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Local business

## Executive coach teaches clients to deal with stress

BY VAL PREVISH / ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

Stresses in the workplace from the slow economy have inspired some executives to look to outside coaching firms such as Baker & Daboll downtown to help them cope with the rapid changes in their businesses and industries.

Paige Turk, a senior vice president with Farmers National Bank in Emlenton, Pa., said executive coaching that eight executives underwent during an 18 month program with Baker & Daboll recently helped them improve working relationships significantly.

"The biggest differences we saw were in how we behaved during stress," she said. "And there certainly have been some stresses in the banking industry lately."

A change in leadership with the company's CEO led Farmers to seek out executive coaching in 2007, said Turk, but the process became even more valuable as the economic slump began to affect everyday life.

"Our workplace is absolutely more stressful now," she said. "Although we've never made sub-prime loans and have always subscribed to sound business practices, we've been grouped with the big banks and greed and bad decisions. It's been a real challenge for leadership.

"(Coaching) turned out to be a very good investment to handle this uncharted territory," she added.

Todd Uterstaedt, president and CEO of

Baker & Daboll, said his company specializes in helping executives understand how their actions impact their organizations thereby making them more effective as managers and leaders.

"We help leaders become more clear about who they are and how they run their businesses," he said. "Company leaders' ability to work together impacts the entire organization."

Amy Katz, chief learning officer with Baker & Daboll, said that employees need company leaders to be even more influential during difficult periods.

"Now is a time of great distraction," she said. "Executives must be role models. They must provide a sense of stability."

Vivian Kist, chief operating officer at Baker & Daboll, said executives often use coaching for feedback. "We serve as unbiased sounding boards when they have no one else to talk to," she said.

Turk found this to be true for executives at Farmers who she said learned to listen better, take responsibility for how they made others feel and set the tone for relationships in the company.

"Having an independent facilitator is the real value of it," she said. "They are someone who can challenge you as an executive that few other people can or do. It's a very dynamic and rewarding process."

Uterstaedt founded Baker & Daboll with business partner Kyle Steele five years ago. The two men met in 1995 while serving in the Army as intelligence officers. The military training they received in un-

derstanding how to recognize personality characteristics was valuable background for executive coaching, said Uterstaedt.

"It's really about helping them to understand their behavior and modify it if necessary," he said.

Uterstaedt said he and Steele also found inspiration for their coaching style from their grandmothers, whom the business is named after, and who they said were influential in molding them into successful adults.

"She was a good listener and very selfless," said Uterstaedt of his grandmother, Mildred Daboll Howard, who lived in Connecticut where Uterstaedt grew up. "We strive to be selfless in serving our clients."

Baker & Daboll experienced 20 percent growth in revenue during 2008, said Uterstaedt, which he attributed in part to new industries that are seeking coaching that previously had not made it a priority.

These new types of businesses include construction, manufacturing, financial companies and developers, he said.

Coaching is customized for each business to fit its needs, he said, but most companies choose either team coaching or individual executive coaching. The majority of Baker & Daboll clients are from the Midwest.

Pricing is project based and can range from \$2,000 for a half-day team session to roughly \$30,000 for a year of individual coaching with an executive, said Uterstaedt.

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