



FROM ONE TO MANY

Best Practices for
Team and Group Coaching

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TEAM COACHING IN ACTION

Team learning is vital because teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit in modern organizations. This is where the rubber hits the road; unless teams can learn, the organization cannot learn.

—Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*¹

This chapter brings light to a range of team coaching interventions through a discussion about design, examples of activities that can be used and four case studies. In this chapter we explore:

- Voices from the Field: Sharon Miller, Jacqueline Peters, performance coaches with the B.C. Public Service Agency, and Phil Sandahl
- Design principles for team coaching
- Favorite activities for team coaching
- The context of team coaching today: challenges and opportunities

One of the most frequent questions I get asked when I speak to coaches about team and group coaching is, “*What does this work look like?*” This chapter is geared to practitioners who want to explore a variety of ways this work really plays out with teams. In the first part of the chapter we meet four different

¹ Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of The Learning Organization* (New York: Random House, 2010), 10.

coaches and hear directly about their experience in designing team coaching processes:

- Sharon Miller and her experience in working with a global financial institution. Her case study looks at expanding coaching from leader to team and organization.
- Jacqueline Peters: team coaching as a lever for social change in the oil and gas industry.
- A case study from the B.C. Public Service Agency.
- Phil Sandahl of Team Coaching International: insights from the field of team coaching and a health care case study.

The latter part of this chapter provides a reminder of some of the design principles for team coaching, as well as a summary of some key activities team coaches will want to incorporate. Finally, the chapter ends looking at some of the challenges and opportunities facing the field.

Team coaching is a process of change over time. As we will see in Sharon Miller's *Voices from the Field*, team coaching may be one part of a series of coaching initiatives over time, which lead to better leadership and results across an organization. Sharon's example outlines different processes and results that were obtained from a series of interventions she facilitated in the same organization over a period of three years. Note the various components and how they are interrelated.

Voices from the Field: Expanding Coaching from Leader to Team and across the Organization by Sharon Miller, PCC

Client: Country head of a global financial institution, his leadership team, a sub-team and then the entire country team.

The Initial Need: The organization promoted a successful producer and manager to a country head position with extensive leadership responsibilities. To meet the requirements of his new role, he needed to enhance and broaden his skills, particularly in the areas of leadership and increasing performance through improving collaboration and developing others. The organization had very significant morale challenges, silos and pockets of dysfunctional employee behaviors.

The Work: Over three years Sharon worked with a number of different levels. Here's what Sharon writes about the process:

First, I undertook a “challenged team” engagement in partnership with Jennifer Britton. This included a 1.5-day offsite based on the results of the Stellar Team Diagnostic deployed by Team Coaching International. The offsite was followed by six team coaching meetings: two in person, four virtual.

The second engagement was with the new country head. This work included six two-hour one-on-one coaching meetings based on a series of feedback interviews and the creation of a SMART development plan.

The third engagement focused on coaching to the leadership team. This work consisted of five half-day offsites using Tribal Leadership and ORSC principles and exercises, each offsite building on the previous.

Finally, two full-day full-team development offsites were done with Jennifer Britton. These offsites were held with the entire Canadian organization to create engagement, alignment and commitment, and to provide learning on high-performance teams.

Key Outcomes

Over the three years outcomes of the different engagements included:

- Improved measurable financial results through *enhanced leadership* (at country head level and beyond) and *collaboration* (issue identification and resolution through constructive dialogue).
- Improved sub-teams' Stellar Team Diagnostic scores (upwards of 30 percent) directly correlated to sustainability and bottom line results.
- Common values and behavioral practices were established at the team and organizational levels. Team contracts formed the basis for all to review their own actions and resolve disagreements and were woven into the performance management system.

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- Increase in trust and employee engagement.
- Better recognition of employee needs and solutions.
- Attracted new people to key roles given the strong culture they felt during the interview process.

Key Benefits

A sample of key benefits included:

- More cohesive and stronger team and more connection and understanding of each other.
- Open dialogue.
- Greater respect and tolerance.
- The team will take responsibility and be accountable for their actions.
- Stronger group working together toward a common goal; knowledge to be able to participate in process.

What Made the Engagement Successful?

The engagement was successful due to the comprehensive approach—leader, management team, challenged sub-team and all-staff team development:

- Leadership understanding that this was a process that would take place over time and would require work at different levels and engaging people at different levels.
- The willingness to make the investment and stay the course to ensure sustainability.
- The willingness of the team and organization to make commitments and follow through in a highly visible way and holding themselves and others accountable to these commitments.
- Creation of a team behavioral contract that people could point to and that became part of the performance management system.
- Working with a co-facilitator with one of the teams needing support, and with all staff.

- My personal research and training in team dynamics and what makes a team successful: I draw on the resources I have acquired from Team Coaching International, ORSC (Organization and Relationship Systems Coaching), Tribal Leadership, and Patrick Lencioni's *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*.

Challenges

Personal confidence in being able to work with the team as a system and help them create the results that they desired and the business needed.

The elephant not coming out until late in the process with the challenged team.

Lessons as a Coach

- Trust yourself and trust the process.
- Go to the difficult places, those areas that are difficult/risky for you and for the team. Take a powerful stand for the team speaking the truth. Encourage and even push the team and system, as appropriate and when you feel the time is right to do so.
- It's so much easier and more effective when you collaborate with a partner.
- Connect with people: the more people, the more you need to personally connect with. This is not just about your skill as a facilitator or a team coach but as an empathetic and likeable human being. This builds positivity (trust, camaraderie, etc.).
- Remember that team coaching is not a one-shot deal but a process.

Best Practices

- Working with the team as a system.
- Ensuring sustainability: The initiatives are sustained as they have become part of the performance review system

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and everyone has a copy of the team contract, which is used, and referred to, in conversation with each other.

- Being competent in the “art and science” of teams and high performance, not just about asking good questions, and being a masterful coach, etc.

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Question to Consider

What do you want to note from Sharon’s case study?

Voices from the Field: Team Coaching as a Lever for Cultural Change by Dr. Jacqueline Peters, PCC

As a team coach, it was a dream assignment. A medium-sized, publicly traded oil and gas company of about 300 people, Oil Co.* was focused on growth and wanted to strengthen its team-based culture. The company was ready to invest in a full organizational team effectiveness/team coaching program. It was a big enough project to keep me and two other coaches busy for a full year!

The request grew out of the work I had been doing with the company’s eight-person executive team over the previous two years. I had started working with the leadership team as a result of their request for some team effectiveness work, so we started with interviews using a team effectiveness assessment that I have developed and used for about eight years as a way to benchmark the team’s current functioning and effectiveness. We then did a team debrief of the results to determine the focus and goals for the inaugural two-day team launch, held in the spring of 2007. Starting with the team launch was important, since an effective launch can account for up to 30 percent of team effectiveness alone, according to team effectiveness researcher Richard Hackman.² We focused on typical team launch activities, such as defining the vision, mission and values of the organization. We also identified the leadership’s team purpose, key working agreements or norms for the team, high level goals, and measures of success.

