

# Unleashed Potential at Branch #0036: A Coaching Success Story

When Tim Houck asked to manage the Quinpool Rd. branch in Halifax, it may not have appeared to be the most logical move. As the Senior Manager of Finance and Operations for the Atlantic Region, Tim had spent twenty-three years at TD Bank. There were other options open to him, yet he was choosing to move to a branch with an inexperienced sales team. Tim, however, had his own reasons. “I came because it was a group of young, energetic people who wanted to do something with their careers,” he explains. Tim looked forward to acting as a coach and helping them move up the ranks while improving the performance of the branch. “To me, there is nothing better than seeing your people being sought after by other managers for more senior roles.”

By October 2006, however, Tim found himself in a tough situation. “I never realized how much there would be to do,” he explains now. Despite weekly coaching sessions with his people, his branch was sitting 42nd out of 44 branches in the region, and he was having little success working with a newer Salesperson – who was sitting in the bottom quartile of performers.

“I was finding that the coaching model I was using – the “did well, next time, action plan approach” - wasn’t giving the results I wanted. I wasn’t able to create action plans that would really stimulate action,” explains Tim. Furthermore, the second most senior person at the branch had left – leaving him a sales team with a total of seven years’ experience in their roles across six people.

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## Coaching for High Performance

Tim signed up to attend the one-and-a-half day Coaching for High Performance workshop in late November with relatively low expectations. “I’ve always been interested in coaching, so I signed up out of general interest – but I didn’t really expect to get much out of it,” he says, looking back. Once in the classroom, however, he got excited. “Within an hour or two, I was thinking ‘this is exactly what I need.’”

As the course progressed through the ‘why’, ‘what’, and ‘how’ of coaching, Tim says he “very, very quickly realized that this was very applicable to my daily routine.” With his interest in developing people, Tim saw immediate application for the technique of painting a clear picture of success to help his people get past performance blocks. He also had a big ‘eureka’ moment in the section of goal setting: “I realized that a lot of what wasn’t working with the old model had to do with the goals we were focusing on.” Tim learned the elements of effective goal setting, and the GROW process, a series of questions to help translate goals into action. He left the course eager to act.

## Impact

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Tim continued his weekly coaching sessions with all of his employees, but the sessions changed to orient around the new tools he had learned. As Tim explains, “the timing didn’t change – but the manner did, as well as the interest from both parties.”

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In the months following the workshop, the results were nothing short of remarkable. “At the end of November 2006, we were 42nd out of 44 branches. By the end of February 2007, in just three months, we had moved up to 13th,” reports Tim. Furthermore, the branch finished number one in the district for the 2007 RSP drive. “Last year, we weren’t even close to being in the top half for anything,” remembers Tim.

On a personal development front, Tim has seen great payback from the course. The junior Salesperson that had been struggling previously quickly moved into the top half of performers in their region. “Before, she just didn’t have the confidence. Once I took the course, I was able to see what was blocking her and work to help her overcome it. And, of course, confidence breeds confidence,” explains Tim.

The main driver of success, according to Tim, was that employees became truly committed to their goals. “They set the goal, they realize it’s theirs, and they know they can achieve it. While the old goals tended to be overwhelming – for them and for me - the new goals are energizing”.

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## Looking Back

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“I have gone out to so many people and said ‘if you can get on this course, do it as soon as possible because it will change the way you think about coaching, and how you coach,’” says Tim. “I don’t think you have to be a fan of coaching, or even like it. If you go through this, you’ll be a better coach. I think that’s as simple as it gets.”

After twenty-five years with TD, Tim sees Coaching for High Performance as one of the best opportunities the bank has offered its managers. “It’s the best time I’ve spent away from the branch in terms of time for money in many, many years”.