

## Siemens

### How to Get Others to Follow You: The Story of Debbie

An Operations Manager for Siemens Industries achieves a positive lasting change in leadership behaviors that results in enhanced team cohesiveness, reduced stress, and improved business performance.

#### **Passion for Work Leads to a 70-Hour Work Week**

Debbie's manager, Chris Lofaso, approached her about the possibility of leadership coaching. He wanted her to take on a bigger role and to be more influential, as well as to **focus more on strategy and big picture topics rather than on tactical issues**. Debbie felt honored that she was seen as worthy of coaching. She knew it was worth exploring. She thought that coaching could help her to better manage her time and also address the issues of stress, frustration and feelings of being overwhelmed.

Debbie had recently been promoted to a position as Operations Manager for Siemens Industries. She had previously been responsible for 50 people. Now her new position covered three product groups - automation, fire and security - in Northern California with the charge of managing 130 people.

There are four phases in Debbie's coaching process:

1. Get feedback from coworkers about how she was perceived as a manager.
2. Put together a development plan with specific items and behaviors to improve.
3. Help her to make changes in those behaviors while engaging others. This would include a couple of workshops with her team.
4. Measure how much progress people have seen in changing those behaviors and in overall leadership effectiveness.

**Debbie was drawn to the clarity of the behavioral coaching process.** She also felt immediate rapport and a personal connection with Simon. She had previously talked to and decided not to work with another coach whose process was more conceptual and did not have clear measurable objectives.

## **Get Feedback to Establish a Baseline**

In the initial phase, Simon and Debbie carried out an online 360-feedback survey. In addition, Simon conducted 8 interviews with Debbie's co-workers, including her manager, three direct reports and four peers to collect feedback about Debbie's perceived strengths and areas for improvement in her leadership role. This produced a great deal of valuable data, which helped Debbie to uncover blind spots in her leadership behaviors, brought the issues to the forefront and shed light into them.

In terms of strengths, Debbie was consistently recognized, perceived and known for her dedication, willingness to help, strong people and team-building skills, ability to communicate, industry knowledge and experience with financial measures and business processes.

**In the areas for improvement, two behavioral patterns came up in the feedback report:**

First, Debbie was very tactical and neglected to be strategic and visionary. This management approach caused a lot of stress because she was spending too much time doing daily tasks that should be done by others. At the same time, she did not allow herself enough time to create strategic plans.

Second, Debbie was known to be a strong problem solver. Her managers and team members regularly came to her with their business problems and issues with clients, product delivery, installation, project plans and such.

She took the time to solve their problems because she was good at it, enjoyed it and was willing to help. The next time her manager had an issue, they came to Debbie, because they knew she would work it out. By doing that, she was enabling her team to come to her with their problems and challenges.

In reviewing her feedback report, she admitted: *“The funny thing is that, deep down, I knew what I needed to improve and what my areas of development were when I got really honest with myself. When I read all the feedback from the different people and took a close look at my habits, it created an eagerness and willingness to change myself. The feedback process is really, really valuable.”*

## **Clarifying What and Why to Change Creates Commitment and Direction**

**The clearer we define what we want to change, the easier it becomes to make those changes. After rigorous reviewing and discussing the feedback, Debbie and Simon established a development plan with specific leadership behaviors.**

### **1. Vision and Strategy**

- Develop a vision and mantra for team and communicate that vision
- Engage team in strategic discussions and get buy-in
- Set and communicate long-term goals and strategies

### **2. Delegation, including Accountability and People Development**

- Delegate effectively
- Develop measurements and performance standards for accountability
- Coach and mentor Direct Reports and manager; develop more leaders in the team

This plan became the roadmap for the coming year as well as for the coaching interaction.

The goal for Debbie was to make lasting changes in those areas, measured and evaluated by her co-workers after one year.

## **Being Strategic Means Knowing Where to Go**

Debbie's challenge was that she really didn't have a strategy. She operated tactically and managed her calendar, projects and tasks day-by-day. She had been given business targets from the company, but they didn't have a plan for where they wanted to go and how to get there. They were very short-term focused with a planning horizon of three to six months. Also, working with a big company with different departments, initiatives and priorities, there were always things coming her way; it was very hard to take the time and stay focused on key longer term initiatives.

## **Fighting fires and solving issues at hand was the daily agenda**

Simon advised her to take a step back, look at her role from broader view and start a strategic conversation with her team. She summarizes the shift from task master to strategic manager:

I had an epiphany, a-ha moment, when I decided to put together a session with my management team to figure out what our longer term priorities. With the coach's help, I crafted an agenda to make the session collaborative. It was really a pivotal point for me when I got the team together to decide on our core priorities: I asked them to write down ideas on 3x5" cards – one idea per card - what they considered the key strategic priorities for our operations team.

Everybody threw their 3 x 5 cards on a pile, arranged them and grouped them in categories. Doing it silently ensured that each person's voice, perspective and ideas got included. In a very short time, we determined five priorities for the upcoming year and how we were going to measure them. That meeting was a turning point for the team because it got each person committed to a long-term strategy and our priorities for the year.

It was amazing how managers took ownership in the five key objectives, which were:

1. Increase our Ops team employee satisfaction by 10% over the year before
2. Improve our customer recommendation index
3. Meet business plan in all three business units (financial profit targets for each division)
4. Successful implementation, acceptance and promotion of workflow and process standard
5. Improve financial target for a special project

At the end of the fiscal year they evaluated themselves (A through F) in each priority area, averaging a B+. To their own surprise, Debbie's operations team was the only group out of 19 divisions across the nation that met the financial targets in all three product categories. At their annual company meeting, they earned an award for their achievements.

## Effective delegation: get more done in less time

Having regular 70-hour workweeks was not sustainable for Debbie in the long run. Simon asked her to write down all activities each day and review them at the end of the week.

Specifically, she identified three areas that were very time-consuming and started to delegate to her team members who were a better fit to complete the tasks.

1. Administrative tasks: fill out expense reports, logistics for large meetings
2. Prepare financial reports for different meetings
3. Fill-in for managers on leave

Consequently, the improvements in her delegation skills helped her tremendously to save time.

Debbie learned and applied a four-key principles about delegation:

- Follow up is critical: by delegating clear assignment and following up on them, it's amazing what people will actually do
- Delegate to people's strengths: it's okay if someone is better at a task than someone else
- Develop and coach the direct reports
- Address performance and behavioral issues in a timely matter

Debbie went on to empowering her people to take on bigger tasks and responsibilities, giving them ownership, equipping them with the knowledge and enabling them with the skills to succeed.

In addition, Debbie has been able to work more closely with her team to help them develop themselves. Debbie not only applied the tools and leadership principles that she learned in the coaching process for herself, she also taught and passed them on to her team.

## **Tangible benefits are priceless**

Debbie acknowledges that the coaching engagement was well worth the investment both in time and dollars. The return on investment for Debbie was twofold:

1. Reducing work hours from average of 70 to 55 -60 per week
2. Meeting financial targets with her team in all three products categories, even in a difficult economy

Debbie's personal life has improved because she now is enjoying more balance and less negative stress. Even though her responsibilities have increased at work, she now spends fewer hours working and more time with her husband, family and friends.

**Professionally, Debbie and her team benefit from a greater sense of accomplishment, enhanced cohesiveness, more fun and positive recognition within the entire Siemens organization.**

Debbie felt honored to be given the opportunity to work with a leadership coach. In return, she gave value back to the organization by increasing her team's effectiveness in meeting their goals. Because of coaching and the behavioral changes from it, Debbie has become a visionary leader rather than simply a "problem-solver."