

THE RENEGADE LEADER®

Debora McLaughlin • The Executive Coach

In three years, Jewell & Associates grew from 200 to 700 clients and quadrupled the number of employees. As a result, the company faced challenges in leadership, culture and organization. Debora McLaughlin helped turn those challenges into opportunities.

Case Study: Jewell & Associates

by Sharon Bailly, TWP Marketing & Technical

“I highly recommend Debora as a leadership coach for anyone trying to attain a new level of performance and success in a changing environment.”

June Jewell,
Jewell & Associates

When a business suddenly expands—or contracts—it faces issues in leadership development, team building and business strategies. Debora McLaughlin helps executives, business owners and managers improve profits, performance and profitability even during the most rapid business change.

As a Certified Executive and Business Coach and internationally known consultant, McLaughlin specializes in helping organizations adapt to change. “Whether you’re growing or downsizing,” McLaughlin states, “infrastructure problems can occur. I help my clients get past what’s difficult for them and their companies.”

June Jewell, founder and CEO of Jewell & Associates, understood the value of that help when she contracted with McLaughlin for executive coaching and organizational consulting. Founded in 1990, Jewell & Associates (J & A) grew slowly and steadily into a Premier Partner of Deltek, the world’s leading provider of enterprise management software. But in 2006 Deltek expanded fast and enlisted J & A to immediately take charge of 400 new clients worldwide.

For J & A, McLaughlin formulated a plan that dealt with three challenges:

- Promotion of staff who lacked management skills
- Hiring of staff who lacked knowledge of the corporate culture
- Changes in leadership style required to accommodate a new management structure

“Everyone wants to feel part of something united,” says McLaughlin. “As the head or owner of a company, you have to build an executive team, set a corporate culture, resolve communications issues, build trust and still lead the company.”

To respond to the first two challenges, McLaughlin combined

“When there is a lot of change, there’s fear and anger. Debora is very good at working through that with people so that they can continue to do their jobs.”

June Jewell,
Jewell & Associates

individual executive coaching with weekly management roundtables on topics such as communications, turnover and building a collaborative company culture. Recently, McLaughlin held a two-day Executive Summit for J & A, during which the executive team re-examined the company’s vision and priorities and established boundaries and accountability.

“The Executive Summit is more than a team building exercise,” explains McLaughlin. “The Summit serves as an advisory board and actions are based on a survey of what’s working and what isn’t. The Summit helps decide what to do next. It helps create a corporate culture of engaged employees of high integrity who deliver to customers.”

Working one-on-one with McLaughlin, June Jewell had her own specific objectives. “There was a lot of change and I wanted to get my arms around dealing with growth in products, staff, clients and the entire company,” she says. “The hardest part of leading a company through change is not knowing what to do first.”

In the past, Jewell was personally responsible for everything from human resources to sales; now she leads an executive team which includes directors of sales and marketing, a vice-president and a chief financial officer. Together, Jewell and McLaughlin determined the type of leadership and company culture Jewell wanted and the skills, resources and coaching needed to move J & A in that direction. They set three specific goals for Jewell, as CEO of the company.

First, communicate. “As a leader,” says McLaughlin, “you have to hear and engage with people to align them with your goals.”

Second, know what you want—and hold on to that vision. Then use transparent communication to build collaboration.

Third, keep everyone accountable. Invoke leadership at all levels. As Jewell herself says, “You can get all the data from your system to show who did what, but holding people accountable is a human thing and has to be a focus of your company.”

Based on McLaughlin’s executive coaching, team building exercises and strategic planning sessions, Jewell was able to delegate, collaborate and inspire more effectively, while her new team helped her build a more engaged and responsive corporate culture. They evaluated resources, came up with innovative ways to meet the new demands on the company, clarified their roles and developed communication forums. Meeting with success in all these areas, Jewell & Associates soon merged with another company, forming Acumen Advisors and doubling in size.



Debora McLaughlin
CEO, The Renegade Leader
Coaching and Consulting Group
603-324-7171
Debora@TheRenegadeLeader.com
www.TheRenegadeLeader.com

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