

The ROI *of* Curiosity

A CASE STUDY

TELUS PARTNERS WITH **BOX OF CRAYONS** TO SOLVE
THE REAL CHALLENGE & HAVE MORE IMPACT



The Situation

TELUS is a global market leader in communications and information technology, based in Vancouver, Canada. Recognized by Forbes as one of 2020's World's Best Employers, the organization is a dynamic, globally recognized communications and information technology company with \$16 billion in annual revenue and 15.2 million customer connections spanning wireless, data, IP, voice, television, entertainment, video and security, healthcare and agriculture. The services TELUS offers help people and businesses thrive in a constantly changing digital environment.

A significant obstacle TELUS faced was redefining their approach to performance development so that team members receive the coaching and direction they need to gain clarity, focus and support and thereby achieve their personal and professional goals. TELUS needed to introduce annual goal-setting conversations to counteract the **lack of focus that resulted from too many competing problems and pressures, and overwhelming difficulty identifying the real challenge that needed attention.**

Having difficulty pinpointing the real challenge isn't unique to TELUS; a [recent Forbes study](#) found that "85% of C-suite executives across 17 countries believed that their organizations were bad at diagnosing problems." In many organizations, the overstuffed calendars of overcommitted people reflect the **widespread problem of strategic focus**: What will you say no to in order to say yes to the work that really matters?

TELUS had run internal programs and training before, but some employees felt that coaching was a thing that only people leaders did. As one internal leader said, those traditional models are models that "no one applies. Instead, we want to frame and demystify coaching as a way of showing up and approaching conversations." (Peter Block describes it as "a way of being with each other.") Yet, as another internal leader said, "When people are so busy, how do you ever create those synergies?"

From the start, co-creating the new performance-development experience with team members from every level of the business was a priority for TELUS. Along with collecting information on their coaching and feedback needs, the organization researched coaching best practices, examined learning models, consulted experts and studied their current systems, in an effort to identify and define a learning framework that best suited their specific needs.

TELUS then reached out to Box of Crayons, in late 2017, establishing key priorities they wanted to solve in partnership with us. TELUS especially wanted a learning mode that worked across the whole organization and that created a common language and set of behaviours. More specifically, they wanted to instill a strong coaching culture across the entire organization that would support more frequent and ongoing conversations and leverage everyone's potential to drive innovation. This transformed culture could then cultivate the capability across all levels (including their frontline teams) to **define and work on what matters most** every quarter, and provide team members with tools to **drill down into the real challenge** at play, thereby enabling the best outcomes and decisions.



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The Solution

Psychologist Todd Kashdan says that staying curious longer means “people are less likely to prematurely commit to initial ideas and perspectives.” As curiosity expert Dr. Diane Hamilton notes, “We need curiosity to ask questions to be more creative. When we create multiple possibilities, we can be more innovative.” Not only could coach-like curiosity transform day-to-day behaviours and conversations across TELUS, but **staying curious longer could help them to better identify the problems that truly need their focus and to generate more innovative solutions.**

Using their amazing people performance development (APPD) model, TELUS embarked on its most significant cultural transformation. The objectives were to:

1. Completely reimagine performance development at TELUS by providing team members with the direction, coaching and support they need to achieve their personal and professional goals on a quarterly basis.
2. Focus on forward-thinking developmental coaching, rather than on retrospective evaluation of performance.

The idea behind this approach was to create a flexible and simple goal-setting process that focuses on a maximum of five quarterly goals, including one for personal development, with the ability to collect feedback from anyone in the organization. In addition, TELUS wanted to build a strong coaching culture that would be leveraged in daily interactions and in performance conversations.

TELUS engaged Box of Crayons as their learning partner for this initiative. They recognized the simplicity and practicality of our programs, which help people make coach-like curiosity a habit. They appreciated that our work encourages people to slow down and enables teams to stay curious longer by asking more, and better, questions that allow everyone — regardless of job level — to get clear on the real challenge. **Our programs equip people with the practical strategies that drive focus, create possibilities and foster collaboration.** TELUS knew that coach-like curiosity would, in turn, inform and improve their evolving performance-development efforts to increase self-management, foster accountability, energize engagement and inspire learning and growth. Our programs were also a great fit because TELUS needed a **learning ally that could work to scale and offer programming options in various modalities** over an extended period — and service the entire organization (65K+ people, including frontline employees).

Box of Crayons’ engagement scope included an objective to facilitate all programming and offer an agile and iterative approach to the learning pathway so that TELUS could test and pilot the right solution rollout with select team members before launching company-wide. Box of Crayons’ programs have been offered on an ongoing basis to all levels of the organization, from executives to frontline teams.

