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Team Coaching

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss:

- Alternative perspectives on the role and purpose of team coaching
- The role of the team coach
- How team coaching differs from other team-focused interventions and from one-to-one coaching
- Trends and challenges in the development of team coaching as a genre.

The instinct to work in teams can be observed widely in social species, from apes to wolves. Through such collaborations, tasks can be accomplished more effectively (although there are significant exceptions) and individual learning is rapidly shared with the rest of the team members.

Team coaching in the workplace is a relatively recent concept, although it is well established within the world of sport. However, as discussed later, the structure, aims, processes and interdependencies of sports teams are significantly different from those in the workplace – to the extent that the validity and safety of transfer between the two worlds is low (Keidel, 1987).

Although a Google search indicates that ‘team coaching’ is offered as a service by many training and consultancy organizations, there seems to be little consistency of definition or practice.

The situation is not helped by the fact that the evidence-based literature on team coaching is woefully thin. The first substantive attempt to define team coaching was by Hackman and Wageman (2005), who describe it as a direct intervention with a team intended to help members make coordinated and task-appropriate use of their collective resources in accomplishing the team's work. My own definition, based on listening to how team coaches describe their role, is: 'a learning intervention designed to increase collective capability and performance of a group or team, through application of the coaching principles of assisted reflection, analysis and motivation for change'. The contrast in theoretical approach here is between short-term performance orientation and the concept of the team as a learning organism (Marsick, 1994; Clutterbuck, 1996, 2000).

Skiffington and Zeus (2000) present the team coach as someone who facilitates problem-solving and conflict management, monitors team performance and coordinates between the team and a more senior management sponsor. This construct presupposes a very hands-on role for the team coach and a high level of responsibility for team performance, which is absent in both the Hackman/Wageman and Clutterbuck definitions. Similarly, Thornton (2010: 122) defines it as 'coaching a team to achieve a common goal, paying attention to both individual performance and to group collaboration and performance' – placing the emphasis on achieving a solution to a specific problem, rather than on building the team's overall capacity to sustain performance. Hawkins (2014: 52–61) proposes a systemic perspective, defining systemic team coaching as: 'a process, by which a team coach works with a whole team, both when they are together and when they are apart, in order to help them improve their collective performance and how they work together and also how they develop their collective leadership to more effectively engage with all their key stakeholder groups to jointly transform the wider business'. This definition assumes the context is a leadership team or executive board. However, the systemic perspective has value at all levels of team. Techniques, such as socio-mapping (Bahbough & Warrenfeltz, 2004; Willis, 2012), help illuminate the mechanics of human interaction within the team. Relationships with other teams and stakeholders above, below and at the same organizational level are also significant issues in team performance and hence valid areas for exploration within team coaching.

There are, therefore, as with coaching itself, several alternative perspectives about the role and function of team coaching. The common factors, however, include:

- an acceptance by the team and the team coach that a coaching approach is appropriate and beneficial
- a focus on performance (though whether this is a cause or effect of learning differs)
- an emphasis on conversations between team members, aimed at making more effective use of collective skills, knowledge and interests.

Proponents of team coaching argue that coaching an individual without attempting to influence the immediate human systems in which they operate reduces the impact of the coaching intervention. Teams develop habitual behaviours and norms, which exert considerable entropic energy to undermine individual and collective change (Valley & Thompson, 1998). An important

component of this dynamic is the team's mental model, which becomes rigid and less likely to be challenged as circumstances change.

Like individuals, team effectiveness can also be undermined by quality of thinking. Addressing and improving the quality of thinking, for both individual issues and more broadly, is the core of coaching and this applies equally to individuals and the collective work group (Rogers & Blenko, 2006). In addition, teams have many of the characteristics of organisms. Team personality, which has been widely studied (Van Vianen & de Dreu, 2001; Gustavsson & Baccman, 2005), appears to be a valid but under-explored concept and teams also develop collective norms about issues such as time orientation.

The context of team coaching is significantly different from that of one-to-one coaching. Among the principal differences are:

Confidentiality – even with a high degree of psychological safety, team members may be reluctant to disclose to a group of colleagues or to admit weaknesses to their boss.

Pace of thinking and deciding – some members of the team may reach a conclusion faster than others. Where the coach in a one-to-one relationship can adjust pace to the speed of the coachee's mental processing, the team coach needs to be able to hold the attention and interest of the vanguard, while ensuring the rearguard are able to catch up at their own pace.

