

Guide to Finding a Team

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There are many reasons why approaching a real team for pro-bono work in order to develop and apply what has been learned is useful:

- You may not have a paying client team to practice with
- Some external coaches and consultants do not want to take on paying clients until they are fully qualified or experienced
- Some internal coaches and OD practitioners do not want their practice cases to be inside their own organization.

This guide aims to walk you through the various steps in order to secure a team to practice with.

Why Team Coaching?

80% of organizations operate almost wholly in teams, and today's world is complex and changing rapidly.

NGOs and organizations need qualified team coaches and leaders with the ability to create connections on multiple levels to develop a sustainable and prosperous workplace.

Team literacy is now an essential competence for all coaches, team leaders, and HR professionals. Today's challenges need collaborative teams.

“The biggest problem in business today is time pressure that results in decisions made quickly without appropriate input from stakeholders and poor accountability. Team Coaching can solve this by catalysing appropriate stakeholders, making strategic decisions with each stakeholder’s input and buy-in from those implementing the strategy.”

- Tammy Turner -

“As businesses start to plan for life after Covid, effective teams and teamwork will make the difference between those that recover swiftly and prosper – and those businesses that don’t.

“There are lots of ways teams can solve immediate, neatly packaged and discrete problems. The problem is that most of the key challenges teams face are longer-term, messy and interconnected. Team Coaching is the only way we have to help teams work with and thrive on this complexity, to the benefit of both the team members and the team’s stakeholders.”

- Prof. David Clutterbuck -

Coach Alone or in a Pair

You’ll learn more in a coach pair but it’s not mandatory. If you decide to go it alone, keep to a relatively small team. Working with a Co-Coach, the ideal size is 5 to 10 people. If you partner with a much more experienced / senior team coach be sure to agree a co-learning contract with them from the start.

If you would like to co-coach, but haven't found a coach to pair up with, ask your network contacts if they are willing to pair up on an existing team client.

Pitching to Client Organizations

For Client Organizations seeking Team Coaching, this is a unique opportunity to engage with you as a coach and to work pro bono in their organization. This is a powerful and effective process that will enhance the performance of individual members, the leader and the team as a whole, as well as impacting the immediate business and wider organisation.

Process

- a) Initial engagement to understand the situation and ensure a fit with the Team Coaching process
- b) Diagnostic to gather data on the team's current performance
- c) Re-contracting with the whole team and establish the objectives of the Team Coaching
- d) Partnering with the team to achieve those objectives using the Team Coaching framework and methodology
- e) Completion and review of the work against the initial objectives

Research Project

This team project will be the basis of the participants' assessment and so permission to use the data for this purpose will be required. The coach shall keep all discussions and all other information about the client strictly confidential, using a duty of care no less strict than would be applied to any other coach.

Requirements of the Organization

For an organization to take advantage of this opportunity they must meet the following prerequisites:

1. Intact team with objectives and direction as well as the autonomy to implement changes within its jurisdiction
2. The senior management supports the team coaching initiative
3. Team size of around 5 and 10 members
4. Expectation that the team will remain as constructed for the duration with minimal changes in membership
5. Team members willing to engage in individual coaching
6. Team members willing to undertake 360 feedback and other diagnostics that will insight into Team processes.

How Team Coaching Can Benefit an Organization

When pitching to your teams and clients you can discuss how integrating team coaching into an organization can:

- Enable teams to navigate the challenges of today's hyper-complex and fast-changing world
- Facilitate teams to work with each other and every stakeholder across the organization
- Help leaders best operate within this new team-based model
- Help team members think beyond themselves and their own team to consider the organization's larger objectives as a whole
- Help teams develop clarity of purpose
- Help teams explore and adhere to their values and ethics
- Embrace a teaming culture and optimize organizational development with team coaching
- Embed team-based thinking into every level of the operation - from the individual to the ecosystem - ensuring organizations stay relevant during any major transition
- Help organizations fully optimize and mobilize teams in this new virtual environment
- Provide best practices and tools for handling complex team cases in your organization
- Enable adaptation in your organization so it can meet the demands of a fast-changing world.

Who to Pitch to

To find suitable organizations and teams, you can try:

- Approaching 'for-benefit' organizations you personally know or support
- Asking your colleagues at work or on the program if they know anyone who might be interested. Your organization may already support a number of 'not for profit' organizations
- Looking up member organizations of your country's list of voluntary organizations
- Put a request out on your LinkedIn or other social media saying what sort of organizations you are interested in working with
- Engage with your peers and/or LinkedIn groups.

What to Expect

You can break down the project into three steps:

1. Get to know the team and help them begin to understand their internal & external dynamics and the priority areas they want to work on
2. Support them in having the conversations they need to address those issues
3. Gradually transfer the skills of learning conversations to them, so they need you less and less

The outcome of our intervention is both specific improvements in processes and performance and increased capability for the team to coach itself (i.e. to respond effectively to future challenges). If you find that you are jumping ahead to step 2, it's OK.

Contract with them about the purpose of each session and how you will both work together to design experiments in the moment as needed.

