

Case Study: The ROI on the Strategic Application of Coaching, Coach Training and Assessments in a Credit Union Environment

The Background:

With corporate offices in Trail, Kootenay Savings Credit Union offers a full spectrum of financial services to thirteen branches throughout the East and West Kootenays, \$750 million in assets, 40,000 members and 250 employees. It also owns insurance and wealth management subsidiaries and operates a community foundation.

Prior to 2006, the main focus for Kootenay Saving Credit Union (KSCU) was to build sound infrastructure, solid business practices, member acquisition and community responsibility. Since 2006, KSCU has shifted their focus to embrace another bottom line – **Employee Engagement**.

Through **bold leadership** the CEO Brent Tremblay, and his senior team, continue to integrate a coaching culture to support their strategic goals and grow leaders throughout the organization. As a result of **clear vision and commitment** to their employees this organization continues to break new ground and create solid results by incorporating coaching in all aspects of their work. It is no longer just a tool or application to learn but a 'presence of being' that weaves its way through the day to day communication, overall employee development and the performance management process.

KSCU is an organization that now **walks its talk**, where employees matter, where they build strong and effective working relationships and develop long term careers. The coaching that is taking place throughout the whole organization, from the CEO to the front line staff, promotes powerful performance management and employee development opportunities and is a perfect fit with the organizations core values.

There is a direct link between the coaching efforts of this entire organization to having the **appetite and ability to execute complex strategic initiatives and projects** while managing organizational change successfully. With continued focus, this organization will clearly meet its strategic goal as one of the top 50 employers in BC by 2011, if not sooner.

The Situation

In 2005, KSCU undertook their first Employee Opinion Survey (EOS). Twenty-four survey items (out of 154) were rated unfavorably by at least 30% of employees. The following five items represent the greatest challenges facing KSCU at that time.

1. Management Effectiveness
2. Career Development and Training
3. Communication
4. Performance Management
5. Organization Image and Change

As a result of the EOS, the consulting team of Bock and Associates, along with feedback from the Advisory Committees and the employees of KSCU, created the Career Development Initiative. Our goal was to integrate and utilize coaching across the organization to support:

- Bolder leadership,
- Stronger working relationships,
- More effective communication,
- Meaningful performance feedback, and
- Career planning, training and education choices.

From 2006 through to today, KSCU has undergone significant changes. Coach training, coaching and coach leadership have been integrated throughout the organization – *every employee (250) is coached for growth and development*. Senior management, supervisory staff and the Internal Coaching Team are designated as the major change agents and are the catalysts for embedding the coaching culture into the various aspects of the organization.

“We are building a coaching culture – we are taking it right to the core.” The Senior Management Team is being coached; all management staff has been trained to coach; the Internal Coaching Team continues to work towards their ICF certification by coaching the coaches; we are coaching at all levels ... this is the way of our future.”

Brent Tremblay, CEO, KSCU, 2008

The original Career Development Initiative was brought about in 2006 as a result of an Employee Opinion Survey (EOS) conducted in 2005 by management. The employees of KSCU sent a number of clear messages to management indicating that they wanted opportunities for more training and career planning, more meaningful feedback as to their performance and more accountability for their day to day roles. Through considerable research Bock and Associates recommended a number of tools for the senior team/advisory committee to choose from that would support the requests of the employees as well as tie into the current tools being used by the organization which supported any technical training being offered. The organization needed a tool and framework that would both assess the ‘softer’ skills of each employee and provide a mechanism to support the supervisors to have meaningful conversations with their direct reports. The project team chose the Profile XT (PXT) tool from HiringSmart Canada, Inc.

Profile XT is designed to create a comprehensive picture of the total person by examining an individual’s thinking style, behavioural traits and their occupational interests. It provides the flip side of the technical competencies by profiling how an individual is hardwired. The focus isn’t about what the employee does but why the employee does what they do – it is not a DISC assessment and it does not measure competencies. What it does do is support an individual to understand their behaviours and thinking styles in order to identify a possible career path that fits their profile – for some they are in the right role for others they are not. PXT helps both the employee and the supervisor identify that fit and then be able to create personal action plans that support that person’s success.

The tool is very powerful and comes with 9 various reports which can be used for a multiple of functions including coaching and development, career planning, hiring, managing and succession planning. One of the key reports initially used was the coaching report which matches an individual’s results with a specific job profile and provides potential coaching questions for the supervisor to use during a coaching session.