Scope of topic – team coaching can only deal effectively with issues in which all the team members have a stake. Sometimes this involves helping team members to recognize the mutual benefits and value of supporting a colleague.

Building trust within the coaching relationship – while team members will vary in the level of trust they place in the coach, progress can normally only be made when the team as a whole is ready to trust both the coach and the process.

Team coaching also differs significantly from team building, team facilitation, process consultancy and other related interventions. Clutterbuck and Hawkins each present different, but broadly consistent, rationales for these distinctions in terms of purpose, style, duration of intervention, nature of learning and other characteristics.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

Features of team coaching, such as the setting of goals, are dependent on the stage of team development and on the specific characteristics of the team. Although it is common to refer, for example, to *the leadership team*, the collective leadership may not be a team at all (Katzenbach, 1998). A group is distinguished from a team in various ways, but some of the most common (Hackman, 1990; Thompson, 2000) are:

- shared goals and purposes
- structured communications

- allocated responsibilities and accountabilities
- a level of interdependence
- willingness of members to place the collective goal above their own priorities
- clear boundaries (who is and is not included)
- operation within a social systems context (i.e. it is part of a larger organization, to whose goals it contributes).

Team coaching is also commonly used at the time of team formation, particularly when a project team is strategically or economically important for the organization. The process of transition through forming, storming, norming, performing and transforming (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977) benefits from some process management and team coaching is claimed to speed up the time it takes to reach the performing stage (Hackman & Wageman, 2005; Jackson & Taylor, 2008). Hackman and Wageman build on the work of Gersick (1988, 1989) to suggest that team coaching interventions should be structured to fit the stages of psychological and process development of the team. What this means in practice is that at the early stages of team formation, team coaching should be focused on clarifying the team task, setting norms of how to work together, defining boundaries and roles and gaining motivational momentum. At the mid-point of the team's development (or of a project assignment), it is ready to reflect on the task and the processes for achieving it. Towards the end of the project's assigned time, team members become open to a review of learning, both individual and collective.

Team coaching may also be remedial, in the sense that a team may need practical assistance in addressing specific issues of performance (e.g. achieving rapid improvements in productivity or customer service) or collective behaviour (e.g. managing conflict). The majority of case studies in Clutterbuck (2007) relate to these two categories, with building a team from a group as a common sub-theme. Wageman, Nine, Burruss and Hackman (2008) maintain strongly that focusing team coaching on interpersonal relations (the core of team building) does not reliably improve team performance, but that team coaching is most effective when focused on motivation (the effort people put in), strategies for performance and increasing the level of skills and knowledge within the team. However, case study evidence tends to suggest that increasing mutual trust and respect does have an impact on performance. A pragmatic perspective, suggested by Clutterbuck (2007), is that behavioural interventions are more likely to improve performance when aimed at specific team processes or objectives.

Where the group already exhibits most or all of the characteristics of a team, the coaching goals tend to relate to specific areas of performance. One way of categorizing these is as:

Interpersonal dynamics – issues such as recognizing and managing conflict, increasing collective emotional intelligence and building and sustaining an appropriate coaching climate.

Temporal issues – for example, how the team balances its emphasis on past, present and future, and time management.

Managing key processes – goal setting and management, functional analysis, innovation, decision-making and communication.

In all of these areas, the core task of the coach goes beyond making the team aware of problems and helping it develop solutions for the present – that is more typically a task for facilitation. Team coaching goes several steps further, helping the team to develop the capacity (skills, knowledge and capability) to manage these issues more effectively on its own.

Role of coach and relationship with clients

Team coaches can operate from four perspectives or relationships with the team. At the simplest level, the team coach is also the team leader – by analogy, the team captain, who is both leading the team and engaging in the collective task. This is a role that involves multiple conflicts. Ferrar (2006) lists a number of barriers to effective line manager coaching, some of which apply equally to individual and collective coaching. These include difficulties in achieving full openness, pressure on the line manager to work to short-term agendas, groupthink and the tendency of managers to adopt parent–child behaviours towards direct reports. Wageman, Nine, Burruss and Hackman (2008), in a recent study of 120 top teams, concluded that the role of line manager as coach is typically less effective than using a coach who is not engaged in the team task.

