COACHING FOR POTENTIAL AT SAP SE

INTERNATIONAL COACHING FEDERATION
PRISM Award

2020 International Prism Award Celebrated Nominee

SAP SE

Systems, Applications and Products in Data Processing

SAP SE, a German multinational software corporation, is no stranger to the power of coaching. What began as a grassroots effort organized by a small group of SAP managers in 2003, today is an international coaching program with over 600 coaches spread across nearly 100 locations in almost 50 countries.

Since launching its global coaching program, SAP has remained dedicated to a mission of nurturing a coaching mindset to help its people realize their full potential. As a result, more than 2,500 coaching relationships have been formed enabling the company to increase its coaching clientele by nearly 10% in 2020.

In 2020, the International Coaching Federation (ICF) acknowledged SAP's dedication to maintaining its coaching culture by recognizing the organization as a Celebrated Nominee for the 2020 International Prism Award. ICF's Prism Award program honors organizations that have achieved the highest standard of excellence in coaching programs that yield discernible and measurable positive impacts, meet rigorous professional standards, achieve strategic goals, and shape organizational culture (Learn more at coachingfederation.org/prism-award.)

Supporting Every Team Member

Each of SAP's 100,000-plus employees has free access to one-on-one coaching. The company's growing community of more than 600 internal coaches adheres to guidelines based on ICF's Code of Ethics and Core Competencies. Each coach also has at least 128 hours of coach-specific training.

Coaching also is a key component of SAP's leadership training. SAP managers participate in sessions on how to use coaching skills and are encouraged to use what they learn in conversations with employees. Active listening, powerful questions and other coaching skills help rising leaders better understand and support their direct reports' professional goals and development. Managers and leaders have the opportunity to work with an ICF-credentialed internal or external coach during these training sessions, while employees are encouraged to pay it forward with a donation to a non-profit organization.

When the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically altered SAP's business and challenged employees around the world, SAP deliberately expanded access to coaching and applied its coaching capabilities as a way to remain agile and meet the demands of the rapidly changing environment.

During the height of the pandemic, SAP relied on its internal coaches to increase awareness of how coaching can support employees. Coaches who regularly helped employees with conflict, diversity, and leadership—among other topics—expanded their offerings to help team members cope with the challenges of change and uncertainty. In 2020, one-time coaching sessions increased by more than 25%.

As a result of such coaching sessions, participants were able to grow their engagement, enhance their job satisfaction and foster better collaboration with colleagues. One participant reported, "I am so thankful for everything [my coach] has done for me. Since the coaching started, I became so much more efficient in my work and a better human being."

> "I am so thankful for everything [my coach] has done for me. Since the coaching started, I became so much more efficient in my work and a better human being."
>
> *SAP Coaching Recipient*

Offering Virtual Sessions

SAP also adapted its coaching program to include virtual courses. Prior to the pandemic, employees could learn more about coaching through virtual and on-site trainings. Sessions included how to use coaching skills and how to be ready for coachable moments. SAP also offered sessions to teach leaders how to incorporate virtual team coaching in their leadership trainings.

Today, SAP's virtual coaching classes have benefitted more than 2,100 employees around the world. In addition, the company's week-long virtual Global Coaching Summit held in November 2020 empowered over 5,000 employees—including those undergoing coach training—to explore the connection between coaching and working through uncertain times. Aspiring coaches also learn how coaching enhances collaboration, mindfulness and leadership. According to a post-event survey, 94% of participants found the summit valuable to their professional development.

Implementing Team Coaching

When SAP received ICF's 2015 Prism Honorable Mention for its coaching program, the recognition emphasized the individual coaching aspect of the program. One client reported, "To be part of the coaching program has improved my self-knowledge and completely changed the way I drive my career at SAP. I recommend that to each and every colleague when I have the opportunity."

The pandemic, however, accelerated the program's expansion into team coaching. SAP was able to invest in team coach training for its internal coaches. Team coaching allows employees to identify their strengths within the organization and successfully manage the unfolding changes brought about by the pandemic. The company further integrated its commitment to this form of coaching with an additional learning series on the topic. SAP's internal coach and Leadership Development Consultant reported, "Without the support of the coaching program, and without SAP allowing me to further my education, I could not do what I'm doing right now."

Cultivating Future Leaders Through Coaching

Coaching is a key driver of success at SAP, which is why the company continues to invest in fostering both a coaching mindset and a coaching culture throughout the organization. Today, two-thirds of SAP's internal coaches are in senior leadership positions advocating for the coaching program.

When coaches are asked to rate how well the coaching process improves their job satisfaction, one coach training participant's comment reflected the views of most, "This company invests a lot in this… because the benefits are obvious. Not only do I help others, the coaching program provides me with the opportunity to continually develop myself personally and professionally through regular learning and development offerings." Individuals who have participated in the coaching process report feeling more likely to achieve their development and business goals.

A Measurable Benefit

In addition to connecting coaching to metrics that matter for SAP—the return on expectations—the company also calculates the ROI of augmenting its coach program with internal coaches. A cost analysis between internal and external coaches—including training, productivity and external hourly rates—found that SAP saved $2.6 million annually by investing in internal coaches instead of only sourcing external coaches. This 289% return on investment also helped expand the coaching program's reach for all employees.

SAP attributes the success of its coaching program to leadership's willingness to listen, understand and respond to the desires of its people and the needs of its coaching community. Internal coaches say their role and skillset have led to improved job satisfaction, motivation, ability to handle conflicts and collaborate with team members. One coaching recipient reported, "Coaching helped me know myself better, and also let me see beyond the horizon I used to have. I know I can do more, and I am able to build the road to a more successful and happier career."

Even amid the pandemic, SAP continues to invest in employee leadership development and support through coaching. In 2021, the company plans to prioritize its data-driven coaching initiative for specific programs, including advancing women in leadership, identifying and developing new managers and fostering team building. Such a dedicated approach ensures everyone has the opportunity to maximize their potential not only as an SAP employee but also as a future industry leader.

The International Coaching Federation (ICF) is the world's largest organization leading the global advancement of the coaching profession and fostering coaching's role as an integral part of society. Founded in 1995, its 35,000+ members located in more than 140 countries and territories work toward common goals of enhancing awareness of coaching and upholding the integrity of the profession through lifelong learning and upholding the highest ethical standards. Through the work of its six unique family organizations, ICF empowers professional coaches, coaching clients, organizations, communities and the world through coaching. Visit coachingfederation.org to learn more.

INTERNATIONAL COACHING FEDERATION
PRISM Award

ICF 25 YEARS

coachingfederation.org
2365 Harrodsburg Road, Suite A325 Lexington, Kentucky USA 40504
Phone: 1.888.423.3131 or 1.859.219.3580
Fax: 1.859.226.4411