



Coaching Exercise #18

Coaching the Narcissistic Employee

Alex Sample is a 46-year Vice President of Finance at *Treasure Corp. Worldwide*. He plays a key role in managing the treasury and tax functions for the firm. He is responsible for overseeing 57 employees, which consist of five team leads. Alex is an expert Finance Officer with 22 years of experience and holds MBA and CPA degrees from Harvard University. He has managed funds, taxes and allocated resources very effectively. He is a master at resolving tax/account issues. He has attracted hundreds of clients to the firm because of his skillful financial service/skills.

Recently, the executive Vice President has called Alex in to discuss a series of complaints about him and his leadership style. Alex's team leads feel that he is more focused on reprimanding them than developing their potential. They feel like they don't have leeway to make their own decisions even though they are in management positions and feel entitled to do so. Alex is typically very boastful about his accomplishments, has an air of superiority, expresses defensiveness when challenged by others, and can be manipulative and deceiving when in his best interests.

Every time they try to have talks with Alex, he reminds them how he has more expertise and experience than they do. The staff feels that even when they try their best and do good work, he never recognizes or acknowledges them; rather he only tries to look at what they have done wrong. Several staff members have experienced Alex's condescending behavior in staff meetings has resulted in their fear to speak up and contribute. Overall, they feel like they are losing motivation to be productive at their jobs.

The executive VP and senior team is presented with a dilemma. How do they keep one of their high profile key players that contributed significantly to the firm's ROI, while addressing his teams' concerns about Alex's leadership practices and interpersonal behaviors. They have suggested that Alex seek an executive coach to address some of these issues.

Directions: You have been delegated to be Alex's coach. Break up in dyads, and answer the following questions:

1. Would you take this assignment as Alex's Executive Coach?
2. What are the pitfalls of this type of assignment? What are the risks? Are there any legal risks?
3. What are some of the key issues to address with Alex?
4. What approach/strategies would you utilize in coaching Alex?
5. What are the steps you would take in coaching Alex?
6. What are typical tools/metrics with this type of client?

Describing the Narcissistic Employee

1. *Entitlement*: The belief that one is good at manipulating people and is entitled to do so.
2. *Authority*: The belief that one possesses an extraordinary ability to influence others and excels at leading others.
3. *Superiority/Arrogance*: The belief that one is just better than others and is a born leader.
4. *Self-absorption/Self-admiration*: A belief that one is special and deserves recognition.

6 Tips for Coaching Narcissistic Employee

- ✓ Focus on developing social, interpersonal, and communication skills (i.e., improving the client's emotional intelligence and helping them eliminate interpersonal blind spots).
- ✓ Coaches should consider utilizing both personality/style and 360-degree feedback assessments.
- ✓ This type of coaching intervention will typically require a lengthier intervention to ensure that these clients fully understand how they are experienced and perceived by others.
- ✓ Expect this type of client to be somewhat defensive and challenging as they often lack "self-awareness" because of their low levels of emotional intelligence. Therefore, provide direct, candid feedback (See DESC Technique).
- ✓ Seek additional insight and recommendations by consulting a clinical practitioner if you believe this individual expresses classic symptoms of *Narcissistic Personality Disorder* or any other clinical disorder.
- ✓ Be mindful when the coaching is simply not working with such clients. Most individuals expressing this personality disorder are unlikely to make major shifts in their personality but by finding the "what's in it for me" you can make substantial progress