

UserTesting Uses Coaching to Support Leadership Development

The fast-growing company realized that to provide a world-class employee experience, they needed to invest in their leaders by building a leadership development program that would boost employee retention and satisfaction.

UserTesting is a San Francisco-based software company that offers a Human Insights Platform to provide usability testing and research tools for organizations looking to improve their customers' online experience.

The Strategy

Realizing that buy-in for the initiative would be critical for any type of leadership development program to scale, UserTesting enrolled senior leaders from the engineering and product development side of the business through the program first. As a result of their participation, these leaders not only reaped benefits of coaching, but the chief technical officer also reaped benefits as his leadership team began to up-level in their strategic thinking, cross-functional collaboration and team development. These senior leaders then also went on to become internal advocates for coaching, identifying other leaders who could benefit from the experience.

The Solution

UserTesting chose Sounding Board as their vendor because their approach was not only data oriented, but also because it allowed leaders to personalize their experience by identifying the top leadership areas of focus specific to their development needs. Leadership capabilities that coachees could develop included:

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| » Communication | » Execution | » Prioritization |
| » Conflict management & resolution | » Executive presence | » Self-awareness |
| » Decision-making | » Interpersonal skills | » Setting vision and direction |
| » Developing others | » Leading high-performing teams | » Strategic thinking |
| | » Organizational collaboration | |

Using Sounding Board's automated coach matching model, coachees were paired with Sounding Board coaches, and met two times a month over a six-month period. In between coaching sessions, coaches and coachees used Sounding Board's technical platform to stay connected and to discuss how coachees were applying their learning to their jobs.

Overall, leaders have demonstrated a great deal of self-confidence and awareness that they were able to build through their work with their coach.

Avery Coleman, Senior People Business Partner



The automated coach matching model resulted in a 97% percent satisfaction rate; coachees reported a 91% percent average coach satisfaction rating after their first session alone. When asked if their coaching experience was off to a good start, 93% percent of coachees agreed. Ninety-one percent of coachees agreed that their coach was a good match for them, and 86 percent said they had a good understanding of how coaching could work for them.

- » As one UserTesting coachee said that “[My coach] asked engaging questions that allowed me to drill down deeper into what I’m thinking about. In our first session, I felt like we were already on a great coaching plan direction.”
- » Another coachee said that their coach was “a very good listener, but also challenges me as she listens and repeats what I say in a way that forces me to re-evaluate my thoughts, which is exactly what I needed.”
- » Coachees loved their experience and rated Sounding Board with an **NPS score of 87**, which demonstrates how willing they would be to recommend coaching to their peers and colleagues.

Leadership Capabilities	Coachee	Manager
Executive Presence	31%	26%
Leading High-Performing Teams	21%	19%
Organizational Collaboration	39%	39%
Setting Vision & Direction	14%	31%
Strategic Thinking	3%	21%

As part of the UserTesting retention strategy, the organization continues to invest in coaching for their leaders. The program has expanded to focus on leaders at all levels, including individual contributors. UserTesting reports that leaders now have a better understanding of what softs skills are and how important those skills are to their leadership and growth. “Overall, leaders have demonstrated a great deal of self-confidence and awareness that they were able to build through their work with their coach,” says Avery Coleman, senior people business partner at UserTesting. But the ultimate criterion for success comes in the form of leaders raising their hands to re-engage with the Sounding Board coaching experience; 20% of leaders continue to work with their coaches beyond the initial investment.