

Improving Client Relationships in Professional Services

Situation

A team at a technology consulting firm was facing a strained relationship with its client on a multi-million dollar account. A breakdown in communications had resulted from missed deadlines, incomplete deliverables, and unmet expectations on an important web development effort. Neither client nor consulting firm was able to voice concerns about the combined team's work style, technical competencies, and decision-making ability. Despite their frustration, the client feared the cost of bringing a replacement firm up to speed would be prohibitive and reluctantly decided to engage the agency for the second phase of the project.

The consulting executive responsible for the account realized that the relationship was headed for disaster unless major changes were made to get it back on track. But he had no idea how to accomplish that.

Solution

Seth Levenson Consulting Inc. designed and implemented a solution that included: one-on-one interviews, feedback surveys, a facilitated working session, and individual coaching to get the relationship back on track.

Using information from the interviews and surveys, Seth determined the root causes of the problem and designed the workshop accordingly. The workshop – conducted over 2 half-days -- provided a “safe environment” to initiate honest and constructive communication. Seth ensured that issues were identified, solutions were scoped, and action plans were created. His individual coaching between sessions helped to keep the meeting productive and forward-looking in tone.

Results

Success! Clients were asked to rate their agency relationship on five key measures on a 1 to 5 scale (with 5 = “It doesn't get better than this” 1 = “Emergency: We must fix this immediately”). The chart below indicates the progress resulting from the workshop itself and after the workshop action plans were implemented. The consulting firm executive summed it up: “Seth Levenson saved this relationship!”

