

BUILDING A COACHING CULTURE
THAT CHANGES—AND SAVES—
LIVES





With more than 120,000 employees to manage and a whole country to provide healthcare to, the National HR Division of Ireland's Health Service Executive (HSE) must be unique in how it does things. In 2011, the team introduced coaching, and since then they have seen transformative growth in more ways than one.

HSE started out as an organization just thinking about coaching but has since evolved into an organization that's all about coaching. That's why the organization earned the International Coach Federation's (ICF's) top honor for organizations with strong coaching cultures: the 2018 ICF 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, fulfill rigorous professional standards, address key strategic goals, and shape organizational culture. (Learn more at coachfederation.org/prism-award.)

In 2011, HSE's National HR Director, Rosarii Mannion, says the organization faced a unique challenge: How can you encourage people to become creative in a sometimes non-creative work environment, such as healthcare? HSE set out on this journey to improve patient experiences through stretching and pushing employees to unlock their potential and use creativity and intelligence to solve problems.

HSE's Lead for Coaching Services, Niall Gogarty, explained that in healthcare, when a problem arises the natural

inclination is to be a fixer, to literally put a bandage on the issue. HSE wanted employees to listen more, to really dig deep for solutions for patients and for themselves.

Fueled by the passion of Mannion and her team, coaching has become an integral part of the organization, as demonstrated in HSE's current three-year strategic plan for HR. To align with ICF's standards and Code of Ethics, HSE has developed a governance model for regulating and guiding coaching. The model includes coaching policy, strategy documents, application forms, agreements, process flows, coach-specific training hours, continuing professional development sessions, mentor coaching, coaching supervision, evaluations and ICF Membership. All HSE coaches are required to complete accredited coach-specific training, and HSE delivers its own ICF-accredited training for internal coach practitioners.

HSE maintains rigorous ethical standards. They make sure no coaching client is paired up with a coach in the same role. For example, a nurse who seeks coaching would not be paired with a nurse who is a coach. Because of HSE's strict standards, other organizations in Ireland are looking at HSE as a model and resource for building a strong coaching culture.

HSE's HR strategy has helped lead over 8,200 employees to transformational coaching. All employees have access to professional coaching, and they're encouraged to consider the service at critical

moments for their team or organization (e.g., a change management initiative), as well as to sharpen their own personal and professional competencies (e.g., moving forward and getting “unstuck,” conflict management, managing people or teams, pursuing work/life balance, and managing stress). Leaders are using a coach approach in meetings, briefings and strategy sessions. Coaching is supported from “hire to retire” at a senior level.

“Coaching was offered to me when I attended the Occupational Health Department following a traumatic event at work,” one employee said. “It helped me think about what was important to me and helped me work out forward-thinking values for myself. If it wasn’t for coaching I would still be on sick leave.”

Since coaching was implemented at HSE, employees’ use of sick leave has significantly decreased. Two-thirds of staff members agree that coaching has enhanced teamwork, and front-line employees (i.e., individuals who deliver patient care) say coaching has left them more prepared to address stressful situations—a critical impact in the healthcare world. Meanwhile, patient mortality rates have decreased since coaching was implemented, demonstrating the literal capacity of HSE’s strong coaching culture to save lives.

“Investment in coaching is a key component of our leadership strategy, generating significant benefits for our staff. This, in turn, translates to a better experience for our public and patients,” Mannion said.

HSE has invested in a “Leadership Academy” where they look at and consider what skills and patterns they’d like to see in their employees and use coaching

from start to finish within the academy. The coaching culture developed through the leadership academy has contributed to support at every level of the organization.

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HSE Employee

“If an employee is coming to us from a hospital who wants to have coaching, after they are done we will get another 20 or 30 referrals from that hospital,” Gogarty said. He explained the coaching and the skills coaching has provided can be discerned by everyone who encounters the employee. Employees across the organization are becoming advocates and spokespeople for coaching and the difference it can make.

Looking to the future, HSE hopes to continue to tailor their coaching practices to meet the needs of the employees while supporting and offering robust professional development opportunities for their cadre of coaches. Leaders within the organization constantly listen to and engage with coaches to ensure that they’re well-prepared to meet the ever-changing needs within HSE. Meanwhile, Mannion serves as a coaching champion at the highest levels of HSE, ensuring that there is space at the strategic level to process the coaching agenda.

“I feel that as a coach I am valued,” HSE’s Prism nominating coach, Irene Harris, ACC, said.

The International Coach Federation (ICF) is dedicated to advancing the coaching profession by setting high ethical standards, providing independent certification and building a worldwide network of credentialed coaches across a variety of coaching disciplines. ICF is active in representing all facets of the coaching industry, including Executive, Life Vision and Enhancement, Leadership, Relationship, and Career Coaching. Its 33,000-plus members located in more than 140 countries* work toward the common goal of enhancing awareness of coaching, upholding the integrity of the profession, and continually educating themselves with the newest research and practices.

**Numbers as of December 2018. Numbers are subject to change month to month.*



coachfederation.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

