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ANNIVERSARY

Team &
Group
Coaching
in an
Evolving
World



Team & Group Coaching in an *Evolving World*

What are the differences between virtual, in-person and hybrid team and group coaching? What are the unique needs of the different types of team or group sessions? What assessment(s) are beneficial for use in this type of coaching? How do you effectively measure the impact of a successful team or group coaching engagement? How to create engagement, foster inspiration, boost motivation and enhance accountability for participants? Uncovering the secrets of successful group and team coaching in an evolving world for both coach and clients.



feature

Is Team Coaching a Fit For Me?

How to decide if teams are in your future

By Michelle Chambers, MEd, CHRL, CTDP, CSODP, CTPC



As an experienced global team coach and provider of team coach training and supervision, this is a common question I receive from others. I mainly support senior leadership teams and recently spoke on this very topic at an ICF Toronto event, which was highly attended.

A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals and approach, for which they hold themselves mutually accountable (Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith, *The Wisdom of Teams*).

Leadership teams are facing a number of key challenges in their current operating environments, including: working in a VUCA environment; managing expectations of different stakeholders; running the business and transforming it; being members of multiple teams; complexity and interconnectedness of organizations; working effectively within and across systems and the need for

better return on investment on leadership development. Sound familiar?

For those of you in the coaching profession, you have probably heard that team coaching is the future. There are a number of reasons for this, including:

- ✓ Organizations operate in teams, so learnings and actions from one-to-one coaching are not as effective as they could be;
- ✓ Coaches of the future will need to develop skills in supporting teams to perform better and increase leadership capacity;
- ✓ There will be a shift from one-to-one coaching towards coaching that supports development of a coaching culture within teams and across organizations;
- ✓ Coach bots and apps are replacing the role of the one-to-one coach.

It is also important to be aware of the different team development modalities. The chart below helps to understand how team coaching compares to other forms of team development.

Many view team coaching as the most challenging (and rewarding) of these team development processes.

As someone who has supported teams for close to 30 years, I personally resonate with this definition of team coaching by Peter Hawkins: “Systemic team coaching is a process by which a team coach works with a whole team, both when they are together and when they are apart, in order to help them improve their collective performance and how they work together; how they develop their collective leadership to more effectively engage with all of their key stakeholder groups to jointly transform the wider business.” (2011)

Team coaching is about coaching the client as a system within the systems in which they operate. At the end of the day, teams are measured on their collective performance. Team coaching involves working with the client over a period of time to help them become more accountable to themselves and to develop sustainable changes in behaviour to support their goals.



TEAM DEVELOPMENT

Longer term, involves many modalities, many topics

	Team Building	Team Training	Team Consulting	Team Mentoring	Team Facilitation	Team Coaching
Time Frame	Short, 1-5 days	Short, 1-5 days	Widely Variable	Staccato, hours over a long period of time	Short, 1-5 days	Longer term, months
Process	Exercises	Work with the team through a curriculum of material	Consultant shares expertise	Mentor shares	Facilitate dialog	Team and coach partner
Growth Area	Enhanced Relationships	New knowledge or skill	Additional Insights	New knowledge	Clarity	Achieved goals: Team sustainability
Team Dynamics; Conflict Resolution	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal advisory	Minimal	Minimal	Integral
Expert; Ownership	Instructor	Trainer	Consultant	Mentor	Facilitator and team	Team

Source: International Coaching Federation

My mentor and colleague at Team Coaching International, the late Phil Sandahl, also shared the following as goals of team coaching:

- ✓ Enhance a team's capacity and capability in order to drive behaviour and culture change.
- ✓ Develop a collaborative working team that supports one another to achieve client objectives.
- ✓ Be viewed and respected as a high performing team, both internally and externally.
- ✓ Work with the interaction of the team as a whole, rather than focusing on individual performance.
- ✓ Work on strengthening the interrelationships amongst team members.
- ✓ Assist the team in serving their stakeholders more effectively.
- ✓ Provide practical tools to support the team.

Also, effectively supporting a team means examining what Hackman and Wageman have proposed as the six conditions of team effectiveness, with the first three seen as the "essentials" required for successful teams:

- ✓ a real team;
- ✓ the right people;
- ✓ a compelling purpose.

The next three conditions are known as the "enablers":

- ✓ a sound structure with team norms;
- ✓ clear task design and appropriate team size;
- ✓ a supportive context and finally team coaching.

Being an effective team coach requires a more complex understanding of team development and enhanced coaching skills and competencies. The International Coaching Federation (ICF) recently released a set of team coaching competencies and an advanced team coaching certification in recognition of the different skills required.

Has any of this piqued your interest? If so, you may wish to consider the key challenges and shifts required to successfully coach teams versus individuals. The key challenge will be successfully making the shift from coaching individuals to coaching the team as a client and as a system.

This can be challenging, as it takes skill to enable team members to reflect on their system, have discussions within the context of their system, and discuss how they will work as a system. Often, team coaches work in pairs to help manage the complexity of team dynamics and to successfully manage both process and content. This means holding the team responsible and accountable for determining their agenda and outcomes.

Secondly, team coaching is way more than just team dynamics. Teams exist to produce results and effective teams require both a positive culture, alignment on goals, a shared purpose and clear processes such as decision making to achieve their business goals.

Having an appreciation of complex change and a systems orientation is extremely beneficial to working with teams. It also means creating trust and a psychologically safe space in which team members can have courageous conversations and give one another positive and constructive feedback. It requires skills to successfully manage conflict and multiple perspectives. Having skills in relationships systems intelligence is very helpful as well.

Team coaching also involves contracting with multiple stakeholders, which creates additional complexity. The team coach needs to contract with: the team leader; their co-coach; each member of the team; the team as a system; other stakeholders; and more.

Developing agreements is critical to the success of the engagement. As team coaching is an evolving field, there is often no clarity or acceptance on the average number of team coaching sessions and the average duration of each session. For clients to reap the benefits of an ongoing coaching engagement, typically six to 12 months in duration is essential.

In addition, each team coaching intervention will need to be uniquely designed based on the identified needs of the team. Being truly present in the moment means being prepared for the unexpected! It can be more difficult to get 'buy-in' to multiple sessions, due to time requirement and a higher level of total investment. Furthermore, ethical

considerations take on a more complex dimension.

Of course, there might be the potential for multiple team coaches to be involved in one intervention. Sounds like fun to me!

Like one-to-one coaching, team coaching also entails asking thought-provoking questions for the team to consider; challenging them to step out of their comfort zone; recognizing their strengths; and reflecting back observations and feedback to help them evolve. It also requires presence and solid observation skills.

Team coaching is about coaching the client as a system within the systems in which they operate.

Assessments are commonly used to collect data and help the team get a better picture of itself and then to measure progress over time. Of course, actively listening and asking questions – the building blocks of coaching skills – are absolutely required!

So, will you join the growing ranks of team coaches to help create systemic change in organizations? If you like complex, challenging situations and really want to enable systemic change in organizations, team coaching would be worth exploring.

As it requires more complex and additional skills compared to one-to-one coaching, consider taking one of the many team coach training programs that are available. Learning more about team development and effectiveness, practising team coaching, and getting feedback on your growth are critical to successfully supporting teams.

Exploring one of the many team coaching assessment tools and getting feedback from a team coach supervisor as you work with teams will also set you up for success. If you like stepping out of your comfort zone and always being prepared for the unexpected, then team coaching might be a fit for you! •