THE CASE FOR TEAM COACHING

**Point of Impact**

“Team leadership has replaced middle management and our companies are becoming ‘networks of teams,’” according to a recent 2016 research report published by Josh Bersin.

Teams are working harder to discover and provide innovative solutions. A team’s capability to communicate and elevate performance can directly address engagement and impact the bottom line.

The evolution of leadership and point of impact in organizational development is now directed towards the value of teams. As stated in the Bersin report:

“Now, an even newer type of management thinking has emerged. Companies should be driven by mission and purpose, with flexible, dynamic teams and managers as “team leaders” not as "executives." These companies do away with the idea that you are a leader because of your position - and focus on people developing "followership," and building the systems and tools which let people cross communicate easily and organize around a "network of teams" as the new model.”

Given the rapid pace of change, boosting the leader’s effectiveness and creating high performing teams is paramount for cutting through chaos. The old paradigm where teams took time to become cohesive is not an option in a business climate where teams are assembled quickly and asked to deliver immediate results.

Team coaching is a valuable tool for addressing this challenge. Professional coaches or internal HROD professionals can teach coaching skills as they guide teams through a business-focused process that impacts team dynamics and the bottom line. And team leaders who learn coaching skills while being coached through a team coaching program apply those skills in real time developmental conversations.

Ideal applications for team coaching include:

- Assimilating a new team leader who is inheriting an experienced team
- Launching a product
- Increasing sales
- Re-organizing a business unit
- Stretching a high-performing team

Studies have demonstrated that team coaching delivers a positive return-on-investment and many organizations have developed coaching capabilities where team coaching can be an augmentation to their current coaching activities.
What is distinct about **team coaching** from other methods of working with teams? This table highlights the differences between team coaching and other common approaches:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Facilitation</th>
<th>Team Building</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Team Process</th>
<th>Team Coaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus is on...</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Open dialogue, to generate a number of outcomes, making it easier for team to establish agreements</td>
<td>Cooperation, fun, short term event to make people feel better about the team and move toward consensus</td>
<td>Educational transfer of specific skills and knowledge, typically in a teaching model</td>
<td>Movement of the team through a specific construct or organizational stages model, requiring observation and discussion about the process</td>
<td>Experience of learning in action, process of discovery, engagement in co-creation, taking more conscious action through a deeper inquiry, personal awareness, discovery, and partnership</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional’s role</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context and guidance</td>
<td>Guide, cheer lead, encourage</td>
<td>Teach Theory, Transfer skills Practice</td>
<td>Share observations, hold the process in place</td>
<td>Coach, listen, elicit creativity, create and hold agreements and process celebrate movement, build awareness and leadership from real time team dynamics, development for each team member</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leader sets the agenda, team contributes</td>
<td>Team leader sets the agenda, team participates</td>
<td>Trainer sets the agenda</td>
<td>Professional sets the agenda, teaches team</td>
<td>Entire team creates the agenda together with guidance of the team leader and coach</td>
</tr>
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</table>

As shown in the table, team coaching is a much more collaborative approach that fully involves the team and team leader and focuses on building sustainable action and change.

**What makes team coaching so powerful?**

The collaborative nature of team coaching makes it a very powerful tool. Here are some key characteristics of team coaching:

- The team has control. Together the team designs and drives attainment of their own extraordinary goal, therefore owning the process and keeps the coach focused on team dynamics, agreements, and execution.

- The team leader receives executive coaching in real time while actively engaged with their team, so they understand, value, and champion coaching.

- The team is engaged in an experience that contributes directly and immediately to the business. The team is not being taken off-line for training that may or may not stick
• The team develops sustainable skills and habits. Unlike training programs – or typical team building events – team coaching takes place over a meaningful period of time for goal attainment. The coach partners with the team.

• ROE and ROI are built in measures. Teams set performance goals and attainment of those goals correlate to a return on engagement and investment.

• Just one success becomes many. One successful team is the key to scaling an initiative. Launching a successful pilot creates a story to share and a model for the organization. In short order, each team witnessing the new hum of activity and ways of working ‘wants what those guys are having.’

What does team coaching require?

There are three critical ingredients for a successful team coaching engagement. These are:

• A strong team leader with big heart and commitment. Commitment is important as is having new eyes, openness for learning, and the courage and capability to have a heart-to-heart conversation when needed during the coaching process.

• A team that has a common goal and responsibility – the team needs to have a collective focus.

• A skilled team coach. Team coaching is not for sissies. There are complexities around team dynamics and the challenges of organizational constructs, culture and systems. A coach who is proficient at partnering with the team leader and challenging behaviors will propel the team to success.

What does the data suggest?

There have been two research studies conducted on team coaching. In both studies, survey questionnaires were used before and after the team coaching process to assess the impact. Questions were targeted at measuring employee engagement and key leadership behaviors.

One study looked at results from 24 teams who took part in a team coaching intervention. The results showed statistically significant increases in engagement and in seven of twelve leadership behaviors measured (all showed positive change). A third survey was conducted three months after team coaching ended to see if the positive changes remained. For all twelve behaviors and the engagement index, the positive gains remained stable.

A second study looked at the results from 60 teams. In this study, engagement scores moved from 61.6% positive to 90.4% positive in one year, an increase of nearly 30 percentage points. Leadership behaviors also showed a positive gain with five of the six behaviors measured showing statistically significant gains.

In summary, team coaching is the bold, experiential approach that is proven to advance teams to play a bigger game. It engages teams at higher and more intimate levels than more traditional team development processes.


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