



COACHING ACROSS
CULTURES

AT TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES



INTERNATIONAL COACHING FEDERATION
PRISM
Award

Tata Consultancy Services

Imagine a multi-national organization operating in 46 countries across 7 geographies with nearly a half million employees. The challenges of ensuring team-building, efficiency and performance across multiple time zones and cultures would be daunting to say the least. That was the situation faced by Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), a global IT and consulting company based in Mumbai, India.

There was a need for TCS leaders to understand how to manage generational differences, lead in a global economy, leverage technology to develop their leadership, and build awareness about the importance of collective leadership capabilities. As businesses operated in borderless economies and large ecosystems, coaching surfaced as a powerful tool for developing leaders, talent retention and promoting a culture of learning that honored and respected each employee across diversity.

The Coaching Centre of Excellence in TCS was set up in 2015 with an objective to deepen human connections, resonance, well-being, efficiency, and performance. The organization celebrates diverse thinking styles, behaviors, expertise, and personalities that coaching has supported in creating a positive ecosystem that leverages individual strengths and celebrates differences to nurture individual brilliance, leading to business excellence and a culture of intentional growth.

TCS has developed a coaching program that includes dedicated systems to measure progress and ensure accountability. The initiative also incorporates a

rigorous internal training program and offerings that go beyond the workplace to support employees' overall well-being. Today, the coaching program at TCS is a significant part of the organization's development strategy and the value is visible through a proactive demand for coaching and learning to become a coach.

TCS has witnessed a tremendous transformational journey, from holding a coaching stance to integrating coaching into learning initiatives, leveraging coaching for change, inspiring leaders to build expertise in teams, and building an internal pool of 2,000 potential coaches undergoing training.

The International Coaching Federation (ICF) recognized TCS's commitment to its internationally-reaching coaching program as a Celebrated Nominee in the 2020 ICF International Prism Award program. 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).

Setting the Path

At the outset, TCS planned carefully to ensure a coaching program would align with its organizational mission, vision, and core values—starting with the goals of accelerating leadership development and improving customer satisfaction. Across its global team of employees, TCS wanted to promote a healthy work-life balance, increase

team-building and bolster adaptability to change. The company also wanted to foster a culture that would celebrate diverse thinking styles, behaviors, expertise, and personalities.

As a massive organization, TCS needed an expansive coaching program in order to make an impact. The program's numerous modalities were developed with the intent to make coaching available to as many employees within the organization as possible, thereby ensuring the greatest impact worldwide.

A priority for TCS was one-on-one executive coaching that would create a "thinking space" for top leaders to work through issues and generate new ideas. TCS also offered leadership coaching to facilitate behavioral changes by fostering new perspectives and behaviors. By prioritizing top leadership first, TCS created a "trickle down" effect to efficiently impact the most employees possible. The company leaders who worked with a coach were able to change their behaviors in accordance with the program goals and begin building coaching practices into their leadership styles.

Other coaching initiatives included systemic coaching, career coaching, team coaching, and peer coaching—which focuses on high-potential employees—as well as coaching for specific goals and challenges with cross-cultural and diversity coaching. The company also leveraged coaching to help employees navigate specific challenging situations.

Coaching has moved beyond creating awareness and business now leverages coaching actively making it a part of the business scorecard linking to the initiated yet aspirational coaching culture.

Building the Program

A great coaching culture starts with great coaches. TCS set high professional standards for its coaching

program with an emphasis on rigorous training, ongoing support, and the highest ethical standards, all informed by ICF's best practices.

TCS's Coaching Center for Excellence, the internal training program to develop employees into workplace coaches, requires 60 hours of instruction to earn certification, including mock coaching sessions with the coaching team to demonstrate the candidate has mastered necessary skills. The program drew inspiration from other successful training programs at TCS and is currently under review for ICF accreditation.

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*Rupika Singh
TCS Coaching & Cultural Diversity Lead*

TCS's internal coaches continue their education and development. TCS provides this support through multiple channels including a blog, regular training sessions, coaching supervision, mentor coaching, and other resources. The full coaching team also meets regularly to stay up to date on the organization's vision and strategy, and how coaching fits within both.

