more than 50 leaders who completed internal coach training. An additional 25-plus employees who graduated from the program are now working toward their ACC credential.

"With coaching, you can become a trusted, authentic leader."

MD Anderson Senior Leader

MD Anderson also employs dedicated ICFcredentialed institutional coaches who spend nearly half of their time working with other leaders in the cancer center who continually refine their coaching skills. Regularly scheduled peer mentor coaching sessions allow internal coaches to reinforce their ICF Core Competencies and learn best practices through recent coaching success stories. Mentor coaches also oversee coaching engagements between internal coaches and employees, conducting follow-up review sessions to provide developmental feedback. External coaches hired by MD Anderson go through a rigorous selection process, including healthcare industry experience, ICF membership and credential and alignment with workplace values.

Guiding Leadership Through Transition

The "moment of truth" for the MD Anderson Leadership Institute came a year after the adoption of the coaching initiative when, in 2019, the cancer center experienced a number of transitions in leadership that MD Anderson filled with interim appointments. It was the first occasion for many of these interim leaders to transition from faculty to administration positions. MD Anderson paired these new leaders with a coach to accelerate this transition and help interim leaders explore critical topics, including learning how to delegate, empower others for success and conduct difficult conversations. MD Anderson calculated that new leaders who worked with a coach were more than three times as likely to earn a promotion—including shedding their interim titles— compared to leaders who did not take advantage of coaching.

The impact went far beyond this one transition period. Since September 2018, nearly 200 of MD Anderson's new leaders experienced onboarding coaching engagements. When surveyed, 95% of these new leaders credited this onboarding coaching as one of their reasons for deciding to remain with the organization. All new leaders reported that coaching helped them accomplish professional goals, increase their motivation and self-confidence, and enhance their awareness of strengths as well as areas for further development. Their managers also agreed that onboarding coaching led to achievement of optimal outcomes and maximized performance.

One senior leader described MD Anderson's coaching program as a "force multiplier." "We have seen an improvement in inspirational leadership, excellence and business success as a result of our superb coaching programs."

PRISM Award MD Anderson's commitment to coaching starts at the top of the organization, including President Peter WT Pisters, M.D., who believes that investing in opportunities for personal and professional growth benefits the future of the organization. "We have challenged ourselves to further evolve our offerings and find new ways to develop our current leaders and prepare the next generation of leaders for our organization," said Dr. Pisters.

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Peter WT Pisters, M.D. President, University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center

'Coach and Develop' is one of the competencies for prospective leaders at MD Anderson, along with providing direction, influence and change leadership. MD Anderson also regularly evaluates all leaders on their coachability, a trait described as open to feedback and ready and willing to change. A biennial employee opinion survey found an 11% increase in favorable sentiment toward leadership along with a 20% jump in employee engagement after the inclusion of the coaching-related competency.

Coaching Through COVID-19

The value of coaching as a means for accelerating leadership and organizational improvement became an especially significant priority in early 2020, with the challenge of navigating the complexities of the COVID-19 pandemic. Just as the workplace suddenly shifted to a virtual format for non-patient-facing employees, so too did MD Anderson's coaching offerings. The introduction of remote on-demand coaching helped leaders address common themes, including the blurred lines of work/life balance, making difficult decisions and effectively managing virtual teams. More managers than ever completed MD Anderson's coach training program, which expanded the number of leaders equipped with the critical skills to operate as an internal coach in addition to their regular roles.

"It was their way of feeling that they can contribute and help others get through this pandemic," said MD Anderson Leadership Institute Program Director Michelle DeVeau. "It was very life giving for all of them."

Now, with a continued focus on financial stewardship, MD Anderson continues to dedicate resources toward maintaining its coaching culture. The organization places an added emphasis on virtual coaching and remote coach training. All leaders have the opportunity to access on-demand coaching or partner with an internal coach for a short-term engagement.

With an ever-growing roster of leaders benefitting from extensive coach training, MD Anderson continues toward its ultimate goal of providing coaching for all employees. In a new year where COVID-19 will continue to impact the lives and work of most, MD Anderson's organizational coaching culture pushes managers and leaders to continue sharpening their interpersonal skills and engage in continuous learning, which are two necessities critical for a 21st century workplace.



The International Coaching Federation (ICF) is the world's largest organization leading the global advancement of the coaching profession and fostering coaching's role as an integral part of society. Founded in 1995, its 35,000+ members located in more than 140 countries and territories work toward common goals of enhancing awareness of coaching and upholding the integrity of the profession through lifelong learning and upholding the highest ethical standards. Through the work of its six unique family organizations, ICF empowers professional coaches, coaching clients, organizations, communities and the world through coaching. Visit <u>coachingfederation.org</u> to learn more.





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