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Client Story

Team Coaching in a Matrix Environment at BIC

When BIC, the iconic French-owned company, launched its Horizon Strategic Plan, it set out to meet evolving consumer demands and drive sustainable growth and profitability for the future. Recognizing that success would depend on the capability and confidence of its people, the organization's CEO and CHRO turned to Kristie Raines, VP people & culture, to design a talent development strategy that would equip team members with the skills needed to achieve Horizon's bold ambitions.

“I knew we needed a strong leadership foundation,” says Raines, “so we began by defining the core competencies and leader behaviors that would bring those competencies to life.”

To embed these capabilities across the organization, BIC partnered with Blanchard to design and deliver tailored learning journeys for two levels of leaders, building consistent leadership standards and language across BIC.

While the rollout of these programs addressed leadership capability, Raines and her team also wanted to strengthen how teams worked together. They conducted a company-wide engagement survey to better understand employee sentiment and identify barriers to collaboration.

“The feedback was enlightening,” Raines recalls. “People were proud to work at BIC. They felt a strong sense of purpose and clearly saw how their roles connected to the company's strategic objectives. But the results also showed teams weren't operating cohesively. For the Horizon Strategy to succeed, we needed to elevate how teams collaborated and performed together.”



Kelly Ramirez



Kristie Raines

As Raines and her team dug deeper, they quickly identified the teams most critical to delivering the Horizon Strategy and met with their leaders to understand underlying challenges. What they heard was consistent across the organization: some leaders lacked the right capabilities in key roles, team members were unclear about the purpose of certain teams, conflict was either avoided or mishandled, and decision-making processes were inconsistent or ineffective. Several leaders believed the solution was simply to hire new talent.

Raines, drawing on her extensive experience in talent acquisition, knew otherwise. Hiring alone would not solve the deeper issues. “No matter how many new people you bring in, if they’re entering an environment where purpose, goals, roles, and decision-making practices aren’t aligned, they won’t succeed,” she explains. “It’s more than hiring the right people—it’s helping them align on what’s required to develop into a high-performance team.”

This in itself is why it was critical for teams at BIC to work through the four focus areas of team performance in Blanchard’s Team Leadership training course. Understanding the building blocks of *Align for Results*, *Communicate during Conflict*, *Build Team Cohesion*, and *Sustain High Performance* would be a strong foundation for success. Armed with the results from the Blanchard team assessment, each team would be able to see where their strengths and areas for development were and identify specific strategies to accelerate their progress toward becoming a high-performance team. The Blanchard assessment and team framework, side by side with BIC’s mission to help team leaders fully develop their teams, were the launch pads for a team empowerment initiative with the identified intact teams.



“We started with the team assessment to determine the strengths of the team, the challenges they were facing, and what the team leader could do to help,” says Kelly Ramirez, BIC’s director of people and culture. “This gave us the information we needed to custom design a program to address their needs. It also served as a coaching tool. The team development model from Blanchard mirrors the SLII® model our team leaders were familiar with, and that connection was powerful.”

While SLII® tracks the development level of an individual on a task so leaders can determine the right amount of support and direction needed, the Team Leadership model tracks the development level of a team as they go through different stages of team development. Team leaders are able to offer the right leadership style to sustain high performance.

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"After taking a few teams through the process, we measured the results to see if we were making a difference," says Ramirez. "In my heart, I truly believe if teams are functioning well together, not only will the business be successful, but the human beings in that team will be happier and more productive. We wanted hard data, too, so we used the engagement survey data along with the team assessment data to measure our results."

Team 1 Results

The engagement survey results indicated a score of 71% overall, with engagement at 60% and trust at 71%. The team assessment indicated the team was clearly at Stage 1, meaning they had high morale but low productivity. They had challenges connecting and trusting one another. After training to address the challenges, the engagement survey and team assessment were repeated. This time, the overall score of the engagement survey increased to 82%, while engagement and trust both increased to 83%. The team assessment showed the team now operating at the T3 and T4 stages, indicating they had higher morale and productivity. Connecting and trust, which were once challenges, were now seen as strengths of the team.

Leadership Team Results

The engagement survey results for the leadership team indicated a score of 84% overall, with engagement at 89% and trust at 90%. After the team empowerment sessions, the overall score increased to 87%, engagement increased to 92% and trust to 94%. They were seeing improvement in a team that was already high performing.

The Organization Under the Leadership Team Results

Since the leadership team has influence on the entire organization, BIC also measured the results of other teams to see if that influence had a positive impact. Initial engagement survey results indicated a score of 73% overall, with engagement at 69% and trust at 74%. After two team empowerment sessions, the overall score increased to 80%, engagement increased to 80% and trust to 78%. Teams across the organization were more collaborative and working together to achieve corporate goals.

Raines and Ramirez knew helping teams work more effectively together would benefit the organization in numerous ways. "When teams are collaborative, there are numerous benefits," says Ramirez. "There is improved knowledge sharing, stronger alignment, greater productivity and efficiency, improved problem solving, and increased innovation. The enhanced team dynamics create a sense of community and belonging that leads to increased job satisfaction and employee morale. The benefits just keep expanding."

With these impressive results and a small L&D team, a plan was needed to scale the team empowerment sessions. "I wanted every team at BIC to benefit from this, but didn't know how many teams we actually had," says Ramirez. "I worked with our data team to determine that we have over 65 million combinations of two or more people working together and 250 billion combinations of three or more people working together. That's a lot of teams! So now the issue became how to scale it.

"The answer was to develop a group of HR professionals to help lead our team development practice. We call them *team empowerment champions*. We take them through a three-day certification process and then they observe a session being conducted. Next, they co-facilitate with one of us leading, then they co-facilitate while taking the lead, and then they are ready to deliver the sessions on their own."

The team empowerment champions learn new skills, and BIC gets the benefit of being able to develop more teams globally.

"Our dream was to make sure we could achieve a world where our teams were connected and people were excited to go to work every day and interact with others," says Ramirez. "We have been able to achieve this with the Blanchard models. We have a structured, sustainable approach to teams that helps bring the Horizon Plan to life!"

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