"Asserting Leadership"

George Maier, Manager, Hewlett-Packard

Working with Turknett Leadership Group has been a very enlightening and enjoyable experience. I started working with them about four years ago and have continued to consult with them on a number of issues over the years. Their Executive Development Program (EDP) is a great way to learn how to capitalize on your strengths and address your weaknesses. It enables you to create an excellent career development plan. The benefits of the EDP program help both the individual and the entire organization.

Our IT department at Hewlett Packard has been going through tremendous changes over the last few years. We've really undergone a whole evolution of our business model, experiencing lots of consolidation and numerous changes as far as assignments and roles. It has affected how we deal with each other, as well as our customers and vendors.

These changes have presented quite a challenge, but they have also presented an opportunity for doing things in new ways. By combining this opportunity with the knowledge we've gained from working with Turknett, we've learned how to better engage our corporate IT leadership. It has involved learning how to better get our thoughts and ideas across and how to convince leadership that another approach to a particular situation might be of value. We learned how to present ourselves at the corporate level in a more positive light as leaders and visionaries in our specific areas of expertise. As a result of our work with Turknett, we have been successful in influencing the corporate folks to take our lead and accept our ideas and suggestions.

One technique we've used to get our message across is to request face-to-face meetings instead of just writing memos. During these one-on-one sessions we implemented many of the things we learned in the Executive Development program and during individual coaching sessions. For instance, Bob always stressed that in order to present yourself as a

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leader you must show an appreciation for the big, global picture and exhibit a knowledge about the organization's overall business, rather than just being familiar with your own narrow area. It's also important to go into a meeting, not with a complaint, but with a better alternative and a complete strategy that includes how to implement the strategy and how it could impact the entire organization worldwide.

In addition to helping us assume a stronger leadership position in getting our ideas across and influencing corporate leadership, they also helped us create a better team environment. In the past, our teams operated in an environment characterized by conflict rather than productivity and cooperation. One way we overcame this is through the personality and leadership skill assessments conducted. The information from those assessments and the corresponding 360-degree feedback data gave us an insight into the personality profiles of ourselves and our team members. These assessments proved to be the cornerstone for improvement. Once you go through the assessment process and get open and honest feedback from your peers, it makes you more insightful and more reflective about who you are. It makes you aware of the areas you need to work on and, because it also highlights your strengths, it gives you confidence that you can address those issues needing improvement.

It's true that if feedback is not presented constructively in a non-threatening environment, people can get defensive and say, "This really isn't how things are." But Turknett consultants are excellent at facilitating these kinds of discussions. They have a real gift when it comes to giving feedback in exactly the right way. Speaking for myself and my colleagues at Hewlett Packard who've worked with Turknett, their insight and expertise Turknett helped us develop our careers and professional skills, and, enabled us to make increasingly valuable contributions.

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