The Key Pitch Elements

- About you and your 1-2-1 coaching experience
- The value of Team Coaching pairs (if applicable)
- The type of team you are looking for and why
- The team commitments and over what timeframe
- Why you are teaching as a team coach
- The team benefits expected
- Be clear with the organization about your experience and the training you are providing
- Likely cost if service purchased from a qualified Team Coach - per hour equivalent of a senior level management consultant
- Contract with them that you can share the work within supervisory boundaries, with your practicum break-out groups and any supervision you arrange
- Explain that this means they will get a much wider range of experience and perspectives helping their situation, than if you were working alone
- In our experience if the organization has no payment to make financially or in kind they become less committed and value the work less, so we suggest you contract on 2 or 3 of the areas below, so they have some investment in the team coaching programme.
 - Contract that they will allow you to write up the case, and once they have agreed to the text, make it publicly available as an example of your work
 - Contract that they will pay any travel and accommodation expenses
 - Contract they will pay for your supervision costs or a contribution towards your training
 - Contract that if they find your work of value, they will introduce you to two new potential clients
 - Contract that they will be open to you experimenting with new ways of helping them
 - Contract that they will commit to investing the time and it will be a journey and not just a series of workshop events

The Five Key Messages Are:

1. Start with the organization's biggest challenges:
 - a. What issues do you lose the most sleep over?
 - b. Which teams have primary responsibility for these issues?
 - c. How confident are you that they are able to deliver what is needed now?
 - d. How confident are you that they are equipped to deal with future challenges?
 - e. What would be the impact of a 10% improvement in overall performance?
 - f. What would be the impact of a 10% impact on the quality of teamwork?
 - g. What are the biggest worries in your own team that better teamwork and team processes could relieve?
2. Spread out your offering. As team coaches, we:
 - a. Help you understand more clearly what is helping and hindering you in achieving your organizational purpose
 - b. Help you create and build into the way you work significant improvements in collaborative behaviours, decision-making processes and other drivers of team success
 - c. Rather than focus on "fixing" problems, we help you to find more lasting solutions and - in doing so - to embed the skills of coaching conversations into your normal daily routines
3. Our contract with you is:
 - a. We are going to challenge you individually and collectively to be your best selves
 - b. We will give you the tools and the ability to use them to tackle both today's challenges and tomorrow's
 - c. It may be uncomfortable at times but our request of you is that you treat each moment of discomfort as an opportunity to learn, for your own benefit, for that of your team and for that of your beneficiaries.
4. Team coaching requires a lot of experimenting. We try things out and learn from what does and doesn't work. That's how good teams become great and great teams become awesome. We will be using very well-proven processes to create experiments together, often in the moment.
5. Some of you may go to the gym, where you have a personal trainer. Think of team coaching as fitness coaching for the whole team. It will take some hard work - both in the coaching sessions and outside, in your day-to-day routine work together - but the result will be a much healthier, more agile team that is "fit for purpose".

And one last point. The way we do it, team coaching is also FUN. By engaging in a quality of thinking that most teams rarely if ever accomplish, we support you in building deeper, more caring, more effective relationships with each other.

Suggested Timelines

A typical team coaching session would be maximum 2 -3 hours (although can be more if you are straying into facilitation). The Team commitment would be approximately 12 hours spread over 6 sessions plus a couple more with the team leader / sponsor. Your own commitment will be closer to 40 hours including interviews, coaching sessions, and your preparation time both on your own and with your co-coach.

Suggested timeline during this program

Time	Main Activities
January	Start Pitching to clients
Jan / Feb	Initial scoping questions with the team leader / stakeholder to assess suitability
Feb / March	Contracting (legal agreement) and deeper team diagnostic
March / April	Initial Team Coaching sessions with the full team
May / Sept	Minimum of 2 sessions - up to 4 more keeping in step with the modules.
Sept / Oct	Formal ending & celebration (can be after course ends)

When Not to Coach a Team

Just as happened with coaching individuals, the more mainstream team coaching becomes, the more it's assumed to be some kind of cure-all for team problems. Of course, it's not; but team coaches increasingly bring issues to supervision which relate to how they manage team clients and sponsor expectations about what can and can't be delivered.

It all starts with getting to know the team and its situation before contracting with them. Experienced team coaches know the danger signs to look for and when they should say no to an assignment. Here are some of those signs:

1. When there is no compelling rationale for being a team – for example, when members of a group have little interdependence
2. When it is too large to be a real team – above eight, it will become harder to gel as a team; above 12, social loafing and other dynamics will be a major impediment to performance
3. When only the leader wants team coaching to happen
4. When the team leader is weak – for example, unable to deal with dissension. In such circumstances, the team coach can easily find themselves in the role of surrogate leader

5. When the team expects you to rescue them, or for you to find the solutions to their problems instead of working things out themselves. If they won't take responsibility for the process or the outcomes, you are liable to become the scapegoat when things don't work out
6. When the team has no prospect of acquiring the resources it needs to succeed
7. When you are a stakeholder in the team – any real or potential conflict of interest can undermine your effectiveness
8. When you have close relationships with some members of the team, but not with others
9. When the team's problems are pathological – deeply unhealthy teams will find it impossible to engage with the team coaching process.

The initial scoping interviews with members of the team provide the opportunity to identify potential red flags. Interviews with key stakeholders and observers of the team provide another valuable perspective.

If you find a red flag, explore your concerns first with the team leader and the assignment sponsor. If they are not prepared to acknowledge the issue(s) and work with you on them before the formal coaching begins, then walk away.

If they will not let you take the issue to the rest of the team, individually or collectively, walk away. If you feel that the complexity of the problem is beyond your competence, walk away. In each case, if you explain clearly the reasons for your concern, you are likely to emerge with greater respect and self-respect than if you take on an assignment that has failure built-in!

Once you start a team coaching assignment, keep your eyes open for signs that the team may be uncoachable in its current form and be prepared to confront the team with your observations. "This is my observation. What do you want together to do about it?" Recontract regularly and reiterate the limitations of team coaching, where appropriate.

If you do find yourself coaching an uncoachable team, don't panic. It happens to all experienced team coaches at some time. Think of it as an occupational hazard of the role - like a sports injury is for an athlete! Extract yourself as soon as you can, and put some quality time into reflecting on the learning you can extract from the experience.