



Leadership Laboratory: A Participant's Experience

Problem

Rita worked in a scientific and technical field of a large government Agency. She had recently been promoted to a supervisory role that required she spend a substantial amount of time on administrative and managerial tasks while maintaining her previous research responsibilities. Rita worked hard. In fact, it was not unusual for her to be the first to the office in the morning and the last to leave. She brought work home with her at night and on the weekends. Though she was a very productive employee, she began to feel overwhelmed with the workload and felt as though she was not fully meeting all of her responsibilities. She commented that her work style had become reactive and transactional with little time spent on planning and strategy. With her new supervisory role, Rita found herself trying to please her direct reports and, as a result, felt misaligned with what she cared about most. Nevertheless, she continued to please and accommodate out of fear of their criticisms. Rita was aware that her health was deteriorating and her family and home life responsibilities were being short changed as a result of her time spent on career responsibilities. All indicators—including Rita's own self-assessment—pointed towards her burning out at her present pace. Rita knew she needed to bring more balance to her personal life and career responsibilities.

Solution

Rita enrolled in the Leadership Laboratory[®] offered by Gilburg Leadership Institute (GLI) which brings a group of organizational peers together for several multiple day sessions over the course of several months. The Program serves to help participants understand and master their own:

- *Nature*: acknowledge and maximize their natural strengths while managing their limitations
- *Beliefs*: identify and address internal resistance to realizing their goals
- *Habits*: practice new, simple habits that serve to align their behavior with their best intentions
- *Life Balance*: strive for life balance to ensure sustainable and meaningful leadership

Nature: Rita was initially participated in a one-on-one Deep Type[®] interview with a GLI facilitator to uncover her natural personality preferences. From this experience and the subsequent sessions of the Leadership Laboratory[®] Rita began to understand how her own natural preferences accounted for her fears of criticism and feelings of misalignment. Armed with more conscious choices about her behavior, Rita realized that

she must be a strong advocate for her core values, rather than try to please others. This stance required that she courageously disregard the default notion that others would overwhelm her with criticism. Further, as an Introvert (someone who recharges with alone time), she was coached to take daily time for herself, to build up energy for the constant interactions demanded by her workplace.

Beliefs: Rita expressed a dual desire to do well in her new leadership role and be involved and present with her family, but the harder she worked the less successful she felt. In the first session of the Leadership Lab during a segment that explores unconscious beliefs, Rita discovered that working harder was not getting her closer to her desired goal. She gained insight on a deeply held belief that she could either be successful at work or be a good wife and mother, but she could not be both. With the help of the facilitators, she was able to see that this belief was not a truth statement, nor were these two desires mutually exclusive. Rita chose to redefine the belief to align with her deepest desires to be successful at work and at home.

Habits: After each session, participants commit to a few simple, high leverage practices that will serve to improve their leadership with tangible measures. After the first session, Rita chose to focus her practices on life balance issues, recognizing that without more discipline in that aspect of her life, her position would be untenable. Rita chose three simple disciplines: she committed to working no more than 8 hours a day for at least two days a week which included not bringing work home on those days. She agreed to close the door to her office for 15 minutes in the morning and afternoon twice a week. Additionally, she dedicated one weekend a month to being totally focused on her family.

Results

When Rita returned for her second session, she reported having had a fair degree of success in meeting these goals. She was able to limit herself to eight-hour workdays at least two times per week except on the weeks when she traveled. And in the two-month interval between sessions, she had actually dedicated three weekends exclusively to her family. At first she admitted it was hard to close her office door, but she managed to do this 15 minutes a day twice a week. Finding that small practice so valuable, she increased the number of days to 3-4 times per week.

One might question how these practices apply to leadership development: Rita reported that her stress levels at work were much lower; she was able to plan more proactively on her important projects and this enabled her to be firm and clear with her direct reports; her colleagues had noted a change in her demeanor, especially after her “alone time”; they saw her as more available, relaxed and focused at work; Rita reported that she was able to respond to situations more thoughtfully and thoroughly. Additionally, Rita’s family was thankful to have more of her attention. She was more relaxed around her children and husband and had more fun with them.

As the Lab progressed, Rita continued to maintain focus on staying balanced. She found her comfort level at work was much higher. She was more focused and productive and she simply felt better. Her colleagues also noted this change. Rita felt she had better

relationships with her direct reports. By the end of the Leadership Laboratory[®], Rita believed she could maintain and thrive in her new position for as long as she wanted to. She had found the key to her own long-term success within the Agency.

For more information contact Gilburg Leadership Institute, Inc. at 413-534-6934, or visit our website: www.gilburgleadership.com.