TCS is equally rigorous in its oversight and client protection measures. For each coach-client engagement, TCS provides templates for documentation designed to protect confidentiality while also maintaining accountability, and to keep coaching focused in areas strategically aligned with the organization's goals. To further support each client's development, supervisors serve as de facto sponsors for their direct reports. This role comes with responsibility to set clear goals for the coaching engagement, future organizational changes, areas for development, and measures of effectiveness.

Employees use personal scorecards throughout their coaching journey to document their objectives, as well as their progress toward reaching these goals. The impact of each coaching engagement is also measured through a self-awareness inventory taken by each client before and after their coaching experience, as well as through peer feedback and a sponsor engagement document that provides the sponsor's observations of the client's growth over the period of coaching.

An overall feeling of 'belongingness' across the company is remarkably high on the Employee Satisfaction Index and has held consistently at this level for three years.

Coaching training has also been built into TCS's pre-existing leadership program's Action Learning and Reflective Labs modules. It is further ingrained into the organization's systems through digitized and automated support to internal stakeholders' oversight of the program and coachee development. Analysis reports also provide assessment of recurring themes and patterns emerging through coaching sessions that might warrant broader action from leadership.

As the program has grown and evolved, it has proven to be a balanced blend of structure and adaptability, thus changing as the organization's needs changed.

Building Sustained Progress

TCS now has a robust coaching program. Coaching is a highly valued pillar of TCS's employee development strategy.

As of June 2020, 865 senior leaders had completed one-on-one executive coaching with a focus on topics of diversity, cultural differences and how to effectively consult teams. An additional 2,000 high

potential employees have engaged in peer coaching. Coaching also has an expanded reach across TCS's enterprise through team coaching and other modules. Over time, the impact of these coaching engagements has "passed forward" to even more of the organization and resulted in a shift in company culture toward innovation, trust and inclusion.

These improvements in the TCS culture are reflected in a variety of ways. Across the leadership team, these improvements included a 28% increase in demonstrated emotional intelligence, 33% increase in cognitive flexibility, and 67% increase in innovation management, among other notable signs of growth. Additional positive shifts have been noted across the full TCS global team as a result of coaching, including a 13% improvement in work-life balance, a 20% improvement in building a global inclusive mindset, and a 21% increase in powerful questioning in team communications. Of particular note, TCS's coaching culture has also improved the company's inclusion of women in leadership roles, with 63% improvement in role movements and a 94% retention rate among female employees.

"We've also had supervisors begin to show greater empathy towards team members—small things like respecting time zones," said TCS Coaching & Cultural Diversity Lead Rupika Singh. "There's been a lot of coaching conversations around building empathy by listening with good intent, with authentic intent. This is an important one in times like this."

An overall feeling of "belongingness" across the company is remarkably high on the Employee Satisfaction Index and has held consistently at this level for three years running.

But perhaps TCS's greatest measure of success is the resilience that emerged amid the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. As the company's nearly

half-million employees around the world navigated regional shut-downs, social distancing, working-from-home and other challenges, TCS took quick action to expand coaching to address these stresses facing its workforce.

A Growing Program with a Global Reach

Six years into TCS's coaching program, the organization has witnessed a notable shift in its company culture toward accountability, commitment, contribution, empowerment, and a strengths-driven approach.

As the organization continues to prioritize coaching with a generous dedicated budget and an emphasis on training, this positive shift is expected to continue to grow. All employees of TCS now have equal

opportunity to pursue coaching, from entry to mid-level all the way up to top leadership. Demand for coaching also continues to grow.

As an ever-growing number of TCS leaders and employees engage in one-on-one coaching, the totals remain but a small percentage of the company's vast global team. Regardless, the trickle-down impacts of the program are undeniable, and even greater rewards are sure to come as the program continues to reach more TCS employees. Despite TCS's large team and broad reach, the benefits of coaching have trickled down and accumulated into significant company-wide cultural shifts that have made every level of the company stronger, more inclusive, and tackling its greatest challenges together. 🙌

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 [coachingfederation.org](https://www.coachingfederation.org) to learn more.



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