² J. Richard Hackman, “Six common misperceptions about teamwork,” *Harvard Business Review*, June 11, 2011, http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2011/06/six_common_misperceptions_abou.html.

We continued to have a two-hour team coaching meeting approximately quarterly and a two-day session once or twice a year that required a mix of facilitation, coaching and training from me as the team coach. We used the sessions to check in on the team goals and working agreements, I provided coaching and support to the team conversations, and the leader and I collaboratively introduced new leadership concepts and models, as required.

The executive team experienced more open conversations as a result of the early coaching sessions and the clarity that the team had about their vision, mission and goals prompted some team members to engage more fully and for a couple of team members to leave. It was the right decision for all involved since the clarity of the team's path forward acted as a lightning rod for people to step up or step away from the business challenge. As a result, the team's engagement and satisfaction increased and team members were more honest around the leadership table as the leaders committed to move forward.

We measured the team's progress toward their goals and their overall performance in several formal and informal ways. Formally, we did a comparison of the pre-coaching team effectiveness assessment results with the team's results on the same survey 18 months later. Many of the team members' average ratings went up between 0.5 and 1.8 points on a 10-point scale, especially in the areas of communication, effective problem solving, adaptability, goal alignment and completing team action plans. Even more dramatic changes were seen in the team's definition and adherence to clear working agreements, effectiveness of team meetings, giving and receiving feedback and recognition to each other, maximizing each other's talents and skills, and tracking the progress of how they worked together over time. The overall team effectiveness rating went from an average of 6.0 to 7.5 over the 18 months, as rated by the team members.

Informally, the leadership team was receiving feedback from employees that they experienced greater alignment and fewer conflicting messages from the leadership team. External investors also indicated excitement and interest in the newly developed vision, mission, and clear business goals and direction for the organization.

This track record of leadership team success set the stage for a larger organizational commitment to team coaching. The leadership team decided to have each of the six major cross-functional teams in the company undergo team coaching. A similar pre-coaching assessment process, two-day team launch, and quarterly team coaching follow-up sessions were planned for these six teams, with kick-offs for the team launch provided by each team's senior leader. The team members from these six teams expressed a great deal of engagement and excitement about the team launch and team coaching sessions and one team even wrote a heartfelt thank-you note to the executive

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team. This is not something that happens often in the male-dominated oil and gas industry, and certainly it had not occurred before at Oil Co.!

Just as everything was rolling out like the textbook organizational team coaching and culture change program, a business downturn put pressure on the organization and the executives. The commitment the executives made to do regular monthly follow-ups with the teams started to wane, and some of these sessions were cancelled because of business pressures and/or a lack of productive conversations between the team and the executive once the team coach stepped out of the sessions. Six months after the team coaching rollout to the major organizational teams began, the executive sponsored meetings with the cross-functional teams were infrequent. There was still alignment with the original mission and vision but the communication had waned.

So what happened, besides the economic downturn, to cause this organizational team coaching initiative to falter from its original years of strong success? There were many lessons learned in this organization. First, what was done well was the modeling from the executive who started with their own team coaching. They focused on getting their own team in order and alignment before charting a path for the other teams in the organization. Further, the executive team committed to coaching follow-up and the ongoing development that kept them progressing toward both their business and organizational leadership goals. The biggest challenge seemed to be the waning commitment of the executive to meet with the teams as promised when they hit business problems and their facilitation skills were challenged. In hindsight, it was clear that the executive needed greater coaching support to lead the first few team meetings, and they needed a stronger accountability system to ensure that they fulfilled their promises for follow-up to the teams.

This case study is a reminder to team coaches to continue to support leadership teams in the transition from being coached to coaching themselves and other teams. A key addition to this robust program would have been to do coach training with the executive team and senior team leaders. This would have provided the leaders with a stronger skill set for managing the inevitable move that teams need to make to coaching themselves. As the researchers J. Richard Hackman and Michael O'Connor have identified, peer coaching can be one of the most important influences on team effectiveness, and we as team coaches can play a role in not only modeling these coaching skills, but also training the team members to coach themselves and each other.³ Coaching

³ J. R. Hackman and M. O'Connor, *What Makes For a Great Analytic Team? Individual versus Team Approaches to Intelligence Analysis* (Washington, DC: Intelligence Science Board, Office of the Director of Central Intelligence, 2005).

skill development is probably even more important when providing a full team coaching initiative with a team and/or organization. Oil Co. started out as an ideal model of organizational team coaching as they were very disciplined for the first three years, and it reinforces the importance of staying the course even after lots of modeling and support from external coaches.

*The name of the company and some of the specific details have been changed to protect the anonymity of the company.

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Question to Consider

What do you want to note from Jacqueline's case study?

Voices from the Field: Team Coaching Case Study— British Columbia Public Service Agency

Our third example comes from two performance coaches with the B.C. Public Service Agency. Their example provides a best practice example of pre-program interviews, identification of themes and how this gets integrated into the design of a day.

Overview

The B.C. Public Service Agency's internal Performance Coaching Service was created in April 2011 after consultations with approximately two thousand public servants who were asked what they needed to support their performance. Coaching emerged as a top service opportunity across the province and a team of 18 coaches was formed. In September 2011, a new Team Coaching Service was added to the Performance Coaching Service roster where any individual or ministry team from anywhere in the province could request individual, team coaching, or a facilitated 360 debrief. Two coaches partnered on one of the first team coaching assignments as described below.

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The Team

Soon after the Performance Coaching Service opened, a request for team coaching came from a curious 13-member work unit. The team consisted of a director, four managers, and a mix of analysts, advisors, administrators and co-op students. They often led progressive new initiatives in their own work areas and were early adopters within their ministry. This team had a reputation for being one of “the best teams to work on.” The director and manager, who were the sponsors for this initiative, could see the value that team coaching offered and were keen to explore this possibility for their team. Before we even began coaching, others in their ministry were looking to them to pilot use of the team coaching service, report back its value, and lead the way for other teams to follow.

The Need for Team Coaching

The director and one of his managers wanted to take their high performing team performance to the next level. In initial conversations, we heard about their perspective on the team’s current functioning, their aspirations and dilemmas. They reported that the team had overworked staff in some areas and pockets of underutilized staff. The director was highly esteemed and emulated; however, due to the workload, he couldn’t oversee all the work flowing through his branch or oversee full development conversations for all staff that reported to him. The director and manager wanted to utilize the talent they had in a more effective and innovative manner, and decrease the workload on the director. They just weren’t sure how to do this. After initial conversations with the director, we mutually agreed that team coaching could help the team to move forward effectively. To prepare for this assignment, we reviewed program information, background strategic plans and organizational charts, and relevant branch documents.

