

CHANGE COACHES

JEDI Consulting Turns Into a Team Culture Conversation

Team Coaching

Change Coaches coach all types of teams but here's one example.

Change Coaches had an engagement recently with a company that was reviving a JEDI Council (justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion) that had gone on hiatus during the coronavirus pandemic. The education company (“STEM Tutor Inc.”) was made up of mostly white employees and had to lay off about 20% of its workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since that time, they realized that employees of color had been disproportionately impacted and that their culture catered to a specific core group of people: white and wealthy. The JEDI Council contacted Change Coaches as they had a sincere desire to create a culture of belonging where diverse employees and students would feel welcome. And because the company didn't have the capacity to hire a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO), this Council was the backbone of their JEDI programs.

The conversation with the JEDI Council head started out with some background around the council itself, the types of projects they had worked on in the past, and the change they wanted to create within the company. It was found that the bias toward white wealthy families extended into the products they offer and that they wanted to serve a more diverse population that reflects our society as a whole.

Defining Clear Goals and Objectives

The Council wasn't starting from a completely blank drawing board: the engagement began by reviewing how they operated before 2020, what new needs had been identified during their COVID-19 pause, and what their new vision might look like. Change Coaches first had one-on-one meetings with everyone on the team to get a deep understanding of their individual and team purpose. Next was a series of about seven team coaching sessions. The first one was focused on creating psychological safety and empathy on the team. This time upfront allowed Change Coaches to get to an honest and vulnerable place with the team.

Next, there was a focus on team structures and systems, starting with a new purpose statement to define how the team would view and conduct themselves as a Council. The next step was to draw out a strategic plan. Early in this process we learned that this JEDI team was a dumping ground and was accountable for far too many things that wouldn't move the needle in the right areas. So, before diving deep into the plan, Change Coaches and the team used a RACI model to understand what they as a group ideally should be Responsible, Accountable, Collaborative, and Informed on. It also worked as a boundary-setting tool to determine what they are not responsible, accountable, collaborative, and informed on. As a small group with distinct purposes within a larger organization, knowing where and how to focus their efforts would be critical in order to make the biggest impact. Once this was worked through, the team put a strategic plan in place that the Council could share with both the executive team and the rest of the company.



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Winning Key Support from the CEO

Once the strategic plan was in good shape, Change Coaches and a few council members presented it to the CEO. Here are a few words from a council member about that meeting: “since that session with LaTonya and sessions where he met with the Council as a whole, he has been more open to working with us. We now present JEDI updates to the Board once a quarter and he has agreed to fund our budget based on our current strategic plan.” That’s a big victory considering where they had started just months before!

Assembling the Right Team for the Future

After the strategic plan was approved, we switched our focus back to the long-term composition of the team itself. We noticed that there were some disconnects between the Council and company leadership—and within the team itself.

One of our most significant changes to team composition was the identification of a C-suite member to liaise and advocate for the team. This executive’s help would be instrumental for the final steps of the Council’s and Change Coaches’ work together.

“What I loved the most about our time with LaTonya was how she coached and advised, she didn’t give us the answers. We, the Council, did the hard work so we have the tools we need to continue to be successful.”

How This Approach to Team Coaching Allows Change Coaches to Make an Impact

Although this case study is focused on a JEDI team, any team coaching engagement might have similar outputs. In this instance, we first had to get clear on the team’s purpose and what was really inside (and outside) their scope. From there, we created psychological safety. Then, we took stock of the individuals on the Council and the Knowledge, Perspectives, and Experience (KPEs) they brought to the table. We made sure the team included key people who had enough influence in the company to help push forward the objectives we had identified. Without taking the time to dig deeper and understand not only what each person on the team could contribute but also why they were invested in this work, Change Coaches wouldn’t have had the same impact on the C-suite member who joined the Council, or on the CEO.

Teams are a microcosm of company culture, and you can see how investing resources to change the dynamics of just one team has a ripple effect on the rest of the company. STEM Tutor Inc. happened to find us because they were specifically working on their JEDI initiatives, but we’ve taken plenty of teams at all levels through similar processes. Psychological safety and a sense of belonging are critical components of positive, equitable cultures of success.

Is there a team in your organization that could use some development and optimization to instill a culture of *below the surface* communication in your workplace? We want to hear about it!