

UNIQUE APPROACH CREATES A WIN-WIN FOR XB COACHING AND CLIENT

EARLIER THIS YEAR, Kathi Graham-Leviss presented a plan to senior management at Mastors and Servant Ltd. The company, based in Rhode Island, is a fast-growing, independent insurance agency that had achieved a staff and revenue level they recognized would require the implementation of new leadership and team building strategies.

Several weeks later, Kathi discovered that funding was available to Rhode Island corporations for leadership training and suggested Mastors and Servant apply. She worked with the company, wrote the grant proposal and was ultimately awarded funding through the state's Human Resource Investment Council (HRIC) program that gives companies up to \$30,000 for training programs that will help build employees' work skills. After being awarded the grant, Mastors and Servant hired XB Coaching to execute the proposed program.

XB Coaching began their project with Mastors and Servant by evaluating the behavioral communication styles of the senior management team. Next, these managers began a comprehensive leadership development program - including learning team building, conflict management, and how to empower people through the techniques of coaching. All managers also participated in an executive coaching program with an XBC certified executive coach. As the project continues, XBC coaches and trainers work with managers not only on overall strategy and skill-building but

also by coaching them on day-to-day employee and business issues. This has helped the management team take their training from theory to practice almost immediately.

“ALMOST IMMEDIATELY THOSE OF US IN SENIOR MANAGEMENT COULD SEE A POSITIVE CHANGE.”

After only a few months, senior management was able to identify significant progress not only in their own management strategies and skills, but also improvement in their team members' business capabilities. Vice-President of Operations Janet Pendexter explains “Almost immediately those of us in senior management could see a positive change in ourselves as leaders. We achieved a new level of cohesiveness and effi-

ciency based on many of the concepts we learned from our work with XB Coaching. Additionally, there was a trickle-down effect to our individual department teams that has had a dramatic effect on the way our business operates.”

Mastors and Servant will continue to work with XB Coaching to develop overall and department-based business objectives, evaluate and train employees, and coach senior management through their current climate of exponential growth. XBC regularly evaluates the firms business and employee needs to determine which products and services will be most helpful on their path to success. The project has certainly achieved the grant's objective of improving the skills of Rhode Island employees, a goal which is already helping Mastors and Servant and will undoubtedly be of value to other firms in the future.



**LETTER FROM
KATHI GRAHAM-LEVISS**

The New Year always offers an opportunity to try new things. In that spirit, I'd like to welcome you to the first issue of XB Coaching's new quarterly newsletter. I'm hoping that **On The Level** will serve not only as a source of information about XBC but also as a tool to help build your career skills. Each issue will offer fresh approaches and proven solutions for issues important to professional success. Through case study analysis, information on current trends and even helpful hints on today's buzzwords, I hope **On The Level** will provide you with concise, usable information, and the opportunity to have a little fun too. You can also stay up-to-date on what's happening at XBC and what we have in our toolbox that we can share with you.

HOW TO MAKE NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS STICK

At the beginning of each year many of us commit to goals and changes. Sometimes we become disappointed when we discover we are no closer to those goals as the year comes to an end. Here are some suggestions that can help you make the changes necessary to achieve them:

- Quantify your objectives and be specific about how you intend to reach them.
- Set a deadline.
- Focus on changing one or two things at a time. Don't overwhelm yourself with trying to implement too much change all at once.
- Be realistic.

CONGRATULATIONS...

to the following people who successfully completed the DISC Behavioral Model Teleclass and have received their certification as DISC Behavioral Analysts:
Mark Fangerlin,
Edith Onderick-Harvey,
Bill Parshall,
Sue Caressimo and
Mattie Ameli.

MAKING THE MOST OF MEETINGS



THE DOWNSIDE LIST for business meetings is extensive – common complaints include their length, purpose, and even the personalities that can emerge during them. Yet people are attending more than ever, some devoting as many as two days a week to meetings.