Overview of Team Coaching

We defined team coaching as follows: “A process by which a team coach works with the whole team to help them enhance their performance, way of working together, and collective leadership.”

We met with the whole team next to connect with them, observe their meeting style and dynamics, and provide an overview of the team coaching process. The team seemed happy to be together, enthusiastic about their

work, and eager to hear the director's update. What was also readily apparent was that most information flowed from the director to individual staff members one at a time and then back to him. Team members seldom engaged across the table and across different work units.

We provided an overview of our Team Coaching Service—what it is, what it is not and four steps that we would use with the team over the next six months: explore, design, deliver and sustain.

- In the *explore* step, we meet with the team leader to gather background information on the team's history and establish the focus and goals for coaching. We follow with an introduction to team coaching for the team (as was currently being done).
- In the *design* step, we conduct interviews and share anonymous rolled-up interview feedback with the team leader and then the team. We coach the team to decide on a team coaching focus that addresses their team needs and helps them achieve their team performance goals. Their team coaching focus forms the basis for a customized team coaching plan.
- During the *deliver* step, we meet with the team for a coaching day or shorter series of team sessions. We are prepared to follow the agenda content and also work with whatever interpersonal processes and dynamics arise during our time together. Based on the day, the team creates action steps that they own and take forward.
- Finally, in the *sustain* step, we support the team leader to coach their team to carry out their follow-up plan and to use the team's strengths to develop strategies toward future success. The team day often results in team members shifting their way of relating to one another, which is as important to foster as are the more concrete action steps going forward.

One person asked us what team coaching could do for them. We used Peter Hawkins' "outside in and future back approach"⁴ to team coaching, and so asked, "What is the future requiring of you as a team that you need to step up to? What are your stakeholders asking your team to step up to? What is the risk if you don't?"

This was a team that responded well to research and evidence, so they also asked for examples of how other teams had used team coaching and what

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⁴ Hawkins, *Leadership Team Coaching*.

the results were. We described a team that moved to cross-functional work because this was appearing to be a direction this team might entertain.

Interviews

One of us interviewed each team member and a stakeholder—the team’s executive director. We asked 26 questions of each member to learn about individual and team strengths, gaps and opportunities. The focus was on a) high-level impression, b) team purpose, c) roles, d) communication and relationships, e) team process, f) leadership, and g) collaboration. Some questions that we included were:

- What do you like the most about working with the team?
- How are differences/conflict addressed by the team?
- What would improve group decision making?
- What doesn’t the team talk about?
- What are three suggestions you would recommend to improve collaboration?
- What do you hope will come out of the team coaching?

Below is an excerpt of the interview themes, reflections and possible directions for team coaching.

Interview Summary

Overall, this is a large team with a highly respected leader and a passionate, talented and dedicated staff. What would take this team further was more connection and collaboration across the team, while carrying out work that was strategically positioned. Below are three thematic areas with selected findings that emerged from the interviews:

1. Strategic Direction

Individuals are clearly dedicated to their program stream and are interested in having a better understanding of and/or involvement in the work of other program streams

2. Human Resources Management

- Almost universal desire and capacity to share the workload
- Stress related to staffing uncertainties

3. Internal Staff Relations

- Need regular meeting times with the director
- Additional rush requests from executives limiting ability to meet other deadlines

Coach Reflections

- How can this team use their strength of connection and camaraderie throughout the day as well as during after-hours socials?
- Because this team prefers closeness, we wonder if members may be risk averse and avoid conflict with the potential of issues escalating.
- We thought that team members might benefit from dedicated time for individual development conversation.
- How would a dispersed leadership framework allow the director to move into a more strategic role?

Suggestions from the Team for the Team Coaching

- Develop a team charter including values, vision, mission, team agreements, and collaborative ways of working together.
- Support a dispersed leadership structure through developing new team agreements and ways of working together.
- Have a session on valuing different points of views: the art of giving feedback.

The director processed our interview feedback quickly and saw connections between what his team was saying, what his executive director wanted and his own hopes for the team. The interview feedback was inspiring him to move from thought to action. He saw the value of moving some of the team's work around through shared leadership and cross-functionality. We agreed upon possible resources that he could review and that we could present with him at the team day. To anchor him in practice, we discussed the option that he seek out like-minded colleagues who were experimenting with new ways of assigning work and leadership structures within his ministry.

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Team Day

Team Coaching Session		
<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Presenter</i>
9:00 AM	Opening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check-in: "What's your intention?" • Working agreements for the day • Setting the stage: director's vision 	Coach 1 Director
9:30 AM	"Where to from Here?" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review and discussion of interview themes • Agreement on team direction going forward 	Coach 2
10:00 AM	Presentation on Shared Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview and coaching 	Coach 1
10:30 AM	Break	
10:45 AM	Individual Leadership Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "What's my style?" • Exploring your primary and secondary work style (include experiential group work and journaling) 	Coach 1
11:45 AM	Introducing Special Assignment Project Teams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What might this look like? • Role of success team • Facilitated coaching 	Director
12:15 PM	Lunch	
12:45 PM	Bringing It All Together: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaming: brainstorming a shared leadership model using a sample project • Alignment: journaling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "What's my greatest contribution?" • "What's my personal learning goal? (What am I being called to step up to?)" • "How do I support the team?" • Coaching conversation on creating a project team structure 	Team members invited and supported to facilitate Coach 1 Coach 2

1:55 PM	Group Coaching Session: Alignment and Measures of Success	Coach 2 and team member
2:25 PM	Next Steps and Your Action Items	Both coaches
2:55 PM	Break	
3:00 PM	Takeaways, Acknowledgments and Close	Both coaches

We developed a customized team day session based on the needs of the team and their particular research-based team culture. Our focus was on assisting them with their goal of sharing leadership responsibilities and developing cross-functionality. We introduced the DiSC style assessment tool to explore one another's preferred ways of working and to shift the focus from knowledge areas to strengths and abilities.

The group appeared welcoming and curious as we began the team day with setting intentions and team agreements. Then, based on interview feedback about wanting a researched-based approach, and on our conversation with the director, who had expressed his desire to have more people involved equally on the team, we led a presentation on shared leadership. During the presentation, we reframed leadership as follows: "At its heart is the notion that leadership is a collection of roles and behaviors that can be split apart, shared, rotated, and used sequentially or concomitantly. This in turn means that at any one time, multiple leaders can exist in a team, with each leader assuming a complementary leadership role."⁵ We discussed matrix management and the pros and cons that go along with this style and we asked them if this approach was right for this team.

When we watched them interact as a group we could see that everyone was not participating or being fully utilized; this confirmed what we had heard in the initial interviews. The analytical thinkers in particular tended to hold back or were the only ones to offer alternative views. We intentionally addressed this dynamic on the team by describing a study by Heidi Gardner on decision making, and by facilitating a style assessment.⁶ Gardner studied

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⁵David Barry, "Managing the Bossless Team: Lessons in Distributed Leadership," *Organizational Dynamics* 20, no. 1 (1991): 31–47.