To aid learning transfer and behaviour change, the programs incorporate ongoing adoption and sustainment resources, including an accountability challenge, “nudge” reminders and access to the program content.



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The Impact & Results

The response to these initial programs was phenomenal. Leaders in multiple business units wanted more, and one participant remarked: “I have been able to connect differently with my team members.” Box of Crayons and TELUS were able to work together to solve certain difficulties that arose during the pilot by incentivizing enrollments and offering a “why” to those who were still unsure if they would benefit from coach-like conversations. TELUS developed a robust **internal marketing strategy**, and Box of Crayons was able to offer support in the form of program invitations, informational one-pagers and the identifying of “change champions” within the organization who would create buzz and excitement about this culture-change initiative.

TELUS’ pilot engagements with leaders saw **100% overall participant satisfaction**, and 97% of participants said that, as a result of experiencing Box of Crayons’ programs, they’d be **more focused and effective at work**. Both The Coaching Impact (previously known as Coaching for Great Work) and The Coaching Habit were assessed with 80%+ overall participant satisfaction.

An increasing number of people within the TELUS community are taking Box of Crayons’ programs. The participants are seeing worthwhile impacts following the training and experiencing firsthand how the learning is **making a positive change in them** — all of which is cascading out to their teams and what they are able to accomplish.

In participant feedback following the program delivery, over **98% of leaders at TELUS reported that they would recommend Box of Crayons’ programs**. They’ve found **many benefits to the learnings**, with one leader remarking, “The ripple effect to me personally is that it frees up my time to focus on a strategic view, rather than day to day and issue to issue. And it helps team members grow in their roles.”

In looking at **behaviour change and the positive impact** of Box of Crayons’ programs at TELUS:

- **55%** of leaders reported being significantly more curious.
- **89%** of leaders reported that they are now generating tactics to break patterns in conversations that create barriers to curiosity and coach-like conversations.
- **70%** reported implementing habits to support more coach-like conversations with their teams.
- Over **80%** noted a significant difference in smarter collaboration, employee engagement, career conversations and the understanding of the value of coach-like curiosity.

As a direct result of these changes, TELUS saw behaviour change throughout the organization. Increased engagement, smarter collaboration and deselection led to a **financial savings of \$92,071, an ROI of 457%**.



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The Reviews

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I learned to spend less time on prescribing solutions, to allow team members to solve problems themselves.

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We have been able to align quickly on items by getting to the problem faster and still getting the same value as we would have had if we were having a long, in-depth conversation. It's very practical. That helped make it stick.

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We are all so busy. Too many programs are too lofty and hard to understand. The impact [of the Box of Crayons' program] is that the team takes more responsibility.

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Next Steps

By 2019, TELUS had officially launched the learning pathways, with the live full- and half-day programs at the heart of the program experience. But with **the extreme disruption of COVID-19 in the spring of 2020**, TELUS teams moved the majority of their workforce to home offices. Based on the excellent results of the piloted programs and the ROI findings, TELUS and Box of Crayons worked through COVID-19 disruptions to redefine the learning pathways. Since Box of Crayons offers virtual programs, we leaned into our already-collaborative partnership with TELUS to move from live to virtual delivery and are on track to engage the entire organization in the coming years with a webinar series, virtual programs and a **brand-new frontline offering**.

As of spring 2021, TELUS has successfully transitioned from Box of Crayons' live programming to virtual programming for their leaders, training over 6,000 participants. Box of Crayons' practical and unique programming frameworks **integrated successfully with TELUS' culture-change initiative** and has since been helping improve their ability to get to the root of real challenges, while empowering innovation through conscientious leadership modelling.

Box of Crayons' virtual programs solve distance-learning issues and help unify dispersed teams so they can become more focused, resilient and innovative in an ever-changing business market. This current environment highlights the need for flexible learning options, as well as for shorter sessions to accommodate varied schedules.

TELUS wanted to find focus and establish a shared set of behaviours so they could more effectively respond to pressures and obstacles. **Box of Crayons** delivers programs that meet their need for an accessible, practical and engaging learning mode. The Coaching Habit and The Coaching Impact programs are **helping TELUS achieve their goal to embed curious, coach-like behaviours across the organization** so that they can better pinpoint the real challenge, improve communication by being open to diverse perspectives, be more effective at collaboration and increase individual initiative.



I'm saving 25% of my day (and some of this is my calendar balance) because we are communicating better and differently about what matters most and deselection. **All of this time savings is due to this program.** Annualized gains.”



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