Supervisors were trained in using the tool and provided with mentor coaching to ensure effective coaching was taking place throughout the organization. Employees experienced a meaningful conversation with their supervisor that was focused on themselves and their goals versus the old system which often focused on meeting a set of predetermined competencies.

As a result of the Career Development Initiative, communication, employee training and development as well as performance management is all underpinned with the PXT tool and a coach approach. The subsequent performance management process is now more flexible and employee-centered. Coaching has provided a means to shift from a static form interview to an open conversation with employees as to what’s working well and what’s not. Questions are geared towards the employees, their current work performance, their goals and dreams and what they are committed to doing going forward. Employees are now responsible and accountable for their own growth and development, and supervisors are now ‘coaches and facilitators’ of that dialogue.

The Outcome

Following all the work and effort of the Career Development Initiative during 2007 and 2008, a Member Survey and two additional Employee Opinion Surveys were completed and the results revealed consistent and in most cases, significant improvement. The success that was realized over those three years was notably due in part to coaching being woven into so many strategic initiatives as well as the focused improvement made to the Performance Management process and the endeavors created to improve employee recognition and feedback.

You will note in the table below, each of the five key challenges facing KSCU in 2005 improved significantly and the additional improvements resulted as by-products of that effort

		2005	2007	2008	Overall % Increase
	Dimension	% Favour	% Favour	% Favour	
Initial Focus	Management Effectiveness	46	59	65	39
	Career Development & Training	58	68	78	35
	Communication	57	68	71	25
	Performance Management	55	57	62	13
	Organization Image & Change	64	82	87	36
Additional improvements noted	Sales and Quality Service	57	63	68	20
	Job Content & Satisfaction	72	77	80	11
	Teamwork	66	74	75	14
	Pay & Benefits	73	69	76	4
	Supervision	63	70	74	17
	Decision Making	50	59	57	14
	Work Organization/Environment	73	81	74	1

Determining Return on Investment (ROI) and benefits to the organization for something 'soft' such as coaching is always a challenge, but the above table clearly demonstrates significant improvements in major areas of business and employee management.

Worth noting is when Bock and Associates began facilitating focus groups with the employees of KSCU, trust was a key topic of concern throughout the whole organization but specifically between the employees of KSCU and Senior Management. The topic of trust seemed to underpin a number of the key areas requiring improvement such as communication, performance management, and change management.

On numerous occasions, since those focus groups, the senior team has had their trust levels put to the test. At first glance the team appeared to be strong and cohesive; however the results of a 360° survey clearly showed that was not the case. The survey scores and comments illustrated a perceived lack of trust amongst some of the senior management team members and their colleagues indicated they wanted more harmony and solidarity from the senior group. Therefore, in order to improve their internal trust index to an acceptable level for the team as a whole, a serious commitment to both personal mastery and 1:1 coaching was established. In my opinion, this was a key turning point for the

organization. Through hard work, great modeling and a willingness to be vulnerable, the senior team stepped into their leadership roles and openly rebuilt and strengthened their relationships and trust between themselves and the employees of KSCU.

It was through that effort that this team increased their overall level of trust within the senior team itself by 75%, as noted on a team index taken during a senior team workshop, and by 70% within the whole organization as noted on the 2008 EOS.

Additional Outcomes

The following bullets include data and comments from the senior team 360° survey results, data from HR as well as direct quotes or summaries from discussions with the senior team and staff.

- Coaching and Leadership Development:
 - The senior team has strengthened their own leadership competencies by participating in 1:1 and group coaching sessions. All areas of their leadership performance have increased across all rater groups as noted in their second 360° survey results. Specifically employees noted that more coaching was happening, the senior team was more accessible to staff, decisions were more timely and over all, the group was managing more effectively.
 - Every employee receives coaching – all 250 employees are provided with Performance Development Planning where they identify what’s working well and what’s not. Through a coaching process they create individual and employee-centered action plans that promote growth, development and effective performance.

“I always look forward to my coaching sessions and I value the insights I always get from being the coach and the coachee.”

Shelley Welsh, Regional Manager North

“I really liked the introduction my coach uses ~ “What has been good about your day, or what is really working for you today”, then the question, “what challenges or problems have you had?” These questions quickly clear up the need to down load & they open the door for me to solve my own challenges in a safe environment with the support, guidance, & experience of my coaching partner.”

Jenny Jones, Deposit Service Advisor

Having leaders who intentionally influence and develop other leaders is a precious asset to an organization. Through intense leadership development work, the senior team now intentionally seeks opportunities to coach, mentor and groom employees to embrace their own leadership strengths as evidenced in the high numbers of internal promotions given in response to expansion and growth..

