Agile Leadership

An Online-Based Advanced Training Programme for Leaders Including Personal (online) Coaching Sessions

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Abstract—Leadership today is characterized by rapid changes, increased complexity, unpredictability and contrariness. Personnel management requires flexibility and empathy, allowing leaders to respond to employees on an individual basis, to inspire and motivate them and to promote their entrepreneurial spirit. Agility is the key concept for this purpose.

Keywords—Leadership, online training, coaching, agile

1 Introduction

A transformation toward digitalisation is currently taking place on the market for training programmes. For this reason, we in our role as providers of management and sales training and consultation no longer focus on face-to-face training programmes as we did previously, rather we are now focusing on an alternative offering for our customers.

1.1 Needs analysis

We chose a customer-oriented approach to the conception of the training programme that enabled us to analyse the current needs and expectations of our customers precisely and thus prioritise the topics. Apart from carrying out online surveys, we organised several workshops for customers about 'Agile Leadership' and the desired learning formats.

A survey of personnel development managers, leaders and management executives showed that they found agile leadership an important topic (99%). Seventy-five percent of those surveyed rated their own company as 'partly' or 'very' agile. Eighty-two percent of those surveyed stated that no training on this topic had been undertaken in their company yet. From the results of the surveys and workshops, we filtered out attitude (agile mindset) and personnel management as contents for the programme.

With respect to the learning format, customers found it important that they receive an alternative learning offering with less face-to-face training time and lower costs

than a programme with face-to-face training only. Fifty-four percent of those surveyed said that a purely digital training programme should only last 2-3 days at the most in comparison to a face-to-face training programme that usually lasts 8 days. Sixty-six percent of those surveyed mentioned a training period (online) of 2-3 hours for each topic (module) at the most. The loss of individuality and long-term effectiveness of face-to-face training programmes were seen as a critical aspect.

For the format, we decided to use a blended learning approach with a purely digital implementation: online modules alternating with personal coaching sessions (online). As a supplement to this approach, we are offering a version with 2 days of face-to-face training where the participants practise what they have learnt and can discuss the topics with a management trainer in more detail.

1.2 Target group

Based on the needs analysis, we not only determined the rough contents and the learning format but also the target group. 'Agile Leadership' was developed for experienced leaders. They are acquainted with the traditional leadership tools and are able to implement them. Their wish is to become more agile.

This training programme is especially suitable for companies that are going through re-structuring processes or change processes.

1.3 Learning goals

After completion of the training programme, participants can:

- Create a framework for leading agilely and thus increasing the performance of all concerned
- Prepare themselves and their staff better for the challenges that changing organisational structures and the digital transformation pose
- Make better decisions: identify decision alternatives depending on the situation and implement them in a way that matches requirements
- Change their own leadership behaviour in such a way that the best results possible can be achieved in an uncertain environment
- Develop a culture of cooperation where each member of staff takes on responsibility and at the same time works together as a team
- Create a positive atmosphere within the team and an error management culture that rewards courage and proactiveness and brings forth innovations

2 Project Implementation

The conception of the contents of the project and the writing of the scripts was carried out in cooperation with management trainers and customer consultants from PROAKTIV. The trainers were involved in the conception of the project as well as

the writing of the scripts and made an appearance in the video sequences as experts or actors.

The roll-out was accompanied by product flyers and training as well as product presentations for the sales force. Detailed information could also be found on the website and launching pages. Mailings were sent out and test accounts provided for interested customers.

3   Project Outcome

The blended learning training programme 'Agile Leadership' offers participants 7 online modules containing 45 interactive learning units, 131 accompanying PDFs (worksheets and summaries) as well as 8 personal online coaching sessions that can all be accessed on mobile devices. Depending on the type of learner, there is an option to book face-to-face sessions.

The programme starts with the (online) completion of the LIFO® strengths profile. The results of the survey are discussed during a personal online coaching session. The transfer from theory to practice is guaranteed by means of the interactive learning units with video sequences as well as specific exercises and checklists. Each user has access to the learning platform for one year and can repeat contents or work on them more intensively at any time. In addition, it is possible to save contents or print them out, making permanent access to the learning materials possible for participants.

The participants shape the training programme as they wish and choose freely the topics as well as the management coach who will conduct the coaching sessions with them. The micro-learning approach with learning units lasting 15 minutes makes 'training on-the-job' possible. The mobile learning approach creates the conditions required for learning anytime and anywhere at the participant's individual speed and device.

Information about users' level of general acceptance is collected via a feedback form at the end of each module. This form asks how the participants rate the video sequences, learning units, general learning materials and the effectiveness of the concept as a whole. Coaches ask directly for feedback during the personal coaching sessions.

4   Project Outcome

"For a long time, agility was a catchphrase in our corporate group without us having defined the significance of it for our leadership team and their daily work as leaders. The Agile Leadership Training Programme provides us with a training programme that allows our leaders to address the personal challenges they face when leading agilely and at the same time define a common image of the ideal leader in an agile environment." - Tim Kaltenborn, Head of Human Resources, Career Partner GmbH
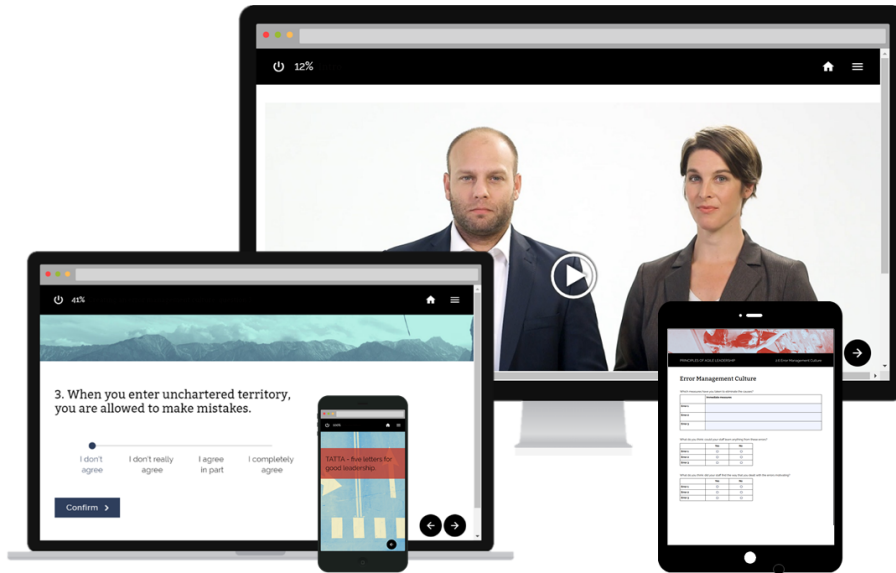
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