⁶Heidi K. Gardner, "Performance Pressure as a Double-Edged Sword: Enhancing Team Motivation but Undermining the Use of Team Knowledge," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2012): 1–46.

78 audit and project teams and found that, when pressure increases, teams rely on general knowledge and do not tap into their team members' specific expertise. Further, teams become motivated to achieve a "good-enough-and-defensible outcome rather than a riskier, potentially superior outcome."⁷ The team could see their response to their own high-pressure environment reflected back. We then facilitated some energizing and illuminating group exercises based on a DiSC style assessment tool.

As the day progressed, we coached them on what shared leadership and cross-functional project work could look like for them. Different possible leadership styles: envisioning leadership, social leadership, spanning leadership, and organizing leadership⁸ aligned with their DiSC style results such that everyone could see themselves and others as valued leaders.⁹ The team was excited as they imagined achieving greater excellence, efficiency, positive energy and creative engagement through assigning work beyond their knowledge areas to encompass a wider scope of possible contributions and growth opportunities. To further support their new way of working we led a coaching conversation on differing experiences and needs in times of change.

Throughout the day, we coached the group on their process as well as the content, asking coaching questions, prompting quieter individuals to speak, checking what "styles" were missing from the discussion, offering group-level feedback, and checking out what was and what wasn't being said. We asked that people contribute from each DiSC style: Dominance, Influence, Steadiness and Compliance. For example, we encouraged people with a primary Compliance style to contribute their analytical strength and discuss risks and benefits, thus providing a deeper critique than we had heard so far. In doing so, people were invited to speak up where normally they might not have. We were encouraging the team to shift their culture by applying their new learning.

The dynamic of waiting to take cues from the director was challenging for them, although he made it clear that he was intentionally stepping back on this team day and would be quieter to support others to move forward

⁷ Ibid, 11.

⁸ Barry, "Managing the Bossless Team."

⁹ M. K. Slowikowski, "Using the DiSC Behavioral Instrument to Guide Leadership and Communication," *AORN Journal* 82, no. 5 (2005): 835-836, 838, 841-843.

as leaders. We purposely didn't turn to the director for his opinion. We also left silence and didn't fill the uncomfortable moments. There was a dance occurring where some people in the room were uncomfortable and didn't know how to step forward. It took several reaffirmations that the director was not going to step in before the team started contributing and we could sense a new flow. This was the beginning of their shift toward what shared leadership would require of them. The team brainstormed principles to guide their new way of working and by the end of the day they had created what they coined their "Success Squad." The Success Squad would:

- Keep the team on track with their principles
- Design special assignments ensuring that all four work styles were embedded

Summary of Feedback from the Day

Overall, the team reported that they liked the quality and openness of the team discussion, that all staff were supported to engage in their own way and that the style assessment was valuable. Members were enthusiastic about their new success team and felt optimistic that their new shared leadership direction could decrease silos. The team liked the flow of the day and that there were two facilitators.

Regarding what could be improved, the day would have been better as either two half-days or a two-day event that incorporated more movement. The team also needed more time to ensure clear next steps and to consider "absent and future members."

After the Team Day

We debriefed the day with the director and conversed about the team's next steps. Over six sessions, one of us continued to work with the director as he championed the team movement going forward, and supported agreed-upon actions from the team day including mentoring the Success Squad in their new role. The Success Squad organized, planned, researched cross-functional teams, gave a stimulating presentation to their team and developed planning

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templates to list the cross-functional interests, skills, and time that their team members had for cross-functional work. The Success Squad then went on to design two three-month special work projects. Application criteria included having some knowledge in the area and also an ability to thrive in a flat structure and team atmosphere.

Eight months later, we met with the team to see what the team had accomplished and could recommend for future team coaching endeavors. In that time, the team had shrunk by four key staff: one had retired, one was transferred to another branch¹⁰ and two others had been working under contracts that the branch was not able to renew.

On the recommendation front, we discussed three possible improvements to the team coaching:

1. Have the team coach interview the executive director, as was done and also include that person in ongoing goal setting and updates.
2. Ensure that action items arising from team days be flexible in case of changing circumstances and priorities.
3. Build in follow-up with the whole team as well as supporting the team leader to coach the team. Indeed, the team intend to request a follow-up team coaching session to support their next steps forward.

As for accomplishments, there were many. The staffing changes had a dramatic effect on the team; however, because of the team coaching and the new shared leadership approach, junior staff were able to step up and take on leadership roles that they may not have had the opportunity to try out under the old model. Communication had improved between members due to the increased understanding of different styles. The team have now recognized the need to be more open in their communication and have the conversations that were previously perceived as “uncomfortable.” The director is pleased with their new process for creating cross-functional projects. This team are becoming known within their ministry for their matrix management and their success through team coaching.

¹⁰This staff member was transferred in part to reduce the director’s workload. This reassigned member went on to recommend team coaching for his new team with the hope that the teams could develop collaborative work agreements in the future.

Voices from the Field: Trends in Team Coaching and Health Care Case Study by Phil Sandahl, MCC, and Team Coaching International

Phil Sandahl has been the chief coaching officer of Team Coaching International for the past few years. I asked him about some of the trends he has noticed in our work, particularly in his role as one of the leaders of team coaching training at TCI. Here is what he said.

Across North America, South America and Europe, coaching has had enough visibility that we rarely have to explain what coaching is. And yet potential clients are still confused: What are we going to deliver? What results or change can they expect? Part of the issue is that they may have spent significant money on executive coaching but did not always see the results expected.

In working with teams the question becomes how you position team coaching in the catalogue of options, such as team building. How is team coaching different?

A team is a system—a living system with unwritten rules of survival. As coaches we know that change takes place over time. We also know that the system—any human system—resists change because change puts the system at risk. These unwritten rules of survival in the system are designed to maintain the status quo whether that means the team is doing well or poorly.

As coaches we are change agents; we work with teams to create structures, and the structures can create awareness. There may also be a need for skills training. As part of the coaching process, teams implement structures and practices and notice the change from month to month. The change process takes time.

If We Are Committed to Change, We Have to Be Committed to Time

The goal of the work is better team performance, of course. But it's not enough to simply turn up the heat on productivity. That's not sustainable. In the Team Diagnostic model we look at a balanced emphasis: improved productivity, of course, but also improvement in the culture of the team, what we call in the model "positivity." It's the environment of the team and it can have tremendous impact on the team's ability to work together effectively.

(Continued)

Benefits of Team Coaching

The pressure is on in organizations to do more with less. One of the benefits of team coaching is *more*: more productive, more effective, more aligned, more engaged . . . and another benefit is *less*: less strain, less toxicity, less confusion about roles and responsibilities. New behaviors lead to better team performance and a sustainable, engaged culture.

