



# Powering Up Leaders

## A long commitment to coaching supports leadership development at Puget Sound Energy

**To stay ahead of a dynamic industry, and transform from a utility to an innovative energy company, PSE has supported leadership development with coaching for all leaders at all levels since 2003.**

As Washington state's oldest local energy company, with a 6,000-square-mile service area stretching across 10 Washington counties, primarily in the Puget Sound region, Puget Sound Energy serves 1.1 million electric customers and 790,000 natural gas customers.

PSE's application of coaching is extraordinary in terms of breadth, depth, and duration. Development of this initiative began in 2003, when the original sponsor, Greg Sisson, PSE's Manager of Organizational Effectiveness at PSE partnered with Dede Henley, founder of Henley Leadership Group (HLG). The two were tasked with preparing senior level leadership for a changing energy industry by designing and delivering comprehensive development for the

director level company-wide. Data from PSE's *Great Place to Work* survey indicated internal business units operated within silos, and were led in a command-and-control style. This hierarchical structure propagated bureaucracy and employee disengagement. A risk-averse culture adopted new ideas slowly and resisted adapting to change. Consistency, familiarity, and security blocked collaboration and innovation. The prevailing attitude was: "This is how it's always been here."

**The intention was to disrupt status quo, ignite and engage leadership, and provide needed training to fulfill PSE's vision and strategy as it emerged.** Expanding the design of this initiative, PSE and HLG provided uniformity across the company by making it available and relevant for all leaders in all areas and at all levels. Success with the first group evolved into three offerings allowing for any leader across PSE, from the frontline supervisor to CEO, to experience six months to one full year of formal development with external coaches.

### Coaching at PSE By the Numbers

135

Years in Business

2864

Number of Employees

13

Years PSE Leader has  
been offered

600+

Number of leaders who have  
received coaching

6

Minimum hours of coaching  
for each leader



This initiative blossomed into three phases. Phase One, “PSE Leader: Engaging Your Full Potential,” includes four, full-day trainings plus six hours of individual and group coaching. Phase Two, “PSE Leader II: The Power of Collaboration,” provided a six-month advanced leadership offering for manager level and above with a 2½-day off-site retreat and six additional full days of inquiry based training and coaching. Phase Three involved a full year of coaching for all executive officers, including President and CEO Kimberly Harris.


**All three phases relied on coaching as the primary methodology for long-lasting learning and development.** Gains are sustained by scheduling PSE Leader consistently twice yearly. This continues building bench strength, while senior executives provide reinforcement by coaching their direct reports and others. In a surprise appearance during PSE Leader, Kimberly Harris shared with all the participants in the room her blind spots as a leader and the professional value coaching provided for her.

Through a continual 13-year evolution, PSE Leader evolved to stay aligned with PSE’s mission, values, strategic direction, and internal learning and development processes while running seamlessly for coaches and clients. **Longevity of the partnership between PSE and HLG is a success story unto itself. The nature of this long and trusting relationship allows for a uniquely collaborative and creative opportunity from which PSE benefits.**

The current sponsor, Dan Christopher, PSE’s Organizational Development Consultant, Organizational Effectiveness, invites the external coaches to observe internal trainings to be knowledgeable in other systems supporting corporate learning and development. This open-door policy allows coaches to be fully aligned and supportive to the entire leadership development curriculum, creating a cohesive and seamless leadership development experience for every leader at PSE.



PSE Model of Leadership



“There’s been a change in mindset among PSE leaders. We used to operate in a world of constraints. That’s the outlook of a utility company. Now our leaders think about opportunities and possibilities and work back from there. That’s how an energy company acts.

Henley Leadership Group has been our partner in this transformation. With their support over the past 13 years, PSE leaders at all levels of the organization, from front-line supervisors to the executive suite, have learned to challenge themselves, to fight complacency, and to bring their best each and every day. I’m so grateful to Henley Leadership Group for what they’ve taught me and my leadership team.”

**Kimberly Harris, President & CEO**  
*Puget Sound Energy*

**With over 600 leaders coached and 13 years of observable results, coaching has proven to be a highly effective method for building leadership capacity and transforming culture. Coaching has become embedded in how PSE develops leaders, and its influence is present throughout the company.** As coaching calls forth leaders to be authentic, bold, and confident, the listening, courage, integrity and trust described in PSE’s model of leadership are actualized. There is greater focus on development, more willingness to take risks, and quicker responsiveness to change. Leaders now have the courage to be open and vulnerable, which has led to more collaboration and inspiration for others to step up to the challenges ahead.

**Of 100 former coaching clients surveyed by HLG in 2013, 61% of the participating leaders were promoted, and almost 10% reported they had stayed at PSE as a direct result of the coaching.** At an average cost savings of \$232,500 per person, this adds up to a total savings of \$1.8 million.

The 2015 *Great Place to Work* survey scores improved, amidst unprecedented challenges. Participants consistently report that PSE Leader was the most useful professional development they had ever experienced. They passed it on to their teams, changed career direction within PSE, created new roles for themselves that never existed, and experienced multiple promotions over short periods of time. Clients reported transformations in their personal lives, in marriages, parenting, and other family relationships.

Coaching at PSE will continue to adapt and meet both known and unforeseen business challenges as they arise. The collaborative partnership between PSE and HLG allows both parties to bring their best ideas forward. **By investing in this initiative, and standing behind it, PSE has declared that its employees are its most valuable asset; above all else, they matter.** Because coaching has become embedded in management processes, this shift in PSE’s culture and leadership style will remain.



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