

THE *RENEGADE* LEADER®

Debora McLaughlin • The Executive Coach

Nonprofits face many challenges, and they need to face them as a cohesive unit. But the skills that bring managers to the top of their profession may not be the skills needed to lead, motivate and mentor a team. Debora McLaughlin coaches executives to increase morale and productivity for their teams, their organizations and themselves.

Case Study: Nonprofit Executives

by Sharon Bailly, TWP Marketing & Technical Communications

“Debora was tremendously beneficial and very responsive....She dramatically improved my relationships with my supervisors and staff. She gave me the opportunity to grow.”

Director,
Easter Seals New Hampshire

“Coaching is a positive experience,” states a client of Debora McLaughlin who was recently promoted to vice president at Easter Seals New Hampshire (Easter Seals NH). “Your supervisor is saying, ‘We think so highly of you, we are willing to invest in you.’”

For Easter Seals NH, that investment began with hiring Debora McLaughlin to coach three executives who were facing the challenges of high turnover and low employee engagement. McLaughlin says, “Easter Seals NH recognized the difficulties every new leader faces in creating an energized, collaborative environment for the staff—and keeping themselves motivated, too. Nationally, it costs about \$3500 to replace an employee making \$8.00 an hour. Stress and unhappiness with the work environment exact a high cost in turnover, as well as in absenteeism and illness, affecting health care costs. Low morale leads to low productivity, which increase the cost of delivering products and services.”

McLaughlin has worked as a management catalyst for 25 years. Her background includes two masters degrees in psychology (from Hunter College and Rivier College), professional certifications by the International Coach Federation and the Career Coach Institute and certification in multicultural counseling from Rivier College. Her corporate experience has made her an expert in communication and navigating relationships from executive suites to employee cubicles. She now helps leaders:

- Understand the dynamics of employee engagement
- Adapt their leadership style to improve communication and teamwork
- Align high performing teams to fulfill the organization’s goals
- Foster a culture that vibrates with passion and energy

“Debora got to know the company and guide the coachees in a way that was beneficial to the agency. You could visibly see the change.”

Tina Sharby,
Senior Vice President,
Easter Seals New
Hampshire

When McLaughlin takes on a coaching assignment, she begins by making sure she understands the organization’s overall goals. Larry Gammon, the CEO and President of Easter Seals NH, stressed the need for managers to understand the organization’s overriding vision. Because Easter Seals NH is always developing new programs to benefit the populations they serve, he wanted to build an organization with a sense of community that allowed staff to more easily adapt to change and unite for common goals.

With this philosophy of teamwork and flexibility in mind, McLaughlin helped her coachees to recognize how their styles of management and leadership fit into the organization as a whole; and showed them how to motivate and improve communications with their staff, donors and clients.

The Easter Seals NH vice president reaped the benefits of McLaughlin’s approach, “Debora helped me understand my style and the style of my direct reports. My staff is more comfortable and I’m more comfortable. Problems pop up but now I am much more confident in resolving them.”

“People are much better managers when they live congruently with their real selves and understand the different ways that others approach their jobs,” says McLaughlin.” Not everyone is driven toward leadership. Some are more intuitive, good at influencing people. Some are more process oriented, good at figuring out procedures and operations. Some are most content when their role is spelled out and they have assigned tasks. These are all valid approaches and all necessary for a team and an organization to move forward.”

Tina Sharby, Senior Vice President of Human Resources at Easter Seals NH, helped in the decision to bring in McLaughlin as an outside coach. “I felt the individuals involved would be more receptive and Debora would be more objective. She got to know our company and guide the coachees in a way that was beneficial to the agency. You could visibly see the change.”

One of those coachees, an Easter Seals NH director, explains how McLaughlin’s own straight-forward, supportive and nonjudgmental approach immediately put her at ease. “Debora was tremendously beneficial and very responsive. It was like having a professional mentor. She gave me direct feedback in a way that was respectful and helped model how I should give feedback to my reports. She facilitated a couple of team meetings. She dramatically improved my relationships with my supervisors and staff. She gave me the opportunity to grow.”

Because of her success with three of their most promising leaders, Easter Seals NH asked McLaughlin to coach more of their staff and disseminate her techniques throughout the organization.



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