



LEADING WITH EMPATHY IN TIMES OF CHANGE & CRISIS

CASE STUDY: Heather Heffner, *Dart Design Studio*

DART DESIGN STUDIO

For the past 20 years, Heather Heefner's Dart Design Studio has worked with business leaders across the Fortune 500, prestigious U.S. universities, and top-tier non-profits. Heefner's practice helps equip these business leaders with the toolsets, skills, and strategies to lead their organizations with empathy. While Dart Design Studio originally began as a graphic design company, Heefner evolved its mission as she encountered more and more clients with unique leadership obstacles. Heefner's design quickly turned into communication strategy and the communication strategy into the executive coaching practice she runs today.

As the founder of Dart Design Studio, Heefner has embraced the idea of coaching with empathy and has taken her education of personality assessments like DISC and Enneagram to her numerous clients. Dart Design Studio's focus on helping companies through periods of change and crisis has never been more critical than it is today with the ongoing global COVID pandemic and racial tensions on the rise and at the forefront of workplaces across America.



THE GROWING DEMAND OF EXECUTIVE COACHING

Whether an organization is going through change or experiencing periods of crisis, the communication strategies implemented by the firm's top leaders is critical to navigating these challenging scenarios. When organizations encounter these turbulent situations, their leaders are often left unequipped and unprepared to deal with the inevitable fallout. In the mid to late 20th century, executive coaching began picking up wide adoption. In an attempt to gain a competitive edge, organizations in the U.S. leaned into improving corporate culture and focusing on their leaders' intellectual capital.

Around the 1970s, “[o]rganizations began to recognize the need for a subtler set of competencies: the communication and relationship skills required to influence and energize employees, adaptability to rapid change, and respect for people of diverse backgrounds. Today, executives expect emotional intelligence from supervisors and colleagues but find it’s in scarce supply.”^A

BUILDING BRIDGES WITH PERSONALITY

For Heefner, the transformation of Dart Design Studio from a graphic design firm to leadership coaching wasn’t happenstance. Heefner, like many others, had a unique set of life experiences that brought her to the work she’s doing now, including years of training in personality assessments like DISC and the Enneagram.

Before Crystal, Heefner had to rely on her intuition and learnings about personality to bridge the gaps between herself and her clients. While most of her clients often fell within the DISC map’s upper left-hand quadrant as a Captain (D) Archetype, Heefner herself did not. Heefner’s optimistic, open-minded, and inclusive nature as an Encourager (Is) often conflicted with her clients’ assertiveness, confidence, and high work drive.

Leveraging her existing skillset, Heather would assess her clients before meeting with them and use the information she knew about their personality to deliver her message. But doing ad-hoc assessments of her clients often left a half-painted picture of how best to communicate. While leading a keynote session, one of Heefner’s clients mentioned a trait about her personality and thus proceeded to introduce her to Crystal--the now essential platform in her coaching toolkit.

“Crystal has been doing what I’ve been doing for ten years, but they’ve made it organized and systematic in a way that blown me away in its accuracy.”

HEATHER HEEFNER

STREAMLINING PROCESSES WITH CRYSTAL ASSESSMENTS

With Crystal, Heefner can now leverage the highly-accurate Personality AI technology with just a single-click to predict a client's personality and deliver valuable insights before she goes into any coaching session.¹ With these insights in hand, Heefner can accurately think through the different coaching styles she's learned, choosing the style that best fits her client given the scenario. Because of this, Crystal enables Heefner to develop deep personal connections at a rate much faster than before.

Heefner doesn't just use Crystal for one-off predictions. In fact, by plugging Crystal into every aspect of her business, like her prospecting work, initial consultations, coaching sessions, and training seminars, Heefner can de-risk her business by coming into every situation well prepared. Given the nature and size of Heefner's contracts, every conversation must be driving towards building a deeper relationship and establishing greater trust.

