



Building on a Legacy of Excellence: Facilitating a Coaching Culture at J.K. Organisation

Founded more than 100 years ago, J.K. Organisation (E.Z) is one of India's largest industrial groups. With a diverse portfolio of companies responsible for the manufacture, distribution, sale and service of products including tires, paper, cement, industrial supplies, and agricultural and dairy products, J.K. employs more than 22,000 individuals across India and around the globe.

As India continues to emerge as a global economic power, J.K.'s leaders are seeking ways to capitalize on this opportunity, retaining the organization's legacy of excellence while adapting to a dynamic operating environment. In 2008, J.K.'s senior decision-makers chose to adopt coaching as a strategy for talent development, leadership enhancement and change management. What began as an initiative pairing external Executive Coaches (most of whom held ICF Credentials) with senior leaders

has evolved into an integrated program that incorporates coaching, training for a growing cadre of internal coach practitioners, and opportunities for managers and leaders to learn and apply coaching skills. The result is a coaching culture impacting not only the organization, but also the personal and family lives of J.K.'s employees.

In recognition of J.K. Organisation's exceptional use of coaching, the International Coach Federation (ICF) awarded it with the 2014 ICF International Prism Award. The Prism Award honors organizations that have achieved the highest standard of excellence in coaching programs that yield discernible and measurable positive impacts, fulfill rigorous professional standards, address key strategic goals, and shape organizational culture. (Learn more about the award at Coachfederation.org/prism.)

Breaking the Mold

Prior to 2008, J.K.'s legacy of excellence was premised on a directive management model. "The senior employees have all grown up in the culture of expecting instruction from their bosses," explains Alan Meyne, PCC, J.K.'s nominating coach and the director of Coaching Lighthouse. Innovation and initiative were expected to come from the top, down.

The demands on Indian organizations are changing, however. While most of J.K.'s leaders are in their fifties, the average age of an Indian citizen is 27. Managers and leaders need skills and strategies to negotiate this generation gap in order to unleash their direct reports' potential, promote innovation, retain top talent, and ensure J.K.'s continued success in the 21st century.

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The growth of a coaching culture at J.K. has helped address this need. “A coaching culture is visible in the behavior of people. It’s a way of looking at people and treating each other. When we describe a coaching culture, we’re describing a learning culture that is respectful and that values people’s potential and promotes innovation,” Meyne explains. “The significant breakthrough was in influencing the leaders’ mindset about people development.”

Although J.K.'s strategy calls for a move away from top-down management, the organization's president of corporate human resources and its coaching champion, Dilep Misra, ACC, concluded that top-down implementation of coaching was the right fit. Awareness of professional coaching in India is increasing, but there's still a great deal of confusion about what coaching is—and what it isn't. The perception of coaching as a remedial intervention persists throughout the country, largely due to the word's academic connotations. (India is home to numerous “coaching” institutes and programs that prepare students for school, university and professional exams.) Consequently, the program's developers knew they'd need leaders to model the experience and impacts

of coaching for lower-level employees. This trickle-down strategy has worked: What began as Executive Coaching for a handful of top senior leaders rapidly expanded to include high-potential leaders at the VP level and below. Today, 124 senior and high-potential executives have completed coaching engagements, while 43 new leaders are currently participating in Executive Coaching relationships.

Prior to the start of the Executive Coaching engagement, clients participate in a 360-degree feedback process. Based on the final report, they are asked to identify two to three goals for the coaching engagement, with an eye toward the transformations they believe would most impact themselves, their team and the business. They also have the opportunity to identify one goal that may not be explicitly related to their professional lives.

Executive Coaching engagements at J.K. typically last eight to 12 months, and include mid-term and end-of-engagement meetings with the coach, client and human resources team. The coach also checks in with key stakeholders throughout the process to monitor the effectiveness of coaching. At the end of the engagement, the coach, client and client's direct supervisor all submit written feedback about the process and outcomes.

Producing Results

From the beginning of the program, leaders who received coaching took what they had learned to their interactions with direct reports and peers, applying coaching skills to performance conversations and making a greater effort to nurture

innovation and personal responsibility within their teams.

In 2013, J.K. took the next step, engaging ICF Professional Certified Coaches from Coaching Lighthouse to provide a course of coach-specific training to leaders interested in becoming internal coach practitioners. Coach training is marketed to these leaders as an opportunity to build their legacy at J.K. “We ask them, ‘What’s the gift you’d like to leave this company?’” Meyne says.

J.K.'s goal is to train a cadre of 200 internal coaches by 2019. To date, 28 senior executives have completed an initial course of training, while 20 vice presidents and functional heads are currently enrolled in training.

The organization is committed to supporting these practitioners in their continuing professional development by investing time and funds in additional coach-specific training and supporting internal coaches in their pursuit of ICF Credentials.

As coaching continues to evolve at J.K., the organizational and individual impacts are appreciable. Within the four J.K. companies where coaching is used most frequently, leaders have reported improved performance, profitability and employee retention. Since 2008, revenues have grown by 105 percent, employee satisfaction has increased by 16 percent and attrition of high-potential employees has decreased by two percent (from an all-time high of 7.1 percent).

Leaders receiving Executive Coaching have reported a high return on expectations, particularly in the areas of stress management (with one client reporting a 60- to 65-percent decrease in stress during and after coaching), management skills, role transitions, self-confidence, and enhanced teamwork. The positive impacts go beyond the office walls: Coaching clients also report enhanced communication and relationships with their spouses, children and extended families.

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A New Legacy

Perhaps the most significant change wrought by coaching within J.K. Organisation has been the shift from a top-down management style to a system of collegial, collaborative relationships between senior- and middle-level leaders and their peers and direct reports. Thanks to this change, team members are taking greater initiative for projects and activities, even proposing innovative ideas that they believe would improve a product or operation. No longer is an employee's value based solely on his or her age and tenure with the organization: Now, creative ideas, diverse solutions and the ability to play an active role in the decision-making process are among the factors used to evaluate an employee's effectiveness.

As a result, the climate in the office has changed: Staff members feel a greater sense of belonging, and they see their supervisors as partners in their success, and not just as individuals who give orders. Team members now work together enthusiastically, and lower-level employees feel more comfortable taking on increased responsibilities—thereby freeing up managers and leaders to focus on bigger-picture strategic visioning.

As coaching continues to expand at J.K., the program's architects say they are optimistic about the future of the initiative and the organization. “We believe that people have the potential to do wonders at work, and coaching taps into that potential,” Misra says. “Coaching has provided a common

language that is gaining popularity in the workplace as it creates new learning and sets people up for success. Asking powerful questions, facilitating the process, putting them in charge: It's all a way to get them involved in the organization's day-to-day decision-making process, make them a success in their area, and make them a success in achieving the target.”

Formed in 1995, today the International Coach Federation (ICF) is the leading global organization, with more than 23,000* members, dedicated to advancing the coaching profession by setting high professional standards, providing independent certification, and building a network of credentialed coaches. We exist to support and advance the coaching profession through programs and standards supported by our members and to be an authoritative source on coaching information and research for the public.

*Numbers as of November 2014. Numbers are subject to change month to month.



Coachfederation.org