Results from the Team Diagnostic

Teams who have taken the Team Diagnostic show an average improvement of 19 percent in productivity measures, and 19 percent in positivity measures.¹¹ Look at what this means to the business. If you improve decision making by 20 percent, what's the impact to the business?

We have seen the results with real teams, in measurable improvement in both team dynamics and in business results. One example that stands out is a health care team with direct patient interaction. In this example, the coach worked with the team over a year's time. The result: both productivity and positivity measures improved by at least 30 percent. In addition, the team used an industry-standard patient satisfaction survey to measure improvement. Improvement in that area was one of the team goals for the process. Note how the team improved in the case study.

Case Study from Team Coaching International

Client Profile: Large health care system

Industry: Health care

Location: Minneapolis, Minnesota

Team Type: Intact team, direct patient care

Situation

- The team was undergoing tremendous change on many levels, all at the same time.

¹¹ Productivity strengths include: goals and strategies, accountability, proactive, alignment, resources, team leadership and decision making. Positivity measures include: optimism, camaraderie, respect, trust, values diversity, constructive interaction and communication. (Team Coaching International)

- Communication breakdowns and “team toxins” were common occurrences.
- The clinic was under construction and there was a new clinic manager.
- “Floating” part-time team members were coming and going, and healthcare laws were changing.
- All of this created additional pressure on a team trying to provide high-quality patient care.
- The team needed to improve their interdependence and communication so they could do “more with less in times of stress.”

Synopsis

Team members started out in silos, feeling alone and lacking the resources of time, space, information and connection. The team coaching process helped them see themselves as a team.

Although their material resources didn't change, they began to see each other as resources, which greatly improved their perspectives on resources and bolstered their optimism about getting through stressful changes together.

The team's Press Ganey Patient Satisfaction Scores improved as well. A 12 percent gain moved the team from the 18th percentile in the nation to the 86th percentile.

Press Ganey's analysis of ROI shows the dollar impact of improved patient satisfaction:

- A \$120-million revenue hospital can expect revenue increases from \$2.2 to \$5.4 million.
- Every avoided lawsuit will save \$53,000 in preparatory defense costs and \$173,000 in payments.

Additionally, each team member increased his or her average daily case load by one patient per day, which could equate to as much as \$125,000 additional net revenue per year, based on U.S. average net revenue per PT patient.

Overall Improvement

Productivity: +30 percent

Positivity :+31 percent

(Continued)

Approach

The program went from February 2008 to January 2009.

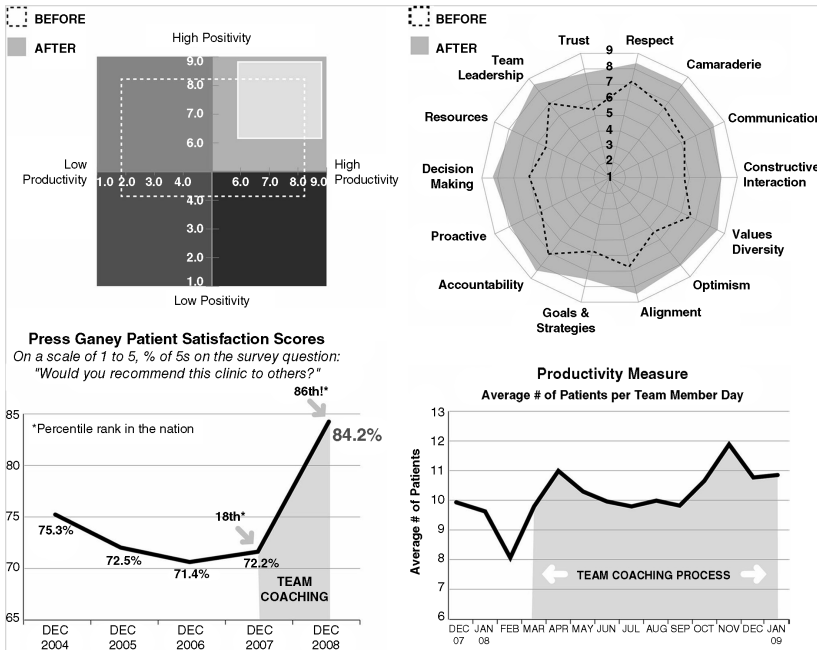
Pre- and post-program measures were:

- The Team Diagnostic assessment
- The Press Ganey Patient Satisfaction survey
- Number of patients per team member per day

The report was revealed in “chunks,” during monthly coaching sessions due to time constraints.

What team members are saying:

- Helped broaden our focus from me to us
- Gave us more positive insight and helped us address trust
- Helped us to see the team as a whole
- Learned ways in which we can positively adapt to change



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For more information about Phil Sandahl and the work of Team Coaching International please visit: <http://www.teamcoachinginternational.com>

Questions to Consider

What is significant about these case studies for your work?

What tools or ideas can you take forward into your work with teams?

What do you want to keep in mind as you move forward with your work?

DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR TEAM COACHING

As we have seen with the different case studies, team coaching approaches can be diverse. Each case study provided a different combination of approaches, from one-day “team days,” to a series of touch points, to work that was scaled up to the entire organization with an annual focus. In addition to the design principles covered in Chapter 4, some principles coaches will want to keep in mind when structuring their team coaching programs are:

- Design with the team in mind.
- Assessments can provide a great starting point/snapshot in time.
- Make it regular.
- Link it into current team structures and systems, e.g., team meetings.

Coaches and leaders planning for team coaching will also find it useful to refer back to the design principles covered earlier, in addition to considering these areas:

Design with the Team in Mind

What are the core needs of the team? What will really support their work and results? What are their training needs? What other supports are required? Chapters 9 and 10 explore additional talent management and leadership support areas that may be of interest and benefit to teams.

Assessments Can Provide a Great Starting Point/Snapshot in Time

At the collective level coaches may opt to use a team-based assessment such as the Team Diagnostic, or the team DiSC profile. There is also value in looking at the individual strengths within the team. As we saw in comments from Phil Sandahl,

measurement of our work is critical. What assessments can you offer to your teams? Where do you want to put emphasis in going forward?

Make It Regular

The sustained conversation and focus for the team is key in this work. Teams may be quick to find excuses but regular meetings (virtual or in person) will keep the momentum going. Depending on the type of team you are working with, some teams may prefer to meet bi-weekly, some once a month, some in person, some by phone, and some combining in-person and virtual meetings. Consider with the team what works best to “make it regular.”

