

Stealth Life Coaching in a Business Setting

by Christina Lombardo Ray, PCC, CPCC, Licensed Executive Wellness Coach

Performance IMPursuit, Inc. & LifeTrek Coaching International

Christina@LifeTrekCoaching.com 614.332.9747

She was the fifth manager that week easily brought to tears during our coaching session. She had not made it home from work in time to tuck her children into bed for the eighth time in the last ten days. She loved her six figure income job, but hated the demanding hours and stress. Her children were being raised by day care providers and her spouse, who was continuing to feel like a single parent.

As her coach, it was yet another day where I was feeling the strong tug of war going on inside me between the organization's agenda for this manager and this human being's suppressed life goals. My job as an internal Coach and Manager of Training & Development was to work with employees and managers during the merger of two businesses. These employees were a mission critical part of the business integration team.

Know that I share this story with you because it highlights some things that went well and some things that were in fact, the right thing to do. But I also share this story because it highlights some things that I'm sure you'll agree, were not the right thing to do.

The organization's objective's for my coaching work were clear:

1. Retain the employees you are coaching until the integration is complete.

My performance was being measured by the percentage of employees that I was coaching who stayed until the grueling integration project was complete. My goal – no less than 100%! All of the employees I was coaching were expected to be employed throughout the integration project—not one person could quit. What made this goal exceptionally challenging was that none of these individuals were promised a job following the integration of the businesses. In fact, they were told, there is a good chance that you will not have a position with this organization.

2. Create a Development Plan

I was asked to partner with each individual to create a development plan. This plan was four fold and included exploring:

- 1) **Strengths** – What are the innate knowledge and abilities that can be leveraged to serve you during this integration project?
- 2) **Development areas** – In what areas is development needed in order for you to be successful in your work on the integration team?

3) **Interests and aspiration** – “What do you really want to be doing?” was the question I really wanted to be asking these individual employees and soon began to do so. However, this section was about me asking: What work within this integration project are you most interested in and want to be more involved in? In what ways can you contribute to other areas of the integration? Good for the organization and in a few places, good for the associates.

4) **Action plan** – What areas can we further develop so that you can be successful on this integration team (and beyond)? What are the knowledge, skills, tools, and resources (people and things) that we can create a plan to develop so you can succeed?

The question I soon began to carry as I engaged in this coaching work was: How can I do this job well, perform to expectations, AND honor the true goals of the individuals I’m working with so that I can sleep well at night?

My answer was to serve both agendas: the organization’s and the agenda of the human being sitting in my office. Yes, 100% of the employees I coached during this integration project were retained and yes, each of them created and moved forward on a development plan. But 90% of my coaching with these individuals behind closed doors was all about who they wanted to be, what they were dreaming about at night, what they valued that was being stepped on by where they were currently working, what would inspire them to get up in the morning, and in what ways was that different from their current situation, what exciting changes do they want to move toward, what goals can they set for themselves to get life in balance, what values were being stepped on, what are they learning about who they want to be, etc. Scary questions to ask for someone whose performance goal is to retain employees! My role required me to be a champion for the organization no matter what an individual’s situation. But behind closed doors, I was able to be a Life Coach and champion for each individual. I’m happy to be able to share with you that this life coaching took place in a business setting and was able to meet the extremely different goals of two competing agendas.