

Leadership Coaching for Mid-Level Managers and Clinical Nurse Specialists

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Introduction

Nursing leaders have been faced with high turnover rates, lack of employee engagement, increasing demands on their time, and perceived lack of support from upper management as there is pressure to do more with less.^{3,8} Also, many nursing leaders have received little training around being effective leaders.^{4,9}

Professional leadership coaching can offer an answer to improving the knowledge and skills of nurse leaders as well as provide the opportunity for self-awareness and growth.⁴ Also, nurse leaders can coach their staff and also teach coaching skills to front-line nurses to use in educating patients and encouraging behavior change.⁵ Executive coaching has begun to be offered to nurse executives²; however, mid-level managers rarely have the opportunity to receive individual or team coaching.¹⁰ In addition, Clinical Nurse Specialists are considered to be nurse leaders but are in a role without formal authority and often have little to no leadership training.¹

Objectives

The overall purpose of this project was to assess the need for leadership training and coaching for mid-level Managers and Clinical Nurse Specialists.

Objective 1: Identify leadership training needs of Mid-Level Managers and Clinical Nurse Specialists

Objective 2: Provide training for Mid-Level Managers and Clinical Nurse Specialists on at least one identified leadership skill

Objective 3: Demonstrate team/group coaching that they may be able to use with their staff to improve understanding and engagement

Objective 4: Introduce Mid-Level Managers and Clinical Nurse Specialists to professional coaching and discuss how it can be used in the workplace

Objective 5: Provide one hour of individual coaching to Mid-Level Managers and Clinical Nurse Specialists to determine if they found individual coaching to be helpful

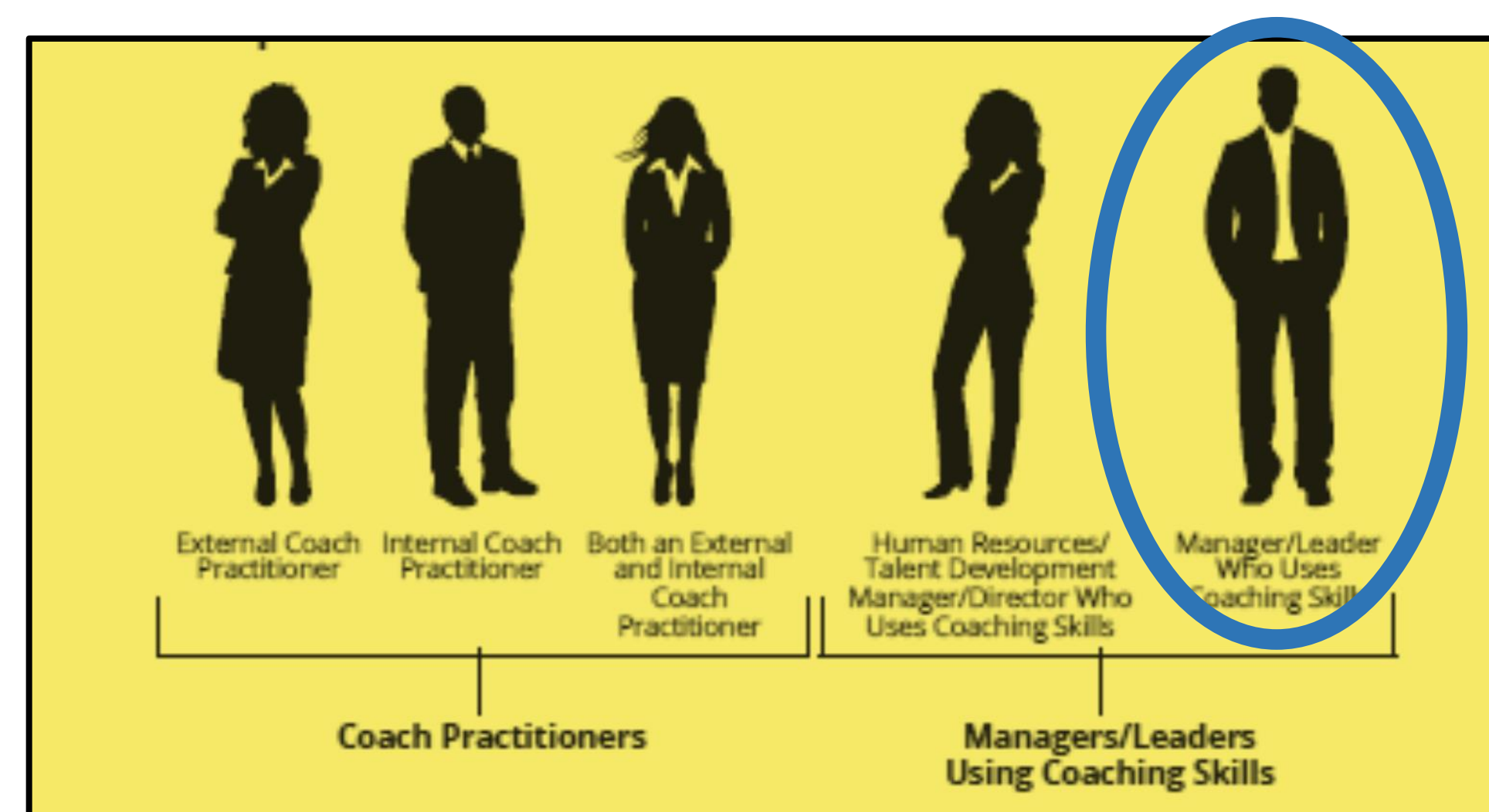
What is Coaching?