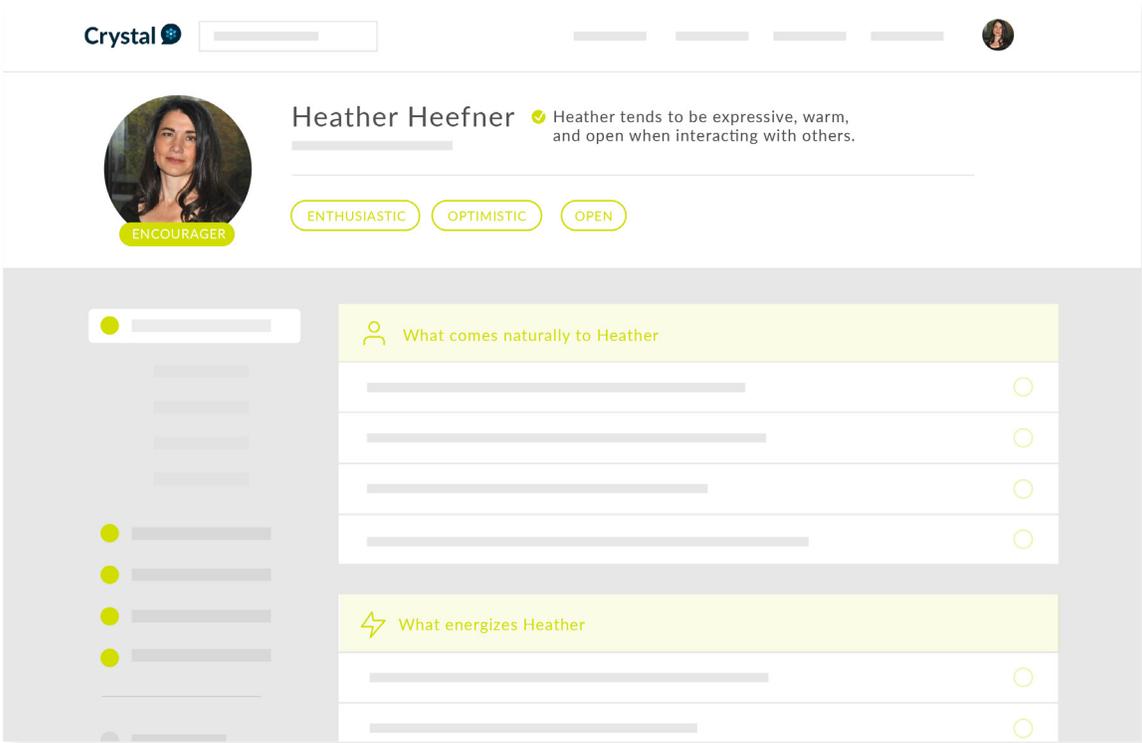
"With Crystal, I would say I'm at least 30-35 percent quicker at building meaningful relationships."

HEATHER HEEFNER

TACTICAL ADVICE WITH THE CRYSTAL COACH

Every coach, including Heefner, understands the value that coaching brings to the table. And yes, even coaches can benefit from having their own coach. With the Conversation Coach feature in Crystal, Heefner can get tactical advice before sending an email, getting on a sales phone call, or giving advice--exactly like having a real coach by her side. Crystal's Conversation Coach presents specific phrases Heefner can use depending on her prospect or clients' personality type.

By combining Crystal's Conversation Coach's tactical advice with the predicted personality profile, Heefner can generate a 360-view of each of her clients. Using these tools, Heefner can teach empathy, emotional intelligence, and communication strategies to her clients to grow past immense organizational change and severe crises.



1. As of Q1 2019, Crystal has shown to achieve an 80% validity rating in personality predictions.

A. Alyssa Freas and Stratford Sherman. "The Wild West of Executive Coaching." Harvard Business Review, Harvard Business Review, 31 Oct. 2014, hbr.org/2004/11/the-wild-west-of-executive-coaching.