Link It into Current Team Structures and Systems (e.g., Team Meetings)

Team coaching should be adding onto and interfacing with what teams already do. Wherever possible we want to ask team members how they can be integrating their actions and insights to the team structures and systems they already have in place such as planning, performance systems and team meetings.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES FOR TEAM COACHING

This part of the chapter includes more detailed instructions for several activities team coaches can use. Coaches will also want to refer to additional exercises in the appendix. The activities that follow have one or both of the following qualities:

They Support Awareness around Styles and Strengths

A main challenge or question in team coaching is, “Why are others not like me?” Using an assessment and/or working around strengths provides team members an opportunity to learn more about themselves and also the others that they work with. This can help people understand why they are different than others, and may help to shed light on why things are the way they are. For example, when two colleagues realize that they have a tendency to see the world in different ways—big picture versus detail oriented—it helps to explain some of the frustrations, different

ways of working and potential conflict that can exist within a team. The more the team members can get to know about themselves, the more solid the foundation the team can build upon.

They Are Experiential

From my own experience in working with teams I know that many like to “get their hands dirty” and “do things.” Coach Jacqueline Peters names one of my favorite activities—Tower Building—as one of her favorite activities. I have seen this and a related activity, Bridge Building, play out across teams. It is not only a great way to get team members in conversation in a fun way, but with appropriate debrief and discussion about the experience, outcomes and learning from the process, these activities can surface important lessons and learning for teams. Coaches will want to refer to the “What? So what? Now what?” questioning process in Chapter 3.

KEY ACTIVITIES FOR TEAM COACHING

- Facilitation Technique: Eliciting Input from All Group/Team Members
- Tower Building
- Working with Strengths and Styles
- Roles
- Strategic Issues Mapping
- Team Action Planning
- Team Modeling

Some other activities include the Team Storyboard and the Best Team (both in the appendix), and Visual Explorer (in Chapter 10).

Facilitation Techniques: Eliciting Input from All Group/Team Members

Getting input from all group or team members can be a challenge, particularly when different styles are at play or trust is low. The following are several ways to elicit input from all group members:

Post-it Notes: Provide each group member with a set of Post-it Notes that they can write ideas on (along with a thick marker so the words will be legible

to all). Ideas can be placed, and grouped according to similarity, on a wall or flip chart.

Example #1: In kicking off a team or group coaching session you may have individuals write out their strengths (on a green Post-it), identify areas for focus (on yellow) and any burning questions (on red).

Example #2: Post-it Notes can be used to identify key themes or areas to work on, brainstorm new ideas, or get feedback on what's really not working for the team. I used this recently with a team to explore values. It created more energy and diverse insights as to how the values were supported by different behaviors in the team. Each team member was given a set of blank Post-it Notes. As we looked at each value the organization had, team members were asked to write down what that value looked like behaviorally. They were asked to write down one behavior per Post-it. Team members were then invited to post their ideas one at a time on the wall of the room, grouping together Post-its that were common. This generated many more ideas than if we had just brainstormed the behaviors.

Index Cards: Ideas are written on index cards (one per index card). Using a large space, ideas can be laid out by group/team members and connections made between ideas. If anonymous ideas are wanted, the facilitator can collect all of the cards and present the ideas as a mix.

Collection Envelope: Many times people want to raise very sensitive issues but there may not be sufficient trust to voice the ideas. There may also be fear of retribution or other “horsemen” that exist in the team (refer to Chapter 9 for more information). In broaching these riskier areas, have individuals write out their ideas on cards, then place them in an envelope that is then collected by the facilitator and sorted or presented back to the group, with the facilitator reading out each comment.

Tower Building

One of my favorite activities is Tower Building. Using materials that the coach provides—such as balloons, tape and straws—the goal is for team members to create the tallest structure possible, one that stands up by itself and can support a chocolate bar. The team can do this in their full entity or in smaller groups (four to five members for each small group is ideal).

First, a team leader should be identified and be given instructions in writing. The team is given seven minutes to build the tallest free-standing structure with the materials provided. The facilitator provides no other instructions, other than time indicators.

When the seven minutes are up the facilitator should measure each tower, and ensure that the towers can support a chocolate bar.

Key to the learning is discussion around the experience. Questions you may wish to put to the group are:

- What happened? What did you do as a team? How successful were you?
- What did you do well?
- What did you notice about strengths in the team?
- What did you notice about communication? Decision making?
- What roles evolved in the team?
- What worked? What didn't?
- What team/leadership competencies were you using (link to organizational team or leadership competencies)?

Your final question to the entire group for discussion may be, "If you had to do it again, what would you do differently?"

This is followed by a second round of building. Appoint a new team leader and indicate that this is an opportunity to avoid the pitfalls of the last activity. A new set of instructions and materials are given. Teams are again given seven minutes to complete their task.

Questions for Final Debrief

The final debrief is key for the learning. Some of the questions you may want to build from are:

What? What did you notice about the roles on the team? What did the team leader do to support the initiative? What enabled success for this team? What behaviors worked for this team? What behaviors got in the way? What did you prioritize?

So what? So what was important about the role of ____? So how do these roles show up in the team every day? So what is significant about the role of the team leader (or other role that showed up)?

Now what? Now what can you take back to the office from this activity? Now what do you want to do differently in terms of (roles, communication, leadership, etc.)?

Working with Strengths and Styles

Supporting the team to understand their unique styles and strengths, along with their preferences, is an important part in the team development process. Working

with strengths and styles allows each team member to see what they bring to the team, and how this matches—or does not match—the way others prefer to work.

Working with VIA Strengths: Individuals can undertake the VIA Inventory of Strengths (also known as the VIA Survey) online; use your search engine to locate VIA Strengths. This assessment comes from the perspective of “positive psychology” and it is “designed to help you easily discover the strengths you already have and gain deeper insight into what makes you who you are.”¹²

The VIA Strengths survey will support an individual to identify their top signature strengths, or characteristics people will demonstrate at their best.

The VIA Strengths survey can be brought in when working in an organization or team. First, have individuals complete the VIA Strengths survey before the session; ask them to print their survey and bring it with them to the session. In smaller groups or pairs, have individual members discuss what their “signature strengths” were. How do they use these at work? In the team? What signature strengths are not being utilized? How are signature strengths becoming a blind spot for them? (As coaches will note, we often say an over-used strength becomes a blind spot.)

Coaches will also want to refer to sections of this book about StrengthsFinder and working with DiSC to get other ideas about how the VIA Strengths Survey can be integrated.

StrengthsFinder 2.0: Another strengths framework to bring in is the StrengthsFinder 2.0. You will want to purchase a copy of the book for each of the team members and have them complete the survey online. They will be able to access a special code at the back of their book, giving them access to the assessment online and also related supports (reporting and other online resources).

At the team level you can design a multilayered process of sharing in small groups and larger groups. I’ve designed half-day new team retreats with this as a foundation, as well as using it as the backbone of a full-day organizational retreat. One health care team enjoyed the process so much that they mapped out all of their team members’ strengths. As new team members joined, they continued to change the map. This was a virtual team that did not connect face to face regularly but whose work was interdependent. The team indicated that the colored strengths map was really useful in terms of communication among members.

