

Alice Zondi's story, as told by **PENNY HAW**, shows how coaching enabled this technical expert to achieve a place on her company's board.



AFTER THREE SUCCESSFUL years as a programmer in the information technology department of a Johannesburg company, Alice Zondi was delighted when she was promoted to divisional manager. Her technical skills and ability to solve almost any system problem were exceptional, and she was pleased both by the acknowledgment from the company and the opportunity to ascend the corporate ladder.

Three months later, however, Zondi was miserable and ready to throw in the towel. She was intimidated by members of her new team – many of whom were older and more experienced than she – and she felt uncertain about how to manage and motivate them. She longed to tuck herself back behind her computer and continue to do what she knew best.

“On the other hand, I really wanted to move on,” she recalls. “I welcomed new challenges and I knew that, as a manager, I could introduce interesting new developments to the department that would result in meaningful change to the company. I desperately wanted to overcome the shortcomings that prevented me from rising from ‘technically competent’ to a ‘competent leader’, but I did not know how.”

Fortunately for Zondi, the company's human resource manager recognised her predicament and proposed coaching.

“He told me that coaching is a critical platform for learning initiatives and successful organisational change. He also said that he believed that the honest, objective feedback I would receive would enable me not only to achieve my objectives as a manager, but that the process would also help me become a leader who could then coach others and help them uncover potential that might otherwise go untapped. That really excited me,” she says.

True to expectation, management coaching was key to unleashing Zondi's leadership potential. Less than two years after her initial exposure to coaching, she was appointed to the board of the company. Today – without a

From techno to the top

moment's hesitation – Zondi credits coaching for changing the way she views the organisation, her colleagues and work, and the world.

“As leaders, we do not have the time or capacity to control anymore,” she explains. “We need to empower and delegate to create a culture of responsibility and self-driven actions. I believe that true leadership and coaching are synonymous because they both work towards releasing potential and growth, and get there via relationships and dialogue.”

According to Dr Salome van Coller, an industrial psychologist and internationally qualified coach, Zondi's journey to leadership via coaching is a crucial outcome of management coaching. Van Coller is the programme manager of the University of Stellenbosch Business School's new MPhil degree in Management Coaching, launched earlier this year.

Her approach to coaching leaders and managers who want to enhance their performance is based on the principle that everyone has unexploited potential, albeit often obscured by the human tendency to set performance ceilings.

“The objective of coaching is to remove the psychological limitations that people set themselves, or that others set for them, and to explore possibilities of performing beyond previous capacity,” says Van Coller. “And, at this point in the evolution of coaching, it has helped transform management in many ways, and continues to change the way people communicate, relate and act.”

CAPE TOWN-BASED HUMAN resources executive, Dr Lee Kingma introduced coaching to the publishing company at which she works about four years ago.

“When we embarked on coaching, we set out to ensure that the investment would be realised in a tangible way, even though the in-

Key characteristics of managers whose techniques feature coaching practice:

- **Increased self-awareness** and a clearer sense of commitment to improve alignment, listen to feedback, incorporate constructive criticism and solve problems creatively
- **Greater competency** when it comes to establishing and maintaining effective relationships that achieve increased levels of trust and accountability
- **Improved ability and willingness to help others** expand their horizons, levels of responsibility, and capacity for action and initiative
- **New levels of empowerment**, unity and teamwork, which help achieve corporate objectives.



LEARN TO COACH

USB's new degree in Management Coaching

The University of Stellenbosch Business School recently introduced South Africa's first SAQA-accredited master's degree (MPhil) in Management Coaching.

The purpose of management coaching, says Dr Salome van Collier, programme manager: MPhil in Management Coaching, is to enable executives to develop key leadership capabilities that will help them face potential challenges in their current roles and prepare them for the challenges they may face as they move up the ranks of their organisations.

Derived from the International Coaching Federation, the course will equip graduates to use their skills both at home and abroad.

For further information, go to www.usb.ac.za/Degrees/MPhil-InCoaching

USB-ED's executive programmes in Coaching

USB Executive Development Ltd (USB-ED) – which is the executive education arm of USB – offers two non-degree coaching programmes. The Certificate in Coaching Practice is designed to offer benchmark training for a new generation of coaches who wish to pursue a professional coaching career. The hands-on coaching programme, Coaching For Performance, equips participants to transfer vital skills to employees for ever-changing business needs and corporate environments.

For further information, go to www.usb-ed.com/programmes

tervention can be difficult to measure in terms of return on investment on financial statements,” explains Kingma, who recently authored the book, *What's Your Tribe?*, which explores the Enneagram* personality typology and its application in the workplace. “Moreover, we did not consider coaching a “flavour of the month” activity, but rather a way for managers to adopt a robust process that would make a real difference to the company.”

While she concedes that it was a “fairly slow process because we allowed the benefits of coaching to morph in a systemic manner”, Kingma says the numerous substantial successes achieved through coaching led to it being rolled out first to the organisation's executive team and then to all managers at strategic level.

“Finding sustainable ways to change people's behaviour has always been one of the most difficult challenges facing human resources practitioners,” she says. “Coaching has been the most effective way to bring about change. It has developed more energetic, self-aware people who contribute to the profitability of the business, lead by example through commitment to ongoing self-improvement and empowerment, and who uphold and promote the positive principles of coaching.”



Dr Salome van Collier-Peters



Dr Lee Kingma

According to a recent survey conducted by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development in the United Kingdom, nine out of ten companies expect their managers to deliver coaching as part of their day-to-day work.

The study showed that a vast majority of employers believe coaching can deliver tangible benefits to both individuals and organisations and that coaching provided by a manager or supervisor is becoming increasingly popular as the value of sustainable on-the-job-learning becomes recognised in the workplace.

Head of the Centre for Leadership Studies at USB, Professor Laetitia van Dyk, has the final word: “In the

new economy, leaders need to spend a great deal of time on coaching their people. Any organisation that wants to be a learning organisation needs to have coaches and mentors to safeguard the transitional world of young executives. Coaches provide space and safety for personal exploration and reflection, which is fundamental to organisational and individual success today.”¹

¹The Enneagram delineates nine basic personality types and their complex interrelationships, and helps people to recognise and understand an overall pattern in human behaviour.