The International Coach Federation defines coaching as: partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential, which is particularly important in today's uncertain and complex environment. Coaches honor the client as the expert in his or her life and work and believe every client is creative, resourceful and whole. Standing on this foundation, the coach's responsibility is to:

- Discover, clarify, and align with what the client wants to achieve
- Encourage client self-discovery
- Elicit client-generated solutions and strategies
- Hold the client responsible and accountable

This process helps clients dramatically improve their outlook on work and life, while improving their leadership skills and unlocking their potential.⁶

The Coaching Continuum



The focus of this project was the Manager/Leader using coaching skills

Materials and Methods

Objective 1

A simple anonymous survey monkey tool was developed based on leadership skills identified in the literature.^{6,10} The respondents were asked to first rate each leadership skill based on its importance to their job performance. The second question asked respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with their level of skill for each leadership skill. The third question asked them to rate their level of interest in attending training around each of the leadership skills. The last question asked their preferred style for training. No demographic variables were collected.

Objective 2

A 1-hour training was provided for the Mid-Level Managers and Clinical Nurse Specialists around conflict management in which they assessed their own preferred conflict management style using a modified TKI instrument. They then participated in an exercise around Edward DeBono's Six Thinking Hats (Yellow: Optimism, Blue: Process, Red: Emotion, White: Factual, Black: Realistic to almost Negative; Green: Creative) to determine their preferred method of approaching different situations (conflict, when asked their opinion, and during a meeting). The managers and Clinical Nurse Specialists were then asked to respond from the perspective of their hat to a scenario.

Objective 3

A group coaching demonstration was provided around stresses at work, stress management and work/life balance.

Objective 4

A presentation was provided that explained professional coaching, positive psychology, and that the purpose of coaching was to both raise awareness as well as move people forward to accomplish a goal. In addition, some of the coaching skills were explained as well as how they could be used in a workplace setting. The skills included: Presence, Powerful Questions, Active Listening, Inner Critic, Accountability, Celebration, and Acknowledgement

Objective 5

Individual Coaching will occur over the next 3 weeks.