2007	2 Management positions posted	1 filled internally	50%
2008	5 Management positions posted	4 filled internally	80%
2009 YTD	8 Management positions posted	8 filled internally	100%

- Firmly convinced of the impact of coaching on the organization, KSCU further invested by creating an Internal Coaching Team. Six passionate individuals were identified and chosen to continue their formal coach training (ICF accredited) and create a new coaching entity within the organization. Their key role is to mentor coach the supervisory staff (45 employees) in order to intentionally strengthen the coaching capacity of that management staff. *Thus a cascading effect is taking place: External coaches coach the senior team and the internal coaching team, who then coach the Management team, who then coach their frontline staff.*

- Enhanced Performance:
 - KSCU is also moving towards strengthening their sales and service culture through coaching. The coach training and ICF competencies practiced today provide a solid foundation for the sales and target coaching currently being implemented to expand the organization's ability to meet the needs of its members and flex with the current turbulent financial times.
- Tangible Business Results:
 - One of the key goals of the Career Development Initiative was to improve the uptake of lifelong learning. Through the coaching dialogue during the Performance Development Planning process, employees noted they were now feeling "more valued" and "supported" resulting in their level of engagement in education and training increasing.
 - Between 2005 and 2008, the numbers of employees engaged in formal training or education increased 104%.
 - Worth noting to date:
 - 6 internal coaches have completed their accredited training requirement for ICF credentials and all of them are working towards completing their ACC by December 31, 2009.
 - Currently:
 - two managers are enrolled in MBA programs
 - 3 managers are enrolled in some form of university level education

- Change Management:

- Moving through transition and managing change can often be an area of failure for some organizations; however KSCU now consciously manages the impact of change on the overall organization through the efforts and formal change workshops provided by the Project Management Office.

During the Career Development Initiative it was imperative to manage the immense change that was being introduced to the employees over the three year period. Even though the changes were often created as a result of staff feedback, employees still went through the change phases differently. Therefore while Bock and Associates was teaching the supervisory staff how to coach, they also simultaneously spent time holding half day information sessions to demystify coaching and prep the 210 frontline staff in 16 different locations on what to expect from coaching and how this new initiative would impact their work lives and possibly their personal lives. It was important that everyone knew what to expect from coaching and how they could support each other and their supervisors as everyone was learning and attempting something new.

Since then coaching has prepared employees for change. It enables resistance and fear to be acknowledged and addressed as well as balanced with the excitement and creativity of new ideas.

- Team Effectiveness:

- Ratings from the 2008 EOS identifies a 14% increase in team effectiveness and comments such as the quote below from the 2008 senior management 360° survey results indicate that improvements are being noticed from staff.
 - *"Great strides have been made during the last year in improving the senior managements' united front and in communicating common messages to the rest of KSCU." Anonymous*

- Employee Engagement:

- One of the main reasons employee satisfaction rates have grown from 61% in 2005 to 72% in 2008, is that employees have been consistently shown over the last three years that 'they matter'.

From the beginning of the Career Development Initiative there was resistance, skepticism and a belief from some employees, that the whole 'coaching thing' was just another 'trend of the day'. However, from ensuring all supervisory staff engaged in strategic planning, to coaching being integrated throughout the whole organization, to new performance management efforts, to employee recognition programs to educational investments, the employees of KSCU have been given solid proof that these efforts are genuine and the CEO and senior team is committed to being the employer of choice by 2011.

"I feel like the company values me, which is happening to me because of the coaching. I feel that it doesn't matter who you are or what your title is, each of us matter." 2008

Tara Briggeman, Employee Development Advisor and Member of the Internal Coaching Team

- Customer Service:

- Based on feedback from the 2007 Member Survey, three areas that the coaching initiative has likely impacted the positive results were in the service section relating to:
 - Understanding member needs
 - Providing proactive advice, and
 - The continuous evaluation of members' financial objectives.

- Problem-Solving and Communication:

- KSCU uses coaching to enhance daily performance through a coach-approach to their day-to-day communication and management. Supervisors are no longer 'the rescuers' but strive to build employee problem-solving capacity and bench strength by empowering their employees to create their own solutions and results.
- Supervisory staff is strongly encouraged to get out of their offices and do 'walk-about's'. Their purpose is to connect to their direct reports and build relationships. By being present they check in on an individual level, ask about action plan progress, specifically provide feedback on good work being done and assist where challenges are occurring. 87% of KSCU employees feel their supervisors or someone at work cares about them as a person.