At the organizational and larger team level you can make this a very visual activity by placing the 34 strengths labels around the room. These strengths

¹² VIA Me!, “Get your free VIA Me! Character Strengths Profile,” accessed May 8, 2013, <https://viame.org/survey/Account/Register>.

are also connected to one of four strengths-based leadership styles written about in *Strengths Based Leadership* by Tom Rath.¹³

Team Coaching: Roles

Working with roles that exist within a team system is a foundational topic area for team coaches. The area is rich for exploration, particularly in this day and age where team members may change, but similar issues circulate.

In a team systems approach, roles will remain the same even if people change. It can be very useful to ask team members to identify the “roles” that exist on their team. Some of the roles mentioned may be “devil’s advocate,” “the optimist,” “the yes man/woman,” “the cheerleader” or “the fix it.”

In discussing roles with teams it is important for coaches to ask some of these questions:

- What roles exist within the team?
- What purpose do the roles serve?
- What is the history of these roles?
- Who occupies these roles?
- What is the value of even the most unpopular roles? For example, what value can the “devil’s advocate” provide for this team?

Team Coaching: Strategic Issues Mapping

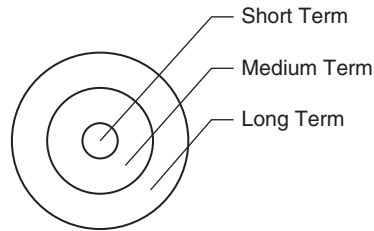
Creating a common vision is key to creating a highly performing team. One activity that supports teams in identifying the context in which they operate, and expanding their awareness around issues they may face, is an activity known as Strategic Issues Mapping. This activity can be as quick as 15 minutes or as long as an hour. It can be coupled with some of the team action planning work that is outlined later in the chapter.

The idea of strategic issues is to give each team member the opportunity to identify and share the strategic issues facing the team (or organization) from their perspective. It can be very useful in opening up the awareness of the different positions within the team; for example, finance versus operations.

Give each team member a set of Post-it Notes and on a wall or butcher’s paper create a diagram as per the illustration below. Get group members to come up

¹³ Tom Rath and Barrie Conchie, *Strengths Based Leadership* (New York: Gallup Press, 2008).

with the labels for the three layers: it could be local, regional and national, or short term, medium term, and long term, or something else. Have each team member bring their issues forward and place them on the map, describing each Post-it as they place it. Have team members group similar issues together.



The activity helps to deepen awareness around strategic issues, and may be followed by some action planning around the key priorities identified by group members. I have in the past had each team member use a colored dot to identify the two to three priorities for their work. This does allow the team or organization to have an overall snapshot of priorities, which can be useful in helping to make the action planning more prioritized and streamlined.

Team Coaching Activity: Team Action Planning

“High performance teams keep their goals at the top of mind at all times and never lose sight of them.”

—Leslie Bendaly and Nicole Bendaly¹⁴

Team Action Planning is a core focus for the team coaching conversation. Once team agreements have been put in place, the action plan provides the clarity and focus for the team going forward. There are several ways to facilitate this process. One process that I find works well is an activity I call “Post-it Team Action Planning.”

Post-it Team Action Planning: Set up the action planning process by placing a large piece of butcher’s paper (or several flipcharts taped together) on the wall. Give individual members a set of blank Post-it Notes (4 x 6 size), a Sharpie/thick marker, and three to five colored dots.

Have individual members brainstorm and write out potential action plan items based on the work together. It should be one action item per Post-it. Give the team three to five minutes to undertake this work individually.

¹⁴ Bendaly and Bendaly, *Improving Health Care Team Performance*, 43.

Have team members come to the front one at a time and share their Post-it Notes (What does it say? What does it mean?). Have them place the notes on a blank flip chart. Group Post-its that are similar as they emerge. For instance, there may be similar proposed actions coming up around team meetings, social events, clarity around roles, etc.

Once all the Post-its are up, invite team members to place a colored dot beside the top three to five action items they think would benefit the team. Very quickly you will see the main areas where the team is interested. There may need to be some discussion and dialogue to come to agreement on the priority areas of focus. Once these priority areas are identified, move to another part of the wall where you can post the items. Break the action plan down into the following categories:

- Action item and description
- Steps needed
- Key dates
- Who is responsible?

My colleague Sharon Miller will also ask, “What’s the *wow* factor?” This points us to the excitement or motivational value.

Depending on how big the action items are you may also need to further “flesh this out” through more dialogue.

Team members should also have a copy of the action plan in their workbook, which they can take back to work.

Total time needed: At minimum, 30 minutes for the individual brainstorming, prioritization, and team discussion. I have done this with some teams where it has become a one- to two-hour session.

Another twist: From the agreed-upon action areas, you may follow up with a quarterly plan, mapping out for Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4 the specific actions each person will undertake, assigning key dates. The advantage of having this on the wall is that very quickly the team will notice the interconnectivity, synergies and key crunch points/dates, as well as where dates may need to be moved out. It is a very visual way to look at this.

Team Coaching Activity: Team Modeling

Materials needed: aluminum foil, masking tape, hard-backed board

Throughout the course of your work with teams there will be key themes that you will want them to capture and also “take back” to the office. A fun and very

visual way to capture this may be to have the team create a model or models of the key themes at the end of the day.

Give the team (or smaller breakout groups of four to five each) 15 to 20 minutes to come up with a model using the materials provided that represents the key themes you have looked at throughout your work together. Give each group several minutes to present to the others. Get team members to comment on the similarities and differences they notice. Find out how the team wants to take this back to the office. Link it to the action planning piece and any other activities or focus areas you have had for the day.

THE CONTEXT OF TEAM COACHING TODAY

“Teamwork remains the one sustainable competitive advantage that has been largely untapped.”

—Patrick Lencioni

In the last two chapters we have looked at best practices for team coaching, as well as several examples of how team coaching plays out in the real world. One of the questions I have had while writing this book was, *“Where are we, and where is team coaching going?”*

Throughout the months during which I wrote this book and undertook hours of interviews and conversations with practitioner team coaches, I reflected on how team coaching has really come into its own. More than five years after David Clutterbuck’s *Coaching the Team at Work* was published, an increasing number of aligned professionals (OD specialists, HR professionals) are incorporating a coaching approach into their team development initiatives. There are more team supports available today for team professionals. Some of the standard tools that used to be available only for individuals (such as the DiSC or VIA Strengths) now offer team compositions, which can provide invaluable insights into the collective nature of teams.