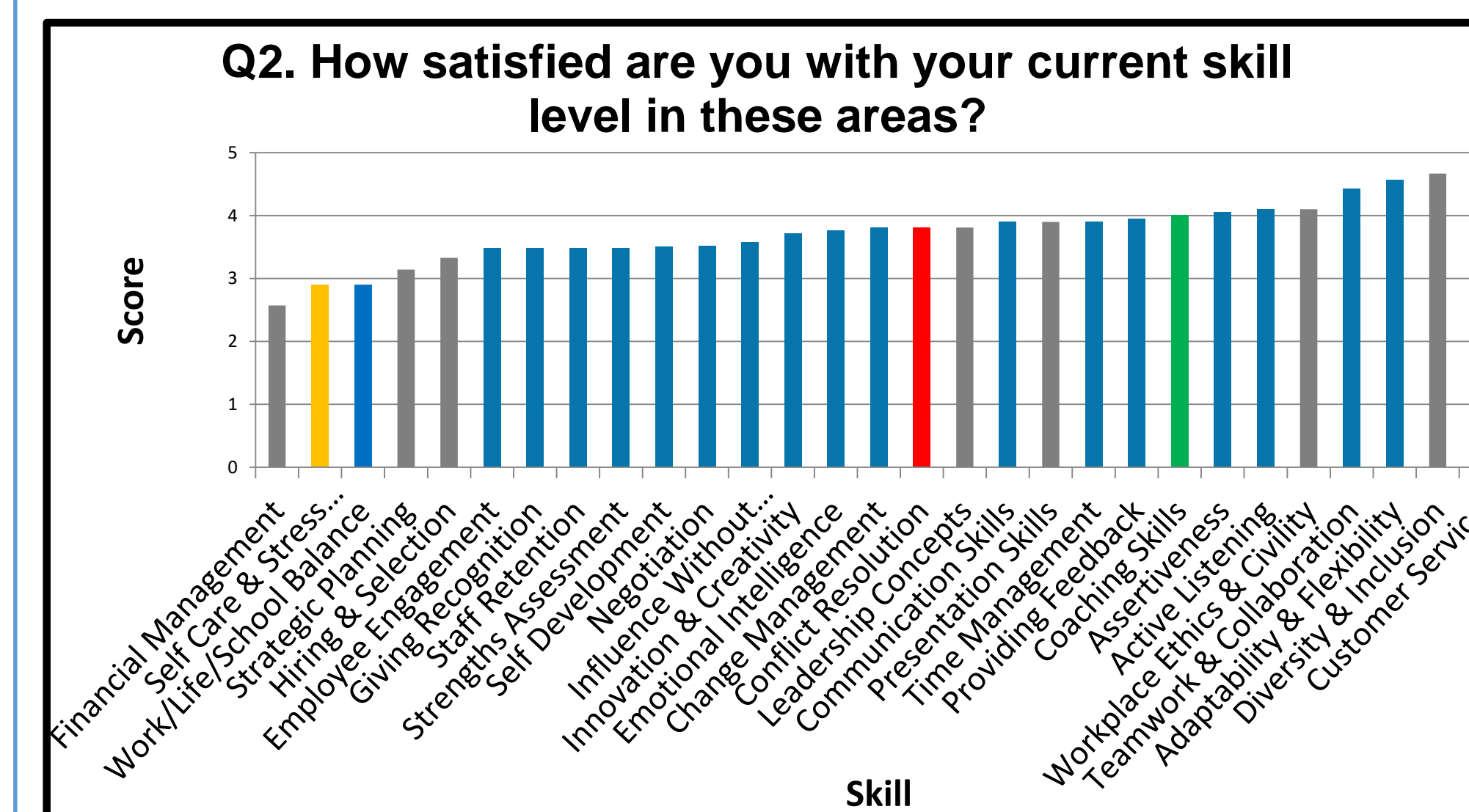
