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the magazine of professional coaching

Team & Group Coaching

The landscape of coaching many



GROUP & TEAM COACHING

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What are the differences between team and group coaching? When and how do you introduce team or group coaching? How do you effectively measure the impact of team or group coaching? This issue uncovers the secrets of successful group and team coaching experiences for both coach and clients, including how to design and launch programs to create engagement, inspiration, motivation and accountability for participants.



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As with individual coaching, the range of what group and team coaching looks and sounds like continues to expand in creative and innovative ways.

From team coaches who are working with virtual startups, to group coaches bringing together social entrepreneurs from across the globe, the realm of coaching many – group and team coaching – continues to expand.

Team coaches today support the building of collective capacity. With teams of all kinds being the engines of business, team coaches work with teams across time, creating a valuable “pause point” for teams to explore their relationships and results. Group coaches bring together usually disparate individuals from across an organization, geography or industry. The group coach usually taps into the individual capacity of each person, supporting their own individualized goals and aspirations.

Against the backdrop of ongoing change and complexity, team and group coaches are supporting others in shaping the conversations and culture in organizations and society.

One of the biggest questions asked by coaches and stakeholders alike is, “what does group and team coaching look like and sound like?” This article explores the landscape of both sub-disciplines, looking at:

- The landscape of the team and group coach
- The stance of the team and group coach
- What it looks like and sounds like
- Critical success factors for each modality

TEAM COACH LANDSCAPE

Teams today face a variety of challenges, from virtual and remote work, to teaming, to cross-cultural membership where team members may have different values, languages and working styles.

The stance of a team coach is usually “outside the team system.” Teams are together “24/7” and stakes are raised with team coaching given that the conversations impact people’s livelihoods.

Team coaches meet the team where they are at, diving with them into the murky waters of power, roles, and goals. Team coaches will regularly work across the domains of supporting a team in the **doing** and **being** realms, supporting the team to focus on **results** and **relationships**.

Team coaches work through the varying layers of history and relationships on the team. They help teams unpack assumptions. They support teams in identifying their beliefs, mindsets and habits. Work around roles is critical, and team coaches help team members explore the varying roles they inhabit: instigator, devil’s advocate, and social coordinator.

Team coaches explore with the team the foundations of team effectiveness. A variety of authors have pointed to these essential elements for team success:

1. Shared vision
2. Shared goals
3. Shared performance measures
4. Common team practices
5. Clear Roles
6. Shared commitment

Team coaches focus on **results** and **relationships**. Areas team coaches may find themselves coaching around with regard to **results**:

- Vision – Creating shared vision
- Goals – Exploration and alignment of individual goals, team and organizational goals
- Roles – Role clarity, role connection, role fatigue
- Measurement and Success Factors
- Habits and Mindsets

With teams of all kinds being the engines of business, team coaches work with teams across time, creating a valuable “pause point” for teams to explore their relationships and results.

In the realm of **relationships**, conversations may include a focus on:

- Exploring different styles (and how these relate to communication, working, feedback and conflict)
- Working across differences
- Identifying skills and strengths which exist across the team

The stance of the team coach includes a focus on the collective and helping individual team members connect to this. Team coaches will often move in and out of the team system, directing the team to talk to each other, challenging the team to consider how the coaching conversation gets integrated into everyday work and dialogue. The team coach also provides support for the team in ongoing integration of their learning through a variety of discussions.

Whereas, years ago, the standard team coaching engagement was six months with bi-weekly touch points, today with budget and team availability, the work may range from real-time embedded coaching where the team coach shadows a team for days, to one-year quarterly touchpoints.

Team Coaching Critical Success Factors

Two critical success factors which warrant attention are helping the team anchor the conversation in actionable behaviors for their every day work. Also, engagement of the team leader is key. Their involvement is fundamental in ensuring that the team has time and space to focus on the changes required.

GROUP COACH LANDSCAPE

The group coaching space continues to bring together individuals from a range of backgrounds in organizations and across the public space. Over the last decade we've seen an explosion in different types of group coaching. From group coaching, to creatives and solopreneurs wanting to leave their mark, to leadership groups, group coaching continues to grow in terms of availability and variety.

The group coach usually taps into the individual capacity of each person, supporting their own individualized goals and aspirations.

The benefits of peer learning, cost effectiveness, and creating connection in a digitally disconnected world continues to appeal to the marketplace. Many are drawn to becoming part of community and the peer group learning experience.

What is being considered group coaching is quite varied, ranging from “30-day challenge groups” focusing on business and fitness issues, to annual programs supporting group members. Masterful group and team coaches are able to weave together tools and approaches from a variety of streams including experiential education and facilitation grounding these in our core coaching competencies.

Given the diversity of group needs, there is not just “one model” which constitutes effective group coaching. Common elements across models will involve a focus on goals, action, awareness and accountability, as determined by individual group members. Groups can be as small as two and as large as 50. Larger than that, groups become facilitated sessions, rather than coaching sessions.

Key issues for group coaches include:

- ▶ The importance of connecting people early on in the conversation building the necessary trust and connection
- ▶ Supporting group members in identifying, anchoring and sharing their individual goals and focus areas
- ▶ Considering ongoing touchpoints and what that can look like. It may be a blend of larger group, paired partners and other
- ▶ Creating structures to keep the learning and focus alive in a busy world. Whether it's getting clients to select a photo which represents commitments or having them create a physical model to represent their learning
- ▶ Having a variety of tools and strategies to draw from

A group coach is usually the catalyst in coaching many, bringing together the group for a shared purpose. From parenting coaches to small business groups, group coaching provides clients with an opportunity to learn from others.

The stance of the group coach is distinct in that they usually bring together a disconnected group of individuals. This requires that the team coach focuses on building a cohesive group where there is enough trust and safety to share, be vulnerable and learn from each other. This requires that group members are connected earlier in the process.

Group Coaching Critical Success Factors

Three critical success factors for group coaches include:

1. Strong Focus on Process

There is a dynamic tension between space and structure in this work. The group members bring the expertise, and the group coach's role is to use process to ensure there is lots of time for connecting, dialogue and articulating insights, next steps and commitments.

2. Utilizing a Variety of Engagement Strategies

From small group breakouts to large group discussion and paired dialogue, group coaches will also want to consider incorporating less verbal approaches, including annotation and body-centred, or kinesthetic, coaching approaches.

3. A Focus on Group Cohesion and Match

Supporting group members in articulating their individual goals, focus and roadmap. Group coaches will want to support the identification of common ground, and the connection of group members early on, so there is enough of a focus for traction.

FUTURE TRENDS

Against the backdrop of ongoing change and digital disconnection, team and group coaching are likely to continue their expansion, given their relevance of support for topics including virtualization, teaming and cross-cultural issues. •