



BUILDING CHAMPIONS®

COACHING LEADERS IN BUSINESS AND LIFE | ON PURPOSE



CASE STUDY

About Coatal

Coatal has been serving the farm and ranch community since 1963. Farmers, ranchers, do-it-yourselfers, and outdoor enthusiasts trust Coatal to supply everything from boots and outdoor wear to livestock, pet, and lawn and garden supplies, to sporting goods. Led by CEO Buzz Wheeler, the company employs more than 750 people in 16 stores located in Oregon and Washington, and they're growing faster than ever.

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—Buzz Wheeler, CEO, Coatal

Building a More Effective Organization:

How Coatal Changed Their Culture and Planted the Seeds for Growth

In 2015, Coatal's CEO, Buzz Wheeler, faced several new business challenges. As a founder, Wheeler had grown his company over fifty years from a single store to a major player in the Northwest. The company had recently completed an acquisition, increasing sales volume by 40 percent, and adding several new stores and dozens of employees in just a few weeks.

Wheeler was concerned that those big changes would impact the company's unique culture. Additionally, he noticed silos were forming: employees, clear on their own objectives, didn't always see how their work impacted the organization and other divisions.

To maintain the company's unique culture as it continued to grow, Coatal would have to improve its approach. The leadership team wasn't dysfunctional. Rather, things were getting done and profits were up, but many wondered if alignment around their core purpose would move them further faster. In Wheeler's words, “We were rowing the boat, but weren't always rowing together.”

BRINGING ON BUILDING CHAMPIONS

With aspirational goals and growth momentum, the company wanted to strategize a better way forward. Fearing a simple off-site meeting wouldn't change anything, Wheeler reached out to Building Champions, an executive coaching firm with a track record of helping business leaders reach new levels of success and profitability. Building Champions worked closely with Wheeler to provide one-on-one coaching for key members of his leadership team to address the challenges each person faced, as well as to facilitate two executive retreats.

Everyone on the Coatal leadership team agreed to participate, but some were hesitant. Byron Baule, VP Operations, questioned whether the effort would be worth it. “I was thinking, what's this going to do for me? It's just going to take up my time,” said Baule. Coatal's Controller, Lori McKinnon, also wondered if anything useful would come out of the experience.



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—Lori McKinnon, Coastal Controller

STARTING WITH ASSESSMENTS

Prior to coaching, each Coastal leader completed a behavioral assessment. They learned more about how they responded to challenges and procedures, what kinds of environments helped them thrive, and how to use their talents to better understand and influence others. The analysis created a solid foundation the team could build on.

COACHING EXECUTIVES ONE-ON-ONE

Building Champions worked with each Coastal leader to match them with a coach. The match was based on functional experience, behavioral style, and specific objectives the leaders expressed as desired end results. Experienced coaches became guides to each manager as they addressed their challenges — at work and in their personal lives. This aligned with Building Champions’ endeavor to tease out greatness in leaders with the principle that self-leadership precedes team and organizational leadership.

One-on-one coaching “gives our people a chance to talk to somebody about their own style of management and progress in a completely confidential way,” Wheeler said. “They can say what they want, they can talk about their problems and their concerns. That’s one of the things that attracted us to Building Champions.”

In addition to action plans, greatest successes, greatest challenges, and discussion topics logged into the coaching portal each week, coaches engaged with leadership team members in regular 30-45 minute sessions to clarify plans, set objectives and work on behaviors needed for success.

BUILDING CONSENSUS AT EXECUTIVE RETREATS

After several months of coaching, the Coastal leaders spent two days at an executive retreat where the Coastal leaders clarified their purpose, built consensus around the company’s vision and strategy, then set realistic, but challenging goals to move the company forward. Guided by a Building Champions Executive Coach, the Coastal leaders had several difficult but necessary conversations and worked hard to find consensus around a purpose they could get behind.

“There was conflict. It was not an easy thing; Building Champions helped facilitate the healthy conflict needed for all to buy in,” said Controller Lori McKinnon after the event, “but we came away with a purpose that we could all stand behind.”

Twelve months later, Coastal’s leaders returned for a second retreat to continue the work of building a high-performing team culture. “When we went back a year later, we didn’t make any changes to our plan. The things we had fought for and debated then are still the most important things now,” said McKinnon.



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—Peggy Miller, HR Director, Coastal

THE RESULTS

The combination of coaching and the executive retreats with Building Champions were so successful, Coastal expanded coaching to the next level of management the following year. Peggy Miller, Coastal’s HR Director, said, “we’ve laid the groundwork for future success—to grow, to set our strategic plan and to build ourselves up as a team more. Looking over the past year-and-a-half, I can see lots of personal growth in myself and in others. And it has a way of trickling down throughout the organization to those who aren’t directly involved in the process. It’s worth the investment.”

Thanks in part to working with Building Champions, the company successfully implemented a new warehouse system that completely revamped the way the company did receiving. In addition, Coastal has continued to expand their footprint in the region, opening larger, higher performing stores. According to McKinnon, “the real financial impact will be seen as the years roll forward.”

CEO Wheeler agreed. “I think it will continue to pay us dividends as we go along. We’ve been able to grow our people. We have better managers and I think they listen better. I can honestly say, I don’t think we’d be where we are today without it.”

Those who were initially resistant to coaching with Building Champions became the biggest fans of the partnership. Baule, who worried the engagement would be a waste of his time, said, “I would strongly recommend it. You’d think after all these years, I would have this down, but I wasn’t even close. It’s helped me on the business level and also with my personal life.” McKinnon added, “When we got to the end of the first year, I was thinking, if the company decides not to continue the program, I’m going to find a way to pay for it myself. It’s that valuable. I can see the impact that it has had every day, professionally and personally. It’s completely worth it.”

LEARN MORE

To learn more about how Building Champions can help your team, call (503) 670-1013. Or visit www.BuildingChampions.com/overview.



About Building Champions

Since 1996, Building Champions has coached thousands of leaders, managers and business professionals to intentionally build their businesses and lives. Building Champions’ personalized approach to coaching, combined with two decades of coaching experience, sets it apart from other coaching companies.