



case study / Coaching

Rebuilding Leadership Confidence and Strategic Leadership Capacity

In increasingly complex organisational environments, leaders are required to balance operational delivery with people leadership, strategic thinking, and resilience under pressure.



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1. Overview

In increasingly complex organisational environments, leaders are required to balance operational delivery with people leadership, strategic thinking, and resilience under pressure. While technical expertise remains important, leadership effectiveness increasingly depends on the ability to lead through others, communicate clearly, and create accountability within teams.

This case study explores the coaching journey of a senior leader within a multinational pharmaceutical organisation. The process drew on multiple diagnostic tools, including psychometric assessments, 360 degree feedback review, leadership feedback, and structured coaching conversations, to support her growth in leading others more confidently, creating more accountability within her team, and operating with greater strategic intent.

To protect confidentiality, identifying details have been changed, and the coachee is referred to as “Mary”.

2. Leadership Context

Mary occupies a senior regional leadership role within a global pharmaceutical company, reporting into an international leadership structure while also engaging closely with local executive leadership. She is regarded as technically strong, intelligent, highly capable, and dependable under pressure.

Despite these strengths, concerns had begun to emerge regarding her effectiveness in leading through others. Feedback suggested that Mary tended to take on too much responsibility herself, struggled to delegate consistently, and found it difficult to assert herself confidently within her team. There were also signs of increasing strain within team relationships, raising concerns regarding long-term team effectiveness, engagement, and sustainability.

At the same time, Mary was operating under significant pressure within a demanding and fast-paced environment. Although she appeared calm externally, she was experiencing high levels of internal stress and self-doubt.

3.Coaching Objectives

A structured coaching process was initiated to support Mary's leadership development and strengthen her effectiveness within her role. The coaching objectives focused on helping her build greater confidence in herself as a leader, while strengthening her ability to lead through others more intentionally and sustainably.

Key focus areas included:

- Re-establishing trust in herself and rebuilding confidence in her leadership capability
- Strengthening self-awareness, particularly regarding her tendency to rescue others, and internalise pressure
- Developing greater assertiveness and ownership of her leadership authority
- Strengthening delegation, accountability, and boundary-setting within the team
- Communicating clearly and managing expectations with confidence
- Learning to separate interpersonal dynamics from leadership and management responsibilities
- Transitioning from a highly operational focus towards a more strategic leadership contribution
- Re-establishing healthier self-care practices and reducing emotional and operational overwhelm

The coaching process was positioned as developmental and supportive rather than corrective. A three-way contracting session between Mary, her manager, and the coach ensured alignment around expectations, developmental priorities, and desired outcomes.

4. Coaching Approach

The coaching journey consisted of eight structured coaching sessions supported by the aforementioned diagnostic inputs. The integrated data provided a comprehensive understanding of Mary's leadership strengths, behavioural patterns, interpersonal dynamics, and developmental opportunities.

The coaching approach was strongly relational and developmental in nature, focusing on creating psychological safety, increasing self-awareness, and supporting sustainable behavioural change. Particular emphasis was placed on helping Mary identify unhelpful patterns, challenge limiting self-beliefs, and experiment with new leadership behaviours within her day-to-day work environment.

The process also included regular reflection, practical experimentation between sessions, and ongoing engagement with her manager to reinforce accountability and support behavioural change.

5.Key Insights:

Psychometric Insights

Mary’s cognitive profile revealed strong problem-solving capability and a capacity for complexity, suggesting clear potential to operate effectively at senior leadership level.

 COGNITIVE PROFILE

Competency	Description	Critical	Important	Neutral
Learning Potential	The capacity to classify information into abstract categories, to overlook detail differences in order to identify underlying similarities or concordances			
Overall Decision Effectiveness	Stratified System's Theory (SST) is a model of how companies match the abilities of staff to the complexity of roles. Lower scores indicate an operational tendency and higher scores a strategic tendency			

Her personality profile reflected a thoughtful, compassionate, and self-aware interpersonal approach. She described herself as adaptable, emotionally sensitive, and capable of remaining composed under pressure, while also demonstrating openness to feedback and self-development.

At the same time, her psychometric profiles highlighted several potential leadership development areas. Mary reported a tendency to internalise stress, paired with a likelihood of becoming highly self-critical and reluctant to assert herself strongly in leadership situations. She also appeared inclined to over-accommodate others and minimise her own visibility and contribution within group dynamics. In addition, the assessments suggested a tendency to remain highly operationally involved rather than leading consistently through delegation and accountability, increasing the risk of emotional fatigue and overwhelm.



