

Case Story: “Coaching Media Advertising Director During Acquisition”

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Context

Seacoast Media Group publishes five weekly newspapers and one daily, *The Portsmouth Herald*, along the coasts of New Hampshire and York County, Maine. In 2014, Foster’s Daily Democrat of Dover, NH merged with the Portsmouth Herald in one of the biggest newspaper mergers in New Hampshire history.

The business had to implement the merger, integrate additional personnel into the Portsmouth Herald – all while dealing with declining print readership, and building a strategy for ongoing increased revenue.

Challenge

The coaching client had been with the organization for 3 years as Digital Sales Manager and was recently made Director of Advertising. He was faced with

- Managing and leading a team, rather than being an individual contributor
- Addressing several personnel performance issues
- Refocusing the team and preparing for the merger
- Building his own leadership skills

Shortly after taking on the new role he was also charged with creating a unified culture out of two separate workforces and hiring additional sales managers.

What We Did

We initially met with our client and his manager, (Editor and President, Seacoast Media Group), and mutually established goals and outcomes for this process. Example outcomes included: being more strategic, effectively working through personnel performance issues, becoming more skillful in listening, giving feedback and developing others, becoming more of a leader/manager than a ‘doer’.

We met with our client on a spaced interval basis, approximately every 2-3 weeks, for 2-3 hrs at a time. During these sessions we discussed approaches to specific situations, role played, did some basic skills training and some self-assessment. We recommended several articles and books for reading and they became part of discussions, also. We prepared extensive notes following each session so that our client would have a continuous document of our work for future reference. We also expected, and received, notes from the client on takeaways from each session.

In the midst of this work, the merger began and our client’s team took on a new shape. With our client we designed a facilitated process for building the team and establishing a strategy for their future. This included a present state assessment and future state visioning of external relations, performance management, people/staffing, teamwork, and operating practices.

Outcomes

- Our client was promoted to Director of the merged Advertising Dept, adding 2 direct report managers and 10 additional Advertising Dept. employees, increasing his staff from 23 to 35. This team procures and manages \$7MM + in revenue.
- Our client was appointed as part of the leadership for the merger transition team, which designed and planned the merger process and monitored progress. The merger was completed successfully and without any significant incidents of negative impact.
- Our client created an entirely new online revenue stream. 82% of subscribers indicated that this is their primary source of regional information and 69% had not been newspaper subscribers.
- The Advertising team now self-assesses their results and team effectiveness on a regular basis and adjusts their plans accordingly.