

[A summary of actions and results for Hack Sain with David as coach, trainer, and consultant]



**“I asked David to help me  
leave a legacy of leaders  
in my company.”**



--Charles “Hack” Sain, Founder and retired CEO, Sain Associates--

### **Situation 1993:**

At age 70, Charles “Hack” Sain was founder and CEO of an engineering consulting firm that had grown to over 70 associates serving in numerous states. Twice before, during extended illnesses, he turned over the company leadership. Each time, the company declined and he came back as CEO. He wanted to leave a legacy in retirement and wondered if his company would survive. Hack asked, “help me leave a legacy of leaders in my company.”

### **Results he and his company achieved during 1993-2000:**

- ◆ Revenues per associate doubled while earning awards for being “family-friendly.”
- ◆ Retention of associates improved four-fold (turnover dropped from 20% to 5%).
- ◆ Employee “Attitude & Ability” improved “C” to “B” and “Satisfaction” improved “C” to “A.”
- ◆ Professionals got prepared for promotion and increased profitability better and faster (one professional got promoted to lead a team three years faster than the previous best, his boss).
- ◆ Improved plans and personnel methods – recruiting, training, empowering, serving, promoting.
- ◆ In-house training increased while travel expense decreased and billable hours increased.
- ◆ Randy planned for how to earn promotion to president, gained support, and succeeded.

### **Sample Methods:**

1. Coaching monthly with Hack as CEO to identify opportunities and barriers, design plans for the company and him, and outline company meetings and training strategies to implement. Three-level process: CEO strategy=>VPs improve and help implement=>train teams and individuals.
2. Consulting to develop solutions: plans, planning templates, assessments, rewards strategy, training.... When Randy became president, a sample need he requested was a written set of options for how he and the vice presidents could make decisions. Other practical applications included designing plans for the company, divisions, and individuals. They worked on practices for recruitment and retention, strategies to boost revenue, streamlining operations, and helping associates take more initiative....
3. Training to present plans, assessments, rewards, and tools to help implementation.
  - ◆ Phase 1: seminars for the company at lunch: goals, best practices for professionalism, empowerment...
  - ◆ Phase 2: three seminars for VPs and others invited to dig deeper for understanding and application...
  - ◆ Phase 3: “Lunch and Learn” course for those invited and others enrolling – 2 hours lunch/class with 2 hours outside work for 12 months. We assessed on *Attitude and Ability* and what they needed to earn “A-B” levels, then adapted curriculum to help them get more of what they needed to *go to the next level*. Deliverables: professional plans with mission, vision, roles, goals, time priorities, and actions presented to supervisors to boost communication, alignment, and focus on priorities, plus mentoring, trust, and empowerment. They improved performance assessments and rewards systems to motivate more people to aim at desired values, actions, and results. We learned more about: professionalism, leadership, motivation, planning, time, and management.
  - ◆ When Randy succeeded Hack as president, he added a workshop monthly of a few hours off site with the VPs in which professional, division, and company plans got presented and honed, strategies and results reviewed, and leadership best practices learned for implementation and passing on....

In 1993, Hack attended a seminar, which I organized and moderated, featuring Dr. Stephen Covey, author of The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. We had 10 corporate sponsors, including our host Birmingham-Southern College and our Life Leaders association in an audience of 1,000+ from nine states. Soon after, Hack called and eventually asked, “help me leave a legacy of leaders in my company.” I felt “bumps on my arm,” as if my grandfather had asked for help saving the family farm!

Hack said that earlier in his entrepreneurial life he thought he could “do it all” (be an expert in his profession, business practices, and leadership training). Near age 70, he concluded, he wished he invested years before to leverage his time so he could lead on professional services to clients and building his business with assistance from someone dedicated to personal, professional, and leadership development..

On the first day I spoke to the company during an hour-long seminar, it became clear that almost no one besides Hack and me were excited to have a consultant there. I learned later I was the third consultant hired in a year. At the end of that session, Hack may have been the only person inspired with me being there! He encouraged, “Don’t quit on me.” He admitted, his decision to launch a professional and leadership development program was not popular – some associates felt they were “too busy” and afraid the expense of a coach would reduce their bonuses. Most of the associates were thinking short-term; Hack was thinking long-term; he was thinking *legacy* of leaving his company at the next level of capacity. He demonstrated leadership. He stood before the company and said he would persist and prove the value of the program. Randy Sain had an open mind and was willing to try. It took months to show results and earn trust with a core group. As people boosted performance and some earned promotions, previous skeptics who wanted “show me” proof, asked to join our course and started growing. A few cynics never tried to give our efforts a chance – some left, others fell behind those learning and using our methods. Hack, Randy, and a growing core persisted – resulting in better people, plans, and profits.

Hack and Randy (who has since become president) learned new ideas and approaches as well as improved implementation of ideas they already had. They opened their minds to opportunities for improvement and systems to inspire and guide people to succeed focused on key performance indicators. They raised standards, described them in their plans and practices, and boosted retention of those who matched – those who wanted to grow and be better. They adopted a new model for leading and empowering people. They opened themselves up to suggestions for how they could improve as leaders – and they improved as professionals, role models, and leaders.

Prior to his selection as president, Randy presented his professional plan to Hack and me to prepare for and earn trust as the new leader. With Hack’s feedback, suggestions, and support, Randy earned the presidency within a year through his performance and developing capacities in identified areas of leadership, management, and business. They worked together at a higher level of intent and cooperation.

Hack was the key difference in the effort because without his determination the effort likely would not have started – or once begun, with resistance, likely would have stopped. That is a key difference between *leaders of legacy* and average executives. Also significant was Randy’s attitude to openly give our program a chance and seek to earn the role as the new leader instead of hide needs to learn and improve. I learned from them. I got to work with Randy as president for a few years. When he became sick with cancer, the company consolidated, and I stepped down from my part-time role. Randy is healthy again and has appointed the next president. Hack shifted from client to advocate and board member. He is 85+.

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Operationalizing ideas:

1. A good *people and organizational development* program links to plans, assessments, and rewards, attracts and retains more of the people you seek, boosts ROI, and could brand you as distinctive.
2. Corporate strategy should include helping associates develop “A-B” level attitude and ability, if you want to be a market leader, world class, or value stewardship of your resources.
3. Every associate should have a plan that links to priorities of the organization or your company will fall short of potential. And, motivated professionals can get prepared for promotion better and faster....