PERSONALITY PROFILE

Competency	Description	Critical	Important	Neutral
Conflict Management	Remain emotionally controlled in tense situations; trust others'™ intentions and reduce defensiveness; show humility and openness to others'™ views; stay resilient and objective under pressure; and address issues directly and honestly to promote open, constructive dialogue.			
Adapting and Responding to Change	Adapts to changing circumstances; tolerates ambiguity; accepts new ideas and change initiatives; adapts interpersonal style to suit different people or situations & shows an interest in new, challenging experiences.			
Strategic Thinking	Having the proclivity to think strategically whilst taking the long-term into consideration.			
Communication	The ability to present information in a clear and concise manner to ensure others understand one's™ ideas in both individual and group situations; appropriately adapts one's™ message, style, and tone to accommodate a variety of audiences; actively keeps people informed and openly communicates relevant information to others.			
People Management	Displaying sound interpersonal awareness and an appetite to lead and control others whilst being attentive to their needs, feelings and emotions			

and that she sometimes withdrew from difficult interpersonal dynamics rather than addressing them directly.

Easily takes charge when strong leadership is required

	Relatively Low	Middle	Relatively High
Self /All Raters			
Line manager			
Colleagues			
Direct reports			
Managers			
Group			

Interestingly, while the psychometric assessments reflected strong problem-solving capability, some stakeholders perceived her as less effective in this area. This appeared less related to capability itself and more to the extent to which her confidence and communication style limited the visibility of her thinking and leadership contribution.

The feedback also suggested that Mary had increasingly adopted an operational “rescuer” role within the team, often stepping in to solve problems herself rather than enabling ownership and accountability within the broader team environment.

Is able to delegate work to others

	Relatively Low	Middle	Relatively High
Self /All Raters 			
Line manager 			
Colleagues			
Direct reports			
Managers			
Group			

6.Coaching Focus Areas

The initial phase of coaching focused on helping Mary create space for reflection and regain emotional balance amidst sustained operational pressure.

Mary recognised the extent to which work pressures had consumed her energy and emotional capacity. The coaching process helped her reconnect with neglected areas of self-care, including exercise, rest, personal reflection, and time away from work. She also began rebuilding healthier boundaries around overtime and emotional overinvestment in work-related challenges.

The coaching process also focused on strengthening Mary’s ability to communicate expectations clearly, engage in more assertive conversations, and create stronger accountability within her team. Particular attention was given to helping her separate interpersonal dynamics from leadership responsibilities and to respond to feedback and conflict more objectively and constructively.

7. Behavioural Shifts and Impact

Over time, Mary began engaging more directly with team dynamics and operational challenges rather than withdrawing from them. She became more consistent in delegating responsibilities, following through on accountability discussions, and involving others more actively in decision-making and problem-solving processes.

She also became more intentional in how she communicated expectations, approached difficult conversations, and managed periods of tension within the team. As her confidence strengthened, she was better able to balance supportiveness with accountability, creating clearer boundaries and greater role clarity within her team environment.

Stakeholders observed positive shifts in communication clarity, leadership presence, and the overall tone of her engagement within the team. Her manager described her as more self-aware, resilient, and confident in navigating complexity and interpersonal challenges within the workplace.

As her confidence strengthened, she became more actively involved in broader discussions relating to team structure, operational effectiveness, and longer-term leadership priorities.

8. Client Reflection

Mary reflected that the coaching process helped her become more assertive, strategic in her thinking, and more willing to delegate responsibilities and hold others accountable.

She described a significant shift in how she experienced herself as a leader, recognising the extent to which negative self-talk and internalised pressure had affected her confidence and visibility within the workplace. Through the process, she developed a stronger sense of self-trust and greater appreciation for her own capability and leadership contribution.

Mary also reflected on the value of having a structured reflective space in which to process complexity, challenge existing patterns, and experiment with different leadership behaviours in practice.

9. Final Reflection

This case study highlights how leadership challenges are often influenced not only by technical capability but also by interpersonal dynamics, self-belief, and the ability to lead consistently through others under pressure.

The integration of psychometric and 360 insights, leadership feedback, and structured coaching conversations created a strong foundation for meaningful behavioural change. Importantly, the process demonstrated the value of combining data-driven insight with reflective and relational coaching practices to support sustainable leadership development.

Mary's journey illustrates how technically capable leaders can sometimes become constrained by self-doubt, emotional pressure, and excessive operational involvement. It also demonstrates how increased self-awareness, clearer boundaries, and more intentional leadership behaviours can strengthen a leader's ability to create accountability, navigate complexity, and operate more strategically within demanding organisational environments.

For more information about Omnicor's Leadership Development, contact od@omnicor.co.za

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Leadership Development is critical to organisational success.