As this work expands to different types of teams, I do believe it is important to continue to keep in mind the real, diverse needs of teams during the team coaching process. Conversation is often not enough. For team coaching processes really to take root, as practitioners we need to be able to draw on a wide variety of tools as well as a wide variety of approaches. Practically, in the work I do with teams, I am often sliding back and forth between training, facilitation and coaching. Consider the continuum. As teams develop enhanced awareness about their strengths and blind spots, they often recognize the need for skill development. A common example is the ability to have difficult conversations and work across

conflict. As a coach I would be remiss in not sharing with them tools, models and resources, as well as giving them an opportunity to practice this in the time we have together. What is important for me to keep in mind is how the skill development ties back into their focus and measures of success.

The need for just-in-time, flexible approaches is another trend. Teams don't have weeks or months to wait on support. By that time, the team is naturally in a different place. Likewise, the team may have limited blocks of time available. As such, we need to be flexible with how and when we can work with teams.

Consider the following example. At month 1 I was contacted for a team coaching engagement. The team had already articulated several core themes. The team availability was limited to two-hour blocks several times over the span of a couple of months. They wanted to start right away (i.e., in a couple of weeks). In addition to deepening awareness around issues, there was need and interest in some skill development. Pre-program one-on-one calls were held with the individual team members to identify some initial foundation areas. As the team sessions rolled out, the conversation and action planning naturally pointed to the focus areas for the remaining sessions. This flexibility in terms of what the team coaching may look like, and the ability for coaches to start working with a team rapidly, is characteristic of today's environment.

I also believe that going forward the types of teams that will be turning to support from the sustained nature of a team coaching approach will also continue to grow. Global and virtual teams are one such grouping. Another key focus area which is also expanded on later in this chapter and the book is around the need for enhanced measurement.

What do other practitioners think about where team coaching is, and the challenges inherent in our work?

Phil Sandahl, the co-founder of Team Coaching International, identifies the following three trends in the context of our work.¹⁵

1. the growth of the global marketplace
2. the exponential change that is occurring in the business context
3. organizations' reliance on collaboration.

These three areas are shaping the needs of teams today, along with the supports that we can offer.

¹⁵ Phil Sandahl, "Trends and Opportunities in the Team Coaching Marketplace," TCI Graduates webinar, November 7, 2012.

In conversation with me, Phil shared the following:

There is no clear identity for our work. Where we fit and what we call ourselves can be an issue. What we bring is culture change and performance improvement. Also critical is our ability and need to measure the impact of our work.

Measuring team coaching results is something we have emphasized in our training of team coaches using the Team Diagnostic tools. As part of the initial debrief of the team's assessment results, there will be action planning, focused on improving team competencies. In addition, the team is asked to determine how *they* will measure the impact of the team coaching work over time, in real business terms that are important to the team.

That way the team has their attention on a business outcome, and in the process will be developing the new behaviors to be a stronger team. The focus on business results makes sense to the team and organization and makes the effort feel relevant.

The Team Diagnostic has now been used by more than 1,000 teams worldwide. Less than 10 percent of teams rate themselves as high performing (data from hundreds of Team Diagnostic assessments).

Phil's comments echo the thoughts of Peter Hawkins, who writes:

Team coaching is currently about 20 years behind, with many of the same difficulties that existed in the early days of individual coaching being prevalent. These include:

- Confusion for clients over what people are offering when they provide team coaching;
- A plethora of terms and no standard definitions;
- Little in the way of research, literature, models or approaches;
- A lack of established training programs or accreditation.¹⁶

Dr. Catherine Carr and Dr. Jacqueline Peters have completed their doctoral work on team effectiveness. Catherine said:

This work can be challenging. The team coaching model Jacqueline and I created is built to be applied *in its entirety*. It is also modularized so it can be customized to roll out in a way that works for the team.

¹⁶ Hawkins, *Leadership Team Coaching*, 47.

The main constraints to team coaching work are budget, time and maintaining a focus on the team coaching. Also leaders often think they can do it themselves. They can; however, there is great value in having someone from the outside assist a team. The coach can see the team picture in a way that no one individual can see. . . .

Challenges come when the team requests team coaching but does not have the conditions in place for team coaching to be effective. For example, the team leader may be dealing with individual performance management issues that they hope the team coaching will solve.

Sharon Miller provided these insights in terms of challenges facing team coaching practitioners:

- Team coaching is different than one-on-one, where the coach creates a safe and confidential space and people will be forthright—in a team, this happens over time.
- Team coaching is a *process that has to happen over time* (like any kind of change). A couple of days of a workshop and a few touch points may not necessarily get to the core issues the team is struggling with. It is normal for human behavior to snap back to the previous state unless there is ongoing practical reinforcement.
- We need to balance what you want as a coach for the team and where the team is at. You may see potential as a coach and that's about you. The team may not be ready to be vulnerable; it feels too risky. That's a cue for the coach to work on building trust.
- There is a perception that there is great risk to be vulnerable, particularly with current economic realities, whereas risk and vulnerability are what business needs to take productivity and performance to another level. The truth is an untapped source of competitive advantage, I believe.

Sharon indicated that some of the challenge areas team coaches may face are:

- Finding the entry point to naming what is really going on and then deciding what to do with it in the moment, particularly if there is resistance or silence.
- Having the team “surface the elephant”; they may not tell you even if you ask. You can also create a great design, get to an action plan and think this is great and potentially have not “got to the gold” for the team. The deep challenge is having the team surface the elephant, and less about the ability to facilitate to an end goal.

In one instance we were told about the elephant after the team coaching process was completed. In another instance, it wasn't until six months into the process that the elephant was revealed.

- Dealing with the different personality styles: one person will love something, another will hate it; one person will say there is no problem, another will say there is or, worse, keep their mouth shut about it. This is another reason why there is such value for the client in doing this work in pairs. In working with another coach you can check in with each other about whether to name and how to name what is going on in the system, whether the system is in fact ready to hear it or will it take them down a rat hole, that doesn't serve them in the present moment. It may be something to address at a later workshop, for example.
- How to get the team unstuck and high performing. The real challenge is about getting to elephants—which could be something positive, like unbelievable potential that is not being leveraged!

In closing, there is great opportunity for coaches entering into the domain of team coaching, though as we have seen the work is not without its challenges. Over time, team coaching, especially when linked to other initiatives, can have tremendous impact. Team coaching is an inherent part of the culture change process in an organization. These topics and others are explored in the final part of *From One to Many*. Capacity development is the focus of Chapter 9. In that chapter we look at how coaching is one of many ways to build internal capability. Chapter 10 looks at developing a new cohort of leaders.

Successful team coaches will also benefit from the practicalities around virtual programming, engagement and marketing—which follow in the book and digitally.

End-of-Chapter Questions

What opportunities do you see in undertaking work as a team coach? What might be the challenges facing you?

What key themes does your team want to focus on? What additional themes are you seeing that would be useful?

What lessons learned can you take forward from the different case studies?

What design principles do you want to keep in mind for your team coaching engagement?

What ideas do you have for team coaching activities?