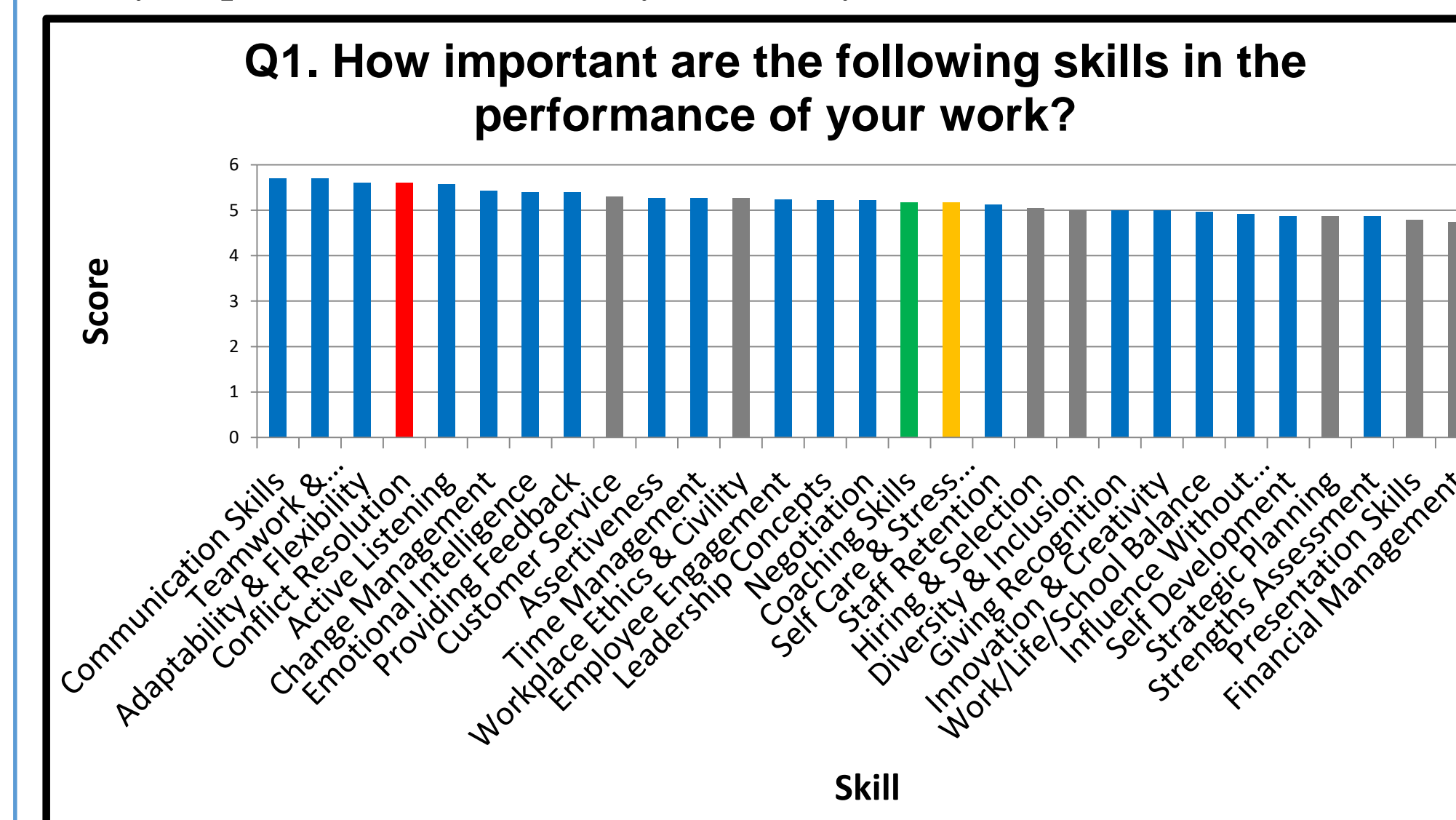
Group Coaching

