



## Coaching Challenge


# Technical Expert to Corporate Leader

Dr. Ana Gutierrez\* is an accomplished, highly intelligent, and goal driven data scientist. A respected expert in her field, she accepted a Vice President role leading a for-profit applied research practice in a high-change, high-stress educational assessment firm. Ana had been a key hire for her company. Her bosses were significantly invested in her expertise which lent credibility and gravitas to the assessment outcomes investigated by her team. At times, Ana wondered if the demands of applied research were misaligned with her values as a researcher and academic. Her discomfort and stress spilled out in meetings with business units, as well as, in relationships with her superior and her direct reports. Additionally, Ana was a self-professed perfectionist and workaholic who trusted few to perform to her standards and drove her team to work at her pace, burning others out and away in the process.

Ana sought coaching after receiving a blunt performance review indicating she was not successfully meeting leadership expectations for company Vice Presidents. Her non-research and corporate unit collaborators found her

*\*Name changed to protect client privacy.*

communication intimidating and believed her hostile to outside input. High turnover on her team was directly attributed to her aggressive critiques, to the lack of ownership, mentorship, and development she offered to her direct reports, and to her unrelenting pace. Ana rejected the initial feedback but recognized her high expectations for herself and others, and she feared failure. A 360 assessment helped her process the feedback more objectively and enabled her to remain committed to success in her role and to proving detractors wrong.

Through coaching, Ana began to make sense of her drivers and what was triggering conflict for her. She identified and reconciled the alignments and misalignments between her environment and her expectations, and determined the impact she sought to have in this role. She explored what was and was not within her span of control, and developed a strategy for stabilizing, leading, and developing her team. Follow up check-ins with her stakeholders and a follow up performance review indicated she had successfully regained the confidence of her boss, begun relying upon and developing her team, and was effectively leading her line of business. 



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