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# TEAM ADVANTAGE PILOT YIELDS TANGIBLE BUSINESS IMPACTS



**T**he Pyramid Resource Group conducted the proprietary Team Advantage™ program with Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC). A professional coach from the Pyramid team led the project and was assisted by two internal coaches from Blue Cross. The company saw tangible business impacts from the process as described below.

*“Team Advantage had a positive impact on our employees. Morale began to increase with the teams. Once they saw how we were collaborating, they began to engage more cross-functionally with each other.”* – BCBS Participant

## The Situation

The Membership Operations Management team was looking to develop more cohesion and collaboration among their leaders in order to drive improved business results. They were accustomed to

operating in silos with little sharing of ideas and best practices. Senior management hoped to establish more “enterprise thinking” within the department.

The management team tried other interventions in the past with little success and there had been many false starts due to the amount of change within the organization. Although the leaders received formal training, there wasn’t an opportunity for them to put their learning into “action” in a way that provided positive coaching to help push beyond what they considered to be barriers to change.

## The Solution

The team agreed to participate in a pilot team coaching program using a proprietary process known as **Team Advantage™**. Internal BCBS coaches had participated in a Team Advantage certification workshop and teamed with an experienced professional coach from The Pyramid Resource Group to implement the program.

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Team Advantage is a four-month team coaching program preceded by one to two months of preparation prior to a kickoff workshop. In the preparatory stage known as Phase 1, the team leader works with the coaching team to set the stage for the program and information is gathered on the team. During a live two-day kick-off workshop – Phase 2 – the coaches work with the team to create a team charter, an extraordinary goal to be achieved in four months, and a detailed plan to accomplish the goal. A critical element of this workshop is that the team creates both the goal and the plan and assumes ownership and accountability for its execution. And, the plan is created as a “game plan” complete with a point system that helps promote fun and ongoing measurement of progress. The team refers to Team Advantage as “the game.”

Phase 3 is the coaching stage and what differentiates Team Advantage from the typical team building event. The team meets regularly with the coaching team over a four-month period and this planned interaction produces many positive benefits which are detailed below. For the Membership Operations Team, the lead coach was from The Pyramid Resource Group while two internal BCBS coaches stayed engaged with the team on a daily basis. During their regular meetings, the Pyramid coach engaged the team telephonically while the team members and internal coaches met face-to-face.

Phase 4 of Team Advantage is the celebration phase and this is incorporated throughout the game. In addition, the team leader offers a reward if the team accomplished their goal and scores all the points they had establishes in their game plan.

## The Challenges

Initially, the team was very skeptical about Team Advantage and looked at it as just another attempt

to initiate change, one more “flavor of the month.” The first day of the kickoff workshop was challenging and the team struggled to come up with a goal for their game. There was also the question of timing. They were launching Team Advantage in fourth quarter and there was a general uneasiness about the time commitment required given the typical year-end workload.

## The Shift

Day 2 of the kickoff workshop provided a breakthrough for the team. They decided on an extraordinary goal that would focus on team empowerment and engagement and created strategic drivers around staff development, staff behavior, attendance, and alignment of policy and procedures. Their skepticism about time commitment was allayed by an exercise known as the “fast forward focus” that identified all barriers to their success in implementing their plan. They realized there would be no excuses that they could not overcome.

The ongoing coaching sessions became the most valuable aspect of Team Advantage. There was nearly 100% participation in every session and there was a renewed sense of commitment from the team. Their operating silos started to break down, and communication among the management team reached a new level of efficiency. And probably the most significant shift was the “transformation” from managing day-to-day work to now “leading” their direct reports and encouraging their teams to explore process improvements. Leadership became the focus of their work and they empowered their teams and each other.

The Team Advantage process helped to redirect their focus in a way that increased employee engagement through empowering their staff to take on more responsibility.

## The Results

Along with the attitudinal shifts of the management team, tangible business impacts were also observed. Impacts included:

- ◆ Of the seven managers who participated in Team Advantage, four made improvements in their next talent review placement.
- ◆ The overall team realized a 65% reduction in overtime, equivalent to 6 FTE's.
- ◆ The team accelerated completion of Phase 1 of the operational inventory management process.
- ◆ The Team Advantage process led to a new approach to planning and organizing the Q4 Open Enrollment for Group and Individual business.
- ◆ Employee engagement in the department increased.
- ◆ There was a 45% increase in "PROPS," BCBS's program that offers a tangible way to recognize and be recognized for a job well done.

Team Advantage produced outcomes that were both measurable and observable in business results and behavior while having a profound personal and professional impact on emerging BCBS leaders. The following quote from one of the Team Advantage participants best sums up the potential of this program for sustainable change:

*On a personal level, I was able to "find my voice". Pre Team Advantage, I was the type to keep a silent voice with thoughts and ideas running through my mind with fear of sharing with others. I confessed my long time fear of sharing, stepped out of my comfort zone during one of the Team Advantage sessions, my peers encouraged me and from that time until now, I have built a confidence level and encouraged to know that I have a voice and it needs to be heard. Since that time, I can't stop talking and I feel so free.*

— BCBS Participant

**If you would like to learn more about Team Advantage™ and the potential benefits for your company, contact Mary Frances Coryell at (919) 677-9300, x117.**