The group coaching topics: self-care, stress management, and work/life balance were chosen because of the survey results (see next column). The ratings for importance of self care/stress management (fairly high) and not being satisfied with their own level of skill in this area (fairly low) did not seem to match with the low level of interest in developing self care and stress management. This incongruence is an indication of a possible unmet need that the managers were ignoring. For this reason the topic for group coaching was chosen.

In asking about the incongruence, the managers responded that by admitting that they needed help in this area, they were afraid they would be seen as being "weak", "not competent", and "selfish". In exploring the topic further, they began to talk about the "overwhelming stress at work", "taking the stress home", "feeling compelled to answer emails on weekends and vacations" and "not being able to get away from the work stress". A few of the managers did engage in regular exercise, but even they identified "sleep and eating" as problem areas. They were able to share ideas about incorporating self care into their lives and some agreed to pair up to check in for accountability to make sure they were leaving work on time. As the group coach from a health & wellness perspective, information about how to relieve stress in the moment was provided (butterfly hug, breathing with an extended exhale, shivering horse) and they were given a stress ball in the shape of a star and bubbles to blow (another way to extend the exhale).

Results

The results of the leadership skills survey are shown below. For Q1, the blue bars represent those skills that are directly related to coaching skills and the green bar specified "coaching skills" directly. The red bar represents the area that was chosen for the training and where it fell in the spectrum of importance (for Q3 the need for training in this area was rated the top priority). The yellow bars are for self care and stress management (with scores falling a little above 5 or "very important") which are compared to the yellow bars in Q2 with scores falling below 3 or "moderately satisfied"). Overall most leadership skills were found to be "very important" to "absolutely necessary."

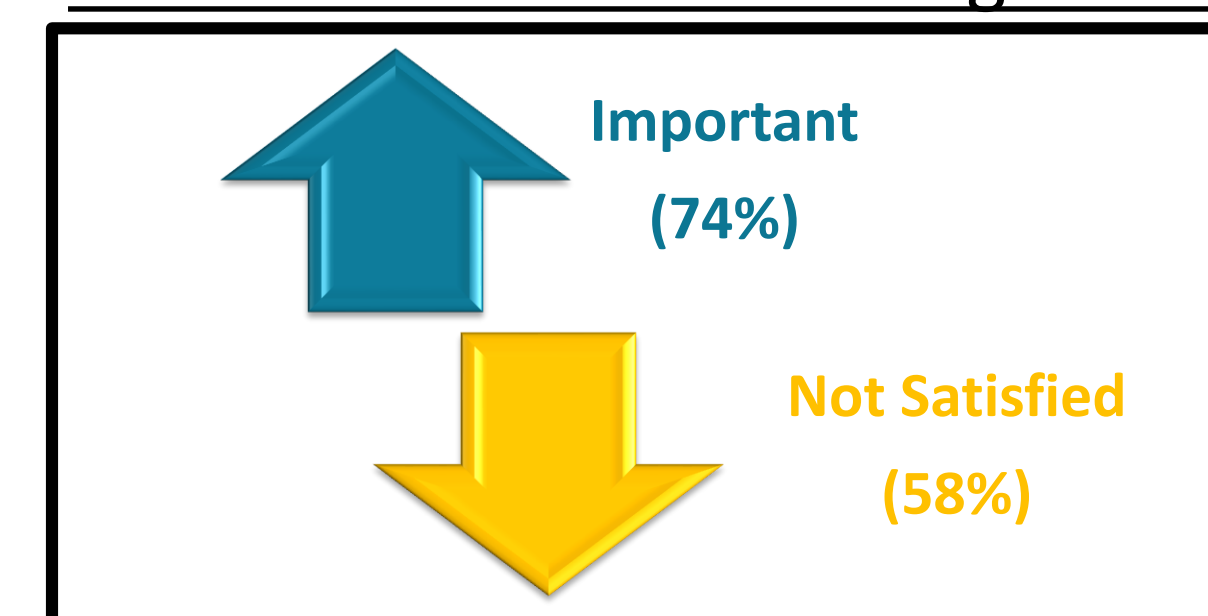


- Q3. The top 5 areas identified as needing further training are:**
1. Conflict Management (training provided in this area)
 2. Employee Engagement (can be improved using coaching skills)
 3. Financial Management
 4. Coaching Skills
 5. Staff Retention (can be improved using a coaching approach)

Group Coaching

For Q1 that asked about the importance of self care and stress management to effective management, 74% answered either that it was very important (22%) or absolutely necessary (52%). For Q2 satisfaction with current level of skill, 58% fell below being moderately satisfied with 10% being not satisfied at all and not one person being absolutely satisfied. And for the third question about interest in receiving training in the area of self care and stress management, the average score was 3.29 (moderately interested) with 14% not interested at all. In addition, similar responses were found around work/life/school balance and time management, all of which have been identified in the literature as being important.⁸

Self Care and Stress Management



Conclusions

- Most leadership skills on survey were rated as very important or absolutely necessary
- Satisfaction with level of skill scores had a range from a little satisfied to quite satisfied, so there is room for improvement
- Most training needs identified were in areas that leadership coaching could improve: Conflict Management, Employee Engagement, Coaching Skills, and Staff Retention (except financial management which was 3rd).
- Using coaching skills can improve performance and engagement of front line staff
- There is a need for self-care and stress management even though it was not identified as a training need.
- Coaching skills are needed at all levels in nursing

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