

## **THE BIG COACHING CHALLENGE! EVOLVING FROM INDIVIDUAL TO TEAM LEADERSHIP COACHING**

(This is the first of a two-part series on team coaching)

*"In our global highly complex world, the heroic leadership figure has increasingly become a relic" (Manfred Kets De Vries, 2011)*



### **The Big Challenge**

Individual coaching has undoubtedly made a profound and major contribution to personal and leadership development around the world for many decades.

However, the world has become too complex, competitive, and fast changing for single leaders to deliver corporate success. Organisations will in future need dynamic, agile and collaborative teams with the ability to adapt to uncertainty. This will require a continuous learning culture, new thinking, and a solid team coaching regimen.

I believe the fundamental challenge for leaders is to recognise and embrace the reality that high performance, value creating teams will drive future organisation success and that these teams will need effective team coaching to deliver optimal results. The huge challenge for professional coaches is the urgent need to transition from purely individual coaching to include substantial true team coaching in their repertoire, if they are to add real value to clients and serve them responsibly.

*This first article will offer an insightful and possibly different understanding of what we mean by “team,” the true nature of team coaching and why it’s critical. The second article will deal with the “how” of team coaching.*



## What do we mean by “team”?

There are numerous types and definitions of teams. It is essential that we have a crystal-clear definition of what constitutes a team in the current and emerging context. The Global Team Coaching Institute (2021) quote two highly complementary definitions that provide excellent insight into the true nature of teams.

Jon Katzenbach (1993) defined a team as ...*“A small number of people with complementary skills, who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals and shared approach for which they hold each other mutually accountable.”*

Peter Hawkins (2021) added a number of profound additions and insights into how we see teams today and introduces the concept of value creating teams which he defines as follows .. *“A high value creating team: meets and communicates in a way that **raises morale and alignment**, partners with all the team’s **key stakeholder groups** to co-create beneficial value for all players and provides **constant learning** and development for all its **members and the collective team**”*

It is important to consider a number of critical key points from the above definitions that are rapidly emerging in our growing understanding of teams. In summary they are:

- We must focus on both what teams are (Katzenbach) and how they operate (Hawkins)
- Teams have a common, not shared purpose
- Teams are about mutual accountability for performance goals through a shared approach
- Teams have ways of effectively meeting & communication that raise morale & alignment
- Teams engage fully with all their stakeholder groups
- Teams continually learn and develop

I believe the Hawkins’ definition offers us a far more comprehensive, accurate and insightful definitions of what teams are really about. The concepts of engaging fully

with all stakeholders, focussing on how they operate, mutual accountability and ongoing learning have largely been absent in traditional definitions. They are critical components if we are to understand team performance and more specifically what to focus on in team coaching.



### **What is “Team Coaching” really about?**

The first challenge in understanding what differentiates team coaching from the associated and limited connotations around “team building,” team development, team facilitation etc, and all the interventions focused on anything to do with team efficiency. These dimensions may sometimes form part of team coaching and do not cover its comprehensive nature.

David Clutterbuck (2020) defines team coaching as *‘Helping the team improve performance, and the processes by which performance is achieved, through reflection and dialogue’*

Peter Hawkins (2021) offers an insightful and comprehensive definition systemic team coaching as follows *“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 both their collective performance and how they work together, and also how they develop their collective leadership to more effectively engage with all their key stakeholder groups to jointly transform the wider business.*

So how is team coaching different from other forms of coaching? The following points summarise the difference”

- ✓ It adopts a strong systemic and process approach
- ✓ It focusses on collective team leadership
- ✓ It engages all the team’s stakeholder groups – not just the team
- ✓ It concentrates not only on the team’s performance, but on transforming the wider business
- ✓ It works with the team, both when they are together and apart
- ✓ It has a major focus on ongoing learning through deep reflection and dialogue.

Hawkins (2021) contends that what differentiates systemic team coaching and makes it makes it valuable to businesses today is that it enables the team to reframe and enhance the way it relates to and serves its business environment, which means

placing as much emphasis on how it leads change with its stakeholders as how it functions internally. In summary, team coaching is about helping teams step back from day-to-day doing to provide clarity about what is happening in the systems that affect performance in both the short and long term. This clarity leads to better decisions and to rapid action when part of the system is not working properly. It is about being pre-emptive rather than just proactive.



### **Why the Team Coaching focus?**

It is useful to consider this question from two perspectives. The first deals with the more macro environment issues and the second from a team's needs emanating from operating the broader perspective.

Forbes (2022) indicates the following eight trends in our rapidly changing world are placing huge pressure on leaders to perform and there is increasing evidence that these complex trends can more effectively be addressed through value adding team leadership teams.

Trend 1: Sustainable, resilient operations

Trend 2: The balance between human workers and intelligent robots

Trend 3: The shifting talent pool and changing employee experience

Trend 4: Flatter, more agile organizations

Trend 5: Authenticity

Trend 6: Purposeful business

Trend 7: Co-opetition and integration

Trend 8: New forms of funding

From recent research DDI (2021) indicates that leaders face the following challenges in the near future and that high performing teams will play an ever-increasing role in resolving them.

- ✓ Leading Through Change and Uncertainty
- ✓ Managing Burnout and Wellbeing
- ✓ Craving Connection in a Virtual Workplace
- ✓ Advancing the Digital Future of Work
- ✓ Building and Retaining Top Talent

The Global Team Coaching Institute (GTCI 2022) indicate the following *Five Keys are necessary for organizations to succeed in the 21st century*

1. Learning faster than the world around them is changing
2. Purpose led – Have a galvanising purpose of how they make a unique “net positive” difference to the world
3. Stakeholder centric - Co-create great positive value with and for all their stakeholders
4. Teaming - All their teams function at more than the sum of their parts and the team of teams at more than sum of the teams
5. Partnering - They effectively partner with all their stakeholders to create win:win:win relationships and networks

Again, high performing teams are seen as highly instrumental in facilitating these keys.

### **In conclusion**

The obvious conclusion from this article is that high performance and value adding teams will play a strong and determining role in the future success of organisations in our complex and rapidly changing world.

The implications for the coaching world are that coaching will need to very rapidly evolve and transition from purely individual to include a major focus on team coaching.

Our next article will deal with how we go about value adding team coaching, a huge topic that merits dedicated focus.

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