Castlight Boosts Organizational Agility with BetterUp

Brad Palmisano, Director of Learning & Development (L&D) at Castlight Health, has extensive experience designing and implementing strategic programs that build leadership capabilities and drive business performance.

“I believe offering BetterUp enhances our competitive advantage in attracting and retaining top talent. It’s great for the employee experience at Castlight.”

Brad Palmisano
Director, L&D,
Castlight Health

When Brad arrived at Castlight, a leading health navigation platform provider, there was no company-wide learning and development function. Training programs were developed and managed by the individual business units. Brad led a team that created centralized learning and development programs in areas such as onboarding, manager development, and broad-based professional development.

Learning to Thrive Amid Change
Because of recent M&A activity at Castlight, many Castlighters are seeking support adapting to a workplace environment characterized by exciting, but extreme change — new roles, new responsibilities, and new priorities.

Castlighters have expressed interest in developing behaviors and skills to more effectively influence their organization and their roles within it. Specifically, they want help with communication and building relationships with senior leadership in order to help effect positive change.

Personalized, Expert Coaching
It was against this backdrop that Brad decided BetterUp was a natural fit. He believed that personalized, expert 1:1 coaching would help both the organization and Castlighters drive performance during a time of transition.

Using its proprietary matching algorithm, BetterUp connected Castlighters with expert coaches based on the individual’s specific goals and preferred learning styles. With their coaches, Castlighters are focusing on the things within their control — namely, their mindsets, relationships, and time management. They're gaining greater clarity around what they want their teams to look like in a post-M&A world and how that will benefit the organization.

How a Growth Mindset Leads to Positive Outcomes
BetterUp coaches partnered with Castlighters in the program to clarify their individual priorities and most deeply held values. Motivated by a deeper self-awareness and an alignment with their core beliefs, Castlighters can now hone in on their goals and successfully execute against them. For example, one Castlighter who initially believed that he needed to take an effective communication course, subsequently discovered through BetterUp that he became a much more effective communicator simply when acting in accordance with his values.
Castlighters are also working on maintaining a “growth mindset” through regular, 1:1 weekly sessions with their coaches. Research by world-renowned, Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck, shows that people who maintain a growth mindset are more likely to tackle difficult challenges and persist at them. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for high performance, especially during times of rapid change.

Cultivating a Sense of Ownership
Castlighters feel an increased sense of ownership over their professional and personal lives through BetterUp coaching. They’re more inclined to embrace change as an opportunity to create the best version of their teams and themselves.

This increased sense of ownership manifests differently among the Castlighters in the program. For example, one Castlighter who was unhappy with how meetings were run, shifted toward a more proactive mindset and shared a list of suggestions for improving meetings with his team. That change in mindset, coupled with a new focus on being fully present in all his meetings, has increased the level of energy he brings to the office on a day-to-day basis.

A Positive Impact on Retention
The greatest measurable gains relate to participants’ improvements in problem solving and focus. Once Castlighters became more grounded in their priorities and their values, they found it easier to find solutions to problems that before felt overwhelming. By adopting a growth mindset, Castlighters are able to employ the problem solving strategies and techniques they’ve learned through coaching.

For instance, one Castlighter who felt underutilized on his current team, leveraged newly-developed skills to seek out a senior leader who could serve as his internal advocate. By partnering with his sponsor, this Castlighter was able to identify a new team within the company, landing in a new role in which he is now flourishing.

Driving L&D Engagement through Opt-in
Castlighters who are interested in participating in BetterUp coaching need to apply to the program, rather than be nominated by their manager. Castlighters must take responsibility for their own professional development and be motivated enough to do the legwork to get their managers to approve the expenditure — as the funds come directly from managers’ budgets. This helps ensure that participants who are in the program want to be in the program and are motivated to engage with their coach, versus being told or prompted by their manager.

“Our partnership with BetterUp has been a key factor in retaining our top talent and driving their overall engagement at Castlight.”

Brad Palmisano
Director, L&D, Castlight Health
Brad knew intuitively what BetterUp’s research has proven: people that opt into BetterUp coaching are more engaged in their own individual growth than are those nominated by their organizations.

BetterUp’s Customer Success team partnered with Brad to create a “readiness document” that helped a Castlight manager determine if a direct report was a good candidate for coaching. It guided the manager to answer questions such as: “Is the candidate self-motivated? Does the candidate have clarity around the areas for which he or she wants coaching?”

Brad believes there are many spillover benefits to having the manager involved in BetterUp coaching. “The ancillary benefit of having the managers approve is that they are formally part of the process. Because it is funded by their department, the managers are extra motivated to stay engaged in the development of their employees and with the coaching over the duration of the program.”

To attract interest in the program, Brad markets BetterUp internally as a form of continuing education and individualized professional development. It fills a gap in Castlight’s professional development resources that had previously existed.

Brad has initially earmarked BetterUp for non-people managers at Castlight who are eager to develop and sharpen capabilities they believe to be important to their own individual performance — and that of their team.

95% Satisfaction Rating
Brad recognizes that L&D programs are susceptible to a lack of structure that leads to sporadic engagement — and limited results. This is why Brad has been so intent on providing his BetterUp program with structure and ensuring that its purpose is clear.

Brad’s efforts are paying off: Castlighters have given the BetterUp program a 95% satisfaction rating. Brad leverages the many positive employee testimonials generated by the program — as well as the positive word-of-mouth within Castlight — to promote it internally.

Self-Directed Approach
Brad’s program isn’t designed to be prescriptive as to the skills and behaviors the Castlighter should develop with a BetterUp coach. Instead, areas of focus are at the discretion of the individual.

What has helped Castlighters figure out where to start in their coaching journey has been BetterUp’s 20-minute, Whole Person assessment. Through this initial assessment, they get clear on their strengths and areas for development. Based on the results of the assessment, Castlighters then work with an expert coach to develop an action plan with evidence-based strategies and a curriculum customized by their coach.

The Standard for Analytics & Reporting
Brad says he gets tremendous value from the analytics and reporting available from BetterUp. He believes the information to which he has access differentiates BetterUp versus other L&D solutions. “BetterUp has become the standard for the analytics and reporting I want from our L&D partners. I’m able to get insights into how Castlighters are using their time on the BetterUp platform: The number of hours they spend in coaching sessions, the content with which they’re engaging, and the time spent with that content.”

Brad has access to real-time dashboards that show him Castlighters’ top practice areas, as well as how relevant to their jobs Castlighters rate each coaching session. Brad also receives written feedback from Castlighters about the impact that BetterUp is having on their employee experience.

Moreover, Brad receives impact reports from BetterUp’s customer success team every quarter. These reports provide Brad with measurable evidence of the individual and business-level outcomes that his program is
BetterUp is the first leadership development platform to connect coaching to lasting behavior change. Learn more at betterup.co

Relationships Matter
When asked if there is a particular aspect of BetterUp that he relies on most, Brad responds that it is the relationship that Castlighters forge with their coaches that makes BetterUp different. “The partnerships that we have with our coaches is the number one thing that I love about BetterUp! My coach is wonderful.”