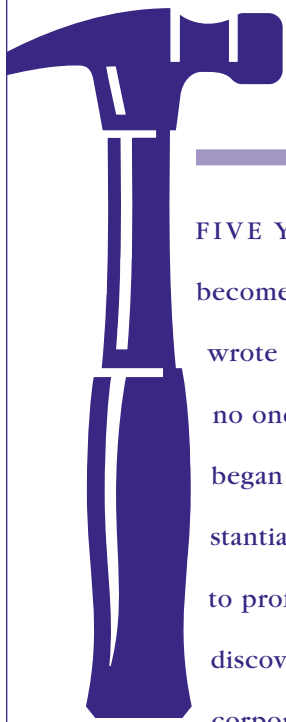
Despite their bad reputation, meetings are important for many reasons. They can be a tool for developing a staff or team, for identifying barriers, and for giving and getting feedback. Whether you're conducting a meeting, presenting information, or just attending, there are some ways to run better, more efficient meetings that leave people feeling like they've accomplished something. Here are a few suggestions:

- **Be prepared.** No matter how pressed for time that you are, don't try to wing it. This is a public appearance. If you're sloppy on the facts, inattentive or out-of-the-loop, it will be noticed.
- Distribute an agenda to participants ahead of time so they can think about the issues.
- **Keep the agenda simple.** Remember, meet-

ings are designed to generate ideas, solve problems

and define what actions the participants will take, not to disseminate information. This can be done electronically.

- **Make the participants comfortable** by providing a welcoming atmosphere. Locking people out of meetings or removing chairs only serve to distract and irritate meeting attendees. Take an interest in what people are saying. Draw people into conversations and make eye contact. Taking meetings off site is another strategy that allows participants to focus and be more relaxed.
- **Meetings may not be productive** if ideas are routinely rejected. You can zap those who are continually negative with a squirt or pelt them with marshmallows to show your support of idea generation.
- **Get everyone involved.** "That's a great question, let's open it up to the group" is a great lead in to a discussion. You can also ask people to write their thoughts down, then read them.



Tool of the Month

FIVE YEARS AGO, Jim Collins asked the question, “Can a good company become a great company and if so, how?” In *Good to Great*, Collins, who also wrote the bestseller *Built to Last*, concludes that it is possible, but that there is no one solution that works universally. Collins and his team of researchers began by examining nearly 1500 companies, looking for those that made substantial improvements in their performance over time. Ultimately, they decided to profile 11, including Fannie Mae, Gillette, Walgreens, and Wells Fargo, and discovered common traits that challenged many of the conventional notions of corporate success. Making the transition from good to great doesn’t require a high-profile CEO, the latest technology, innovative change management, or even a fine-tuned business strategy. A key element shared by all the truly great companies was a corporate culture that rigorously found and promoted disciplined people to think and act in a disciplined manner. The book includes numerous stories and examples of the great and not so great, and offers a well-researched road map to excellence that any manager or organization will find useful.

In response to demand for practical guidance on implementing some of the strategies employed by great companies described in the book, XB Coaching developed the “**Leading Forward**” **Workshop**. In this session, participants put individual vision and talent to work to build a great company from the inside out. The facilitator outlines ways to identify leadership qualities and develop a strategic, individualized vision that enhances the group — and those who comprise it. The skill of understanding and managing change proves valuable to all participants by helping expand their points of view.

BUZZ WORD OF THE MONTH

boiling the ocean:

The result of working hard without focus or purpose. “All she’s doing is boiling the ocean.” Also known as “spinning your wheels” and “running in place.”

SOLID LINKS

Are you looking for an interesting way to streamline your news intake? Do you find it challenging to find time to read the paper each day? Try www.crayon.net, a free website that allows you to create a customized online newspaper from myriad print and web news sources.



MEET JESSIKA M. FERM...

JESSIKA JOINED XBC in July, 2002. She is a Certified Professional Behavioral Analyst/Values Analyst & Coach with international experience in the areas of corporate leadership training/consulting and internal leadership development. Her skills are complemented by her enthusiasm for designing, implementing and facilitating a wide range of training programs. Whether working with individuals or teams, she uses her extensive array of tools to bring clarity and improvement to companies at all levels of performance, and her work achieves measurable results. Jessika is also a Certified 360-Degree Coach.