

# CREATING SUSTAINABLE CHANGE THROUGH TEAM COACHING



**T**eam Advantage was successfully used by a municipal government to reconstruct its utility services division. A professional coach from The Pyramid Resource Group teamed with an internal coach who was certified in the proprietary team coaching process to promote a culture shift to a more collaborative work team. This yielded both tangible monetary benefits and profound changes in leadership attitudes.

*“Team Advantage raised my self-awareness which empowered me to make adjustments. I know that I need to be my best self at all times.”*

## The Situation

Several intervention options were considered for the team. The guiding principle was that of building a solid team, addressing identified issues, and changing the way the team saw themselves, each other, the division, and the customers. Changes

needed to be strategic and sustainable. They needed to address matters of scale and speed. And they would need to include an element of fun, as team morale was especially low.

Traditional approaches to team formation were considered along with business coaching strategies and assessment tools. In the end, the decision was made to use Team Advantage. Team Advantage uses elements of traditional team building but also incorporates sustainable coaching for both team members and team leaders. The process has been successfully used by call centers in other industries, and call center operations were critical to the utility division.

## The Process

Team Advantage took place over the course of nearly six months. The external coach from Pyramid teamed with the certified internal coach and this combination proved valuable throughout the process and set the stage for continued sustainability.

***“As an experienced leader of complex organizations and people, I realized, I was at impasse when trying to bring two groups that had become polarized back to an agreed upon purpose. Team Advantage helped us all break down walls, open lines of communications, and re-build a positive working relationship.”***

Team Advantage consists of four phases and begins with engaging the team leader in the coaching process. For this effort, two managers were provided one-on-one coaching, with the internal coach working with an Assistant Director and the external coach working with the Utility Manager.

Phase 1 was an assessment of the team, including confidential interviews with all team members. The coaches conducted the interviews and developed a theme report that was shared with the two senior managers.

As part of Phase 2, the theme report was shared with the team at the off-site kickoff workshop facilitated by the two coaches. The team engaged in many honest and somewhat contentious conversations. For example, it had been discovered that there were nonproductive team dynamics getting in the way, with individuals feeling marginalized and not respected by their teammates. During the kickoff days, they successfully created a team charter and developed a comprehensive “game plan,” a unique feature of Team Advantage that is intended to help tie team building to concrete business goals.

The team named their game plan “Crossing Bridges,” which was a metaphor for their commitment to building new levels of communication with each other. The game plan not only focused on their business goal, but also provided four strategic drivers to move them forward as a division: communication, process and roles, developmental opportunities, and living the team charter.

Phase 3 is the most important part of Team Advantage. Phase 3 is the ongoing team coaching that accelerates team development. Twelve live meetings were scheduled, with a “coach approach” used in addition to the on-going one-on-one coaching with the senior leaders.

***“I have to say Team Advantage made many impacts and even though it “ended” several months ago – I am still seeing the return on investment.”***

## **The Results**

Phase 3 began slowly with cautious optimism. There were those who already saw small steps forward and wanted to keep the momentum going; returning to the previous way of “working together” was not an option. The team, as a whole, was more supportive of each other and they worked to sustain the initiative by taking responsibility for their actions and commitments. Indeed, the team began to see tangible results that included:

- ◆ Roles were more clearly defined, which helped with accountability.
- ◆ Communication was happening more often, more openly, and among different groups.
- ◆ There was a common goal of improving the process, procedures, options, and solutions, which would improve service to the customers.

And there were other tangible results that could be measured:

- ◆ The team completed 49 work items in the six months that they worked through this process, which was 30 items more than they had completed in the prior six months. This work output positively affected other staff and customers in positive ways as well.
- ◆ The average time to handle a customer call decreased by more than 25 percent.

- ◆ There was a decrease in the average talk time or handle time for each customer call. The average cost per call went from \$2.30 with a talk time of 8 minutes and 22 seconds per call to a cost of \$1.70, with an average talk time of 6 minutes and 10 seconds – an average savings of \$27,515 per month.

The savings were largely attributed to better overall management of the workload, technical improvements to aid efficiency, and a more cooperative team effort. In fact, the savings achieved in one month practically paid for the investment in Team Advantage, with the internal/external combination of coaches.

***“The impact overflowed within my entire team. Team members that were not even part of Team Advantage began to see and feel the effects of Leadership working through Team Advantage. In fact, they began to make changes, adapt, and work towards our Team Charter.”***

## **The Impact**

Phase 4 of Team Advantage is the celebration of team transformation and the results of this process were profound. The team committed to further growth both as a team and as individuals. They are making sure that each person on the team has a voice and is heard, which they had learned through this process was not always the case. This group took a lot of risks in making themselves vulnerable to a new way of working together and, through that, found their courage to address problems in a positive way. There will continue to be a strong desire to work across boundaries to improve knowledge sharing and upgrade processes. As they persist in seeking opportunities to improve, they will continue to hold the relationships with each other as important as completing their tasks.

The team committed to ongoing professional development. The internal coach will continue to work with the team to introduce complimentary tools that solidify the learning from Team Advantage. The team continues to revisit the charter they developed together and make appropriate improvements in this living document that has been so critical to their success with the team coaching process.

***“This was a way for me to learn how to better interact with the team to let them do their jobs so I can do my job better. I loved watching the team grow and I really appreciate the way they are working more cooperatively to creatively solve problems and make the organization better.”***



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