



COACHING FOR THE
COMMUNITY

AT SALUD INTEGRAL EN LA MONTAÑA





Puerto Rico experienced a major humanitarian crisis in 2017 following Hurricane Maria, a deadly Category 5 storm that ravaged the island. Emergency responders, hospitals and health centers were put to the test when the entire population was left without power to run essential medical equipment, facilities and manage emergency communication. Salud Integral en la Montaña (SIM), a nonprofit organization of health centers serving disadvantaged residents in Puerto Rico’s mountainous communities, rose to the occasion, thanks in part to a well-established coaching culture. SIM employees equipped with the necessary skills and tools to manage stress, actively listen and effectively communicate were able to optimize their ability to act as a team and serve patients

— the lifeblood of SIM’s mission. Even as Hurricane Maria’s high winds were battering the island, SIM kept its doors open, making it the only facility that provided care throughout the region.

The healthcare nonprofit credits its robust coaching culture, designed two years prior, for having a monumental impact on employee resilience during a time of rapid mobilization. Fifteen-hour days were not uncommon during this period. Coaching empowered all employees to understand what it means to not just help each other, but to support the community in a time of great need.

The International Coaching Federation (ICF) celebrated Salud Integral’s steadfast commitment to weaving a coaching approach into employee development and client services by awarding the organization an honorable mention in the 2019 ICF International Prism Award program. The Prism Award honors organizations that have achieved the highest standard

of excellence in coaching programs that yield discernible and measurable positive impacts, meet rigorous professional standards, achieve key strategic goals, and shape organizational culture. (Learn more at coachfederation.org/prism-award.)

A Desire For Employee Empowerment

SIM set out to accomplish all that and more when, in 2015, it launched an effort to transform its organizational culture. The organization wanted, first and foremost, to empower employees with the necessary tools to provide high quality service to patients. SIM's leadership and board of directors recognized that coaching would be valuable in effecting this change. The next year, SIM created an internal coaching program and aligned it with organizational goals articulated in a three-year strategic plan to measure the impact of coaching and its return on expectations. Goals included optimizing the potential for professional growth and building leadership bench strength.

SIM began by partnering with an ICF-credentialed coach. Since the program launched, a total of 36 internal coaches have been trained, enabling the organization to maximize the benefits of coaching across the organization. The original goal was for coaches to work with one-third of SIM's employees. By creating an additional coaching program for teams, SIM made it possible for coaching to positively impact virtually the entire organization. SIM now offers coaching to all employees as a way to improve individual and team performance, accelerate leadership development, and increase employee well-being. The organization constantly promotes this benefit through conferences, testimonial videos, and brochures.

"SIM is a great example of integrating a coaching culture in a corporate environment to elevate its mission of service," says Nydia Hernandez, PCC, SIM's Prism Award nominating coach. "So many entities benefit from this. The company, the employees and most importantly, the patients they serve."

ROE: A Measurable Impact

To measure the impact for both the individual and team coaching programs, employees and teams establish and measure specific desired changes before and after their

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coaching partnership—a return on expectations (ROE). One of the top outcomes that SIM noticed across the organization was an increase in patient productivity and satisfaction. Employees went from working with 32,000 patients in 2016, when the coaching program was established, to 55,000 patients in 2018. During this time, patient satisfaction increased to nearly 100 percent.

SIM also conducts an annual organizational survey to measure satisfaction. In 2018, employees identified motivation, sense of belonging and excellent work environment as its three top strengths. Employees were happier, more empowered and more engaged within the organization. Meetings are more effective as employees become better able to manage their time.

A Personalized Approach To Growth

SIM's coaching program is now a preferred professional development modality for employees and managers who view this benefit as more inclusive and focused than other development opportunities, such as motivational conferences or leadership classes. Team members who once passively participated in educational activities are now motivated to take a more active role in training new employees and groups. Additionally, more than 95 percent of employees surveyed identified SIM's organizational culture as "great."

Buy-in from the top levels of management was critical for SIM to weave coaching within the organizational culture. In addition to the three dozen internal coaches, nearly a dozen past and current SIM leaders have also become ICF-credentialed organizational executive coaches.

"We have been very happy with coaching to get both a return on investment and return on expectations

from our employees,” says SIM Executive Director Dr. Gloria Amador.

A community outreach worker credits the new skills and sense of empowerment gained from his coaching partnership with two important personal accomplishments: earning a master’s degree and receiving a promotion to become a registered nurse. This employee also lauds coaching for improving his interpersonal communication and optimizing his personal finance.

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Pediatric Nurse and Coaching Participant

“Coaching enabled me to find different solutions and strategies to work through stressful situations,” said a pediatric nurse and coaching participant. “It is amazing to see how we have the answers to our problems, and we don’t realize them until someone else helps us see them just by asking the right questions.”

The importance of coaching as a fundamental tool in SIM’s success is evident in the company’s annual budget, which includes a line item dedicated to a continued investment in organizational coaching.

Employees at all levels have incorporated a coaching approach into their day-to-day routines. SIM’s Medical Director Ada Santos uses coaching strategies and tools to help the dozens of doctors under his supervision improve medical facility production. These same tools enable nurses and doctors to enhance patient engagement.

SIM also is leading the way in applying a coaching approach in a hospice care setting. Hospice employees are able to use coaching skills, such as engaging in active listening and using powerful questions as a way to manage relationships with families and caregivers of homebound and end-of-life patients.

In 2019, SIM was recognized as a high-achieving organization by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Today, in addition to maintaining a coaching culture of quality and excellence, the nonprofit deploys its coaches to showcase how other community organizations can optimize resources and empower employees to impact more lives.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, health centers such as SIM played a vital role in Puerto Rico’s recovery. The ability to meet the needs of the community on a daily basis — as well as times of uncertainty following a once-in-a-lifetime natural disaster—require agile teams for whom empathy, communication and support are second nature. The creation of a coaching culture has transformed SIM’s organizational fabric and led to a workplace where employees are now eager to take charge. 🙌

In 2020, the International Coaching Federation (ICF) celebrates 25 years as the global organization for coaches and coaching. 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. Its 35,000-plus members located in 143 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.



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