- Organizational Alignment with Personal Goals:

- 94% of KSCU employees have a good understanding of the organizations vision and 88% know what's expected of them at work. The change to a coach approach along with the assessments and tools used during the Performance Development Planning meetings, allow employees and the supervisors to have open conversations about future employment goals. Employees are encourage to shift from 'having a job' to creating meaningful careers. Job fit is critical to building champions, increasing employee satisfaction and achieving organizational success.

- Sales and Service:

- The organization continues to develop and is now simultaneously expanding their ICF competency-based coaching skills to include another layer of coaching which is sales or target coaching for their sales and service program. It's because of their solid foundational training that the employees are able to distinguish between coaching for grow and develop, to coaching to meet sales and service targets. It's this commitment to coaching and coach training that is key to the future success of also building a solid sales and service culture.

Brent Tremblay, CEO, was vital in enrolling the support required by the organization as a whole to ensure solid uptake and success. As mentioned earlier, initially there were pockets of skepticism and reservation throughout the employee body that required vision, patience and nurturing to bring to fruition. Brent was significant in solidifying that effort, by being coached himself, then by participating in coaching skills development and continuously reminding everyone of the vision and effort required to get there.

The Senior Management, as a whole, also contributed to the coaching initiative. Their willingness to be transparent amongst their peers and colleagues encouraged other management staff and employees to embrace and trust the process.

Two Vice Presidents, Sandi MacArthur and Larry Holm deserve additional acknowledgement for their efforts and dedication to the initiative.

1. Sandi, VP of Information Technology/Project Management Office was the Project Manager for the Career Development Initiative. Not only did Sandi champion the initiative but she also embraced coaching as a personal goal. Sandi is a Senior Management champion on the Internal Coaching Team. She has completed her ICF accredited training and is working towards her ACC credentials.
2. Larry Holm, VP of Human Resources joined KSCU just as coaching was beginning to be implemented. Huge kudos to Larry for willingly stepping into his role as project sponsor and holding the vision, long after the initiative had formally ended. Larry continues to recognize the importance of maintaining a steady and continuous focus on coaching and leadership efforts in order to create a lasting coaching culture.

Today, the Internal Coaching Team is establishing their influence and status as coaching experts. Their individual passion and commitment to coaching along with the respect of their peers will enable this team to contribute and fortify the impact of coaching on the organization. All members of the team are currently coaching individuals from their peer group; they participate in mentor coaching and coaching audits as well as monthly community of practice sessions to reinforce their confidence and skills as internal coaches.

The following table outlines the full slate of coaching, coach training and leadership development that KSCU has completed to date.

COACH TRAINING			COACHING			LEADERSHIP		
DATE	DESCRIPTION	# OF PARTICIPANTS	DATE	DESCRIPTION	# OF PARTICIPANTS	DATE	DESCRIPTION	# OF PARTICIPANTS
2006	Basic Coach training 3 Days	Senior Team and Supervising staff 46	2006 through 2007	CEO coaching with external coach	2/month	2007	360 Survey and debrief	Senior Management Team 6
2006	Information Sessions Prepping for coaching half day	All Employees 250	2006 through 2007	Mentor Coaching External coaches coaching to coach & support 1. Career & Employee development 2. Day to Day performance and management	46 supervising staff received 12 hrs of 1:1 mentor coaching All employees received 1:1 coaching 250	2007	Leadership Training	Senior Management Team 6
2006	Certified Executive Coach Program Royal Roads University	1 Manager	2008	External Coaching for Senior Management Team	6 months 3 VP's	2008	One Day intro to Leadership training & coaching practice	Senior Team and Supervising staff 46
2007 2008	ICF Accredited Coach Training Level I 3 Days	46 Senior Team and Supervising staff	2008-09	Mentor & group coaching for Internal Coaching Team with audits	8 months 6	2008	6 days of Leadership & coach training	6
2008	ICF Accredited Coach Training Level II 3 Day onsite 3 Month tele-classes	Internal Coaching Team 6	2009	Mentor and group coaching for Internal Coaching Team with audits	6 months 6	2008	Repeat 360 Survey and debrief	Senior Management Team 6
2008	Coach Practice sessions half day	46 Senior Team and Supervising staff	2009	Mentor Coaching for VP of Human Resources	1	2009	360 Survey and debrief	All Supervising staff 46
2008 2009	Mentor Coaching Sessions 1 day/month	Internal Coaching Team 6	2008 2009	Sales and Service Coaching	Sales staff and Managing staff 150			
2008 2009	Sales Coach Training 5 days	46 Senior Team and Supervising staff						