

Coaching and Team Development for a Senior Leader at Cisco

Brightlife creates transformational change when leaders engage them not just for personal executive coaching but also for team development. An integrated approach enables a much deeper transformation that has wide reaching benefits for the organisation. This is exactly what happened with the Technical Services team at Cisco, led by Phil Wolfenden.



It started with coaching

Phil engaged his Brightlife executive coach in 2012 to help him find a way to progress to more senior levels within Cisco while staying aligned with his own personal values and his firm belief in Authentic Leadership. His coach built a deep relationship with him from the start and facilitated a way for Phil to totally change his perspective on the problem at hand. This enabled him to really align his goal with his core values and make the progress he was looking for. He says that the coaching has given him huge insights into himself:

"I know myself 100% better than I did 2 years ago. It's held up a mirror to me and not just professionally. The word I would use is enlightened. I know myself much better, I know what I want to achieve much better. I've had many personal insights, many strengths I didn't really know I had that I've exercised."



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What results did Brightlife achieve?

Two and a half years later, Phil achieved the promotion he had been aiming for, promotion to the coveted and very difficult to achieve Vice President level.

"Over the months and years, my coach showed me that I was asking the wrong question. The question I should have been asking was what do I want to achieve? I firmly believed that I would have to be someone else to be successful. Now I believe that it's because I am as I am that I will be successful. My perceptions were changed to such a degree that I realised that once I was promoted to Vice President, that actually achieving the title wasn't particularly important. What was important was my continued journey to add value to the company in increasing and different ways and the title of Vice President is just a milestone on the journey. What I want to achieve from my professional life has changed as a result of that perception shift."

Cisco has benefitted enormously from the coaching work Phil has done.

"I'm much more effective than I was. I'm much more willing to grow. Cisco will gain many more years from me. They've found a big supporter of moving the company into a much more diverse leadership culture."

Phil also believes that his team benefitted from the work that he has done with his coach, because it became apparent that he needed to stop doing certain things with the team to enable the team to grow and develop.

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Developing the team

As well as his own personal coaching, he has engaged Brightlife to work specifically with his team - both as a group through workshops and individually through coaching for each of his direct reports.

“We set out on a journey with the team – we are a couple of sessions in. And we have started to move the needle. There are some real tangible results which show that they are thinking for themselves more, they are collaborating amongst themselves more rather than through me and they’re taking responsibility for their combined operation, not just their teams. So they’re actually becoming a team.”

The team participated in a DISC session, which provided self-awareness individually and as a team.

“We looked at what mix of behaviours we have in the team, how we improve the mix of what we haven’t got in the team and how we now use the knowledge we have of each other to improve our communication and collaboration.”

And they’ve loved it. According to Phil,

“The feedback I’ve had from every single team member is why didn’t we do this 2 years ago? And a real enthusiasm – it’s rekindled the interest in being part of the team. As well as the tangible things like we’re learning how to show up better and work together better, there’s also a sense of this team being the place where things are happening, where things are done differently. And that’s exciting for them.”

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To sum up

Phil sums up his experience of Brightlife by referring to his coach, Kate Warren.

“Kate is the best person in the industry in her field. She is just outstanding at what she does. The company is built in her image and she has built an extremely diverse team, from all kinds of backgrounds. Brightlife are people that have not only industry experience but also life experience. The coaches are exceptional and Kate herself is above exceptional.”

Start your transformational leadership journey

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