Case Study
Start-up Hacker Turned Leader

Client Profile

- Newly promoted VP of Engineering at fast growing tech start up
- 1-1 Leadership Coaching for six months, in person, weekly, with initial *Interview-based Feedback Assessment*
- Goal setting and progress reporting with co-founder/CEO

Background

Client was an initial engineer of a start-up which was experiencing market success and had grown quickly over a couple of years. When Mariposa began working with client, he was being asked to lead the entire engineering organization, which consisted of a couple dozen people and needed to continue to scale rapidly. Engineers were generally motivated and engaged, they worked very autonomously, and little process existed. Errors/issues were beginning to become problematic as employees weren't coordinating well. The hand's-on founder/CEO needed to focus on leading the company versus managing/directing the engineers.

Client's Testimonial

"My coach turned this startup-hacker-dude into a good enough VP of Engineering to double Company engineering, launch two major projects and navigate an acquisition by (large company) in 6 months. I never expected a leadership coach to be as good as an MBA or 10 years as a VP. But I did hope that having one would sand off my sharp edges as a manager and provide the extra focus and healthy perspective to get through the tough parts of becoming a leader. My coach did this work fantastically. Whether it was updating process, figuring out how I could contribute best, fixing broken teams, influencing management or just staying sane, my coach always had the right direction when I was lost and helped me keep the engineering needle just under the red zone. She is someone I hope to work with again and will definitely recommend to friends in similar situations."

Coaching Focus Areas and Results
(Excerpts from Coaching Progress Report)

Leadership Tactics – Learn, model and teach new skills to take Company's engineering team to next level of operating.

Accomplishments

- Practicing being in "coaching mode" more often and more effectively. *Results:* He is seeing that others often can and will solve their own problems, and a coaching mindset takes a tremendous amount of pressure from him to always have an answer.
- Changed hiring and interview practices to optimize involvement of team members. *Results:* Hiring going well, team members feel more ownership and buy-in for the hiring decisions. More clarity around hiring criteria.
- Making and managing effective requests/agreements. Requests are specific, considering whole picture and giving context while setting out timing and expected outcome. *Results:* Follow-through has improved, less back-and-forth about requests. Increased team and personal productivity.
- Effectively rolled out workflow "process" to all engineers. Sought input, created approach, communicated it with leadership mindset, listened to feedback, followed-through. *Results:* New process working well, received positive feedback, being used, less issues, parties more informed.
- Enhanced self-management and regulation through exercise, reflection, rest and more reasonable work hours. *Results:* Not "toast" when at work. Better able to handle difficult situations, including emotional ones. Setting example for the engineers.

Influence – Fully contribute to direction of company.

Accomplishments

- Early on, became more aware of language and presence when speaking with senior people or external parties. *Results:* Enhanced credibility without losing his personality. He won over the acquiring company people with ease.
- Client clearly has quite an influential voice at Company, and is valued for his ability to bring people to agreement. His confidence in this arena has grown, and he has been communicating and sticking to his own opinions more often. *Results:* Participates regularly in senior management meetings, seen as significant part of the management team.
- Given that Client is now part of a larger organization (post acquisition), he is proactively thinking about the key stakeholders that he needs to be in relationship with, and is reaching out to them. *Results:* Making excellent progress with the integration, establishing solid relationships.