A second role for the team coach is the equivalent of the touchline manager, who is not part of the play, but can observe, give feedback and bring the team together for reflection. Ferrar's barriers to effectiveness still apply, but the coach is potentially able to apply a wider perspective from not being engaged in the task. Whether this actually happens may depend on how much of their attention is devoted to managing other stakeholders.

A third perspective is equivalent to being in the stands, unable to influence the play in real-time, but able to help the team think strategically about what is its task and the processes it uses to achieve it. Here, Ferrar's barriers become less significant.

Finally, there is an external perspective – the coach, who does not observe the team at all, but who relies on evidence the team itself gathers, either intrinsically or from third parties (e.g. through customer surveys). This is qualitatively a very different role, as it involves helping the team to develop and pursue its own learning agenda.

An issue for the team coach in all these perspectives is how to balance collective coaching with additional, individual coaching. The team leader and team manager as coach will need to be careful not to alienate some individuals by being perceived as offering other team members proportionately more coaching (or by offering them too much!) A useful process in this context is the *team development plan* – an amalgam of personal development plans and the business plan. Clarity around individual coaching needs and opportunities for peer coaching are important elements of this working document.

Also important contextually is the nature of the team itself. There are several ways in which teams can be classified. For example, the degree of task interdependence has a significant impact on the type and frequency of communication needed, the nature of relationships within

the team and the potential for role conflict. The flow of work within the team provides another method of classification (Ratloff, Beckstead, & Hanke, 1999), from simple teams where everyone does the same task, to relay teams where tasks are different and sequential, through integrative teams where everyone does a different task at the same time (e.g. an operating theatre) and finally problem-solving teams where the process and procedures may be defined as the task progresses.

In a study of how teams learn (Clutterbuck, 2000), I identified six major team types, each of which had different issues in terms of their learning dynamics. These are basically:

Stable teams – where membership and tasks are constant over a long period. Stable teams have advantages in terms of learning (strong learning partnerships can develop) but over time group norms tend to narrow creative thinking and reduce experimentation.

Cabin crew teams – where the task remains the same but membership is constantly changing. Examples include film crews and some aspects of police work. The benefit of having lots of people to learn from may be outweighed by the lack of opportunity to form strong, long-term learning partnerships.

Standing project teams – relatively stable new teams drawn from a variety of other teams and working on usually short-term projects. By the time the team has gone from storming to performing, it has often reached the end of its lifetime, so the learning can easily be lost.

Evolutionary teams – longer-term projects, where the tasks and the membership change over time, with new people taking over as the project moves into new phases. A major problem for learning in this context is failure to educate newcomers in the history of the project.

Developmental alliances – teams set up specifically for learning (e.g. action learning sets). An issue here is the relative priority given to membership of this team compared with other, task-focused teams, to which members may belong.

Virtual teams – teams with fuzzy boundaries or that are geographically dispersed. Here the learning problem may be creating opportunities for collective reflection.

Whatever method of team classification is chosen (and there are several more), team coaches need to be aware of the functional dynamics of the teams with which they work and adapt their approach accordingly. In many cases, the team itself may not be consciously aware of its functional dynamics, nor of the implications these may have in terms of performance management.

Similarly, the team coach needs to be aware of the extensive spectrum of influences on team performance and team learning. Some of the most significant include:

Diversity – homogeneous teams tend to provide higher levels of customer service, but lower levels of creativity. Heterogeneous (diverse) teams vice versa. According to Early and Mosakowski (2000), mildly diverse teams perform least well, because they tend to fractionate into sub-teams; but highly diverse teams can perform exceptionally well when they spend time developing rules for personal and task communication, shared expectations about roles and performance, norms for conflict management and a sense of common identity. Although they do not specifically make a link with team coaching as a means of achieving these characteristics, it is likely to be much harder without external intervention.

Conflict management – not all forms of conflict are damaging. While conflict based on emotion and personality tends to undermine team performance, conflict of ideas and approaches can be highly efficacious. The key is for the team to develop language and protocols that recognize conflict at an early stage, steer it towards dialogue around ideas and approaches, and allow for collaborative, no-fault solution-finding (Jehn & Mannix, 2001).

Communication – communication within the team is critical in maintaining workflow, sharing learning and maintaining social identity. Teams may also adopt any or all of three strategies in communicating to key external audiences: ambassadorial (managing team reputation with top management); task-coordinating (liaising with other teams and stakeholders); and environmental scanning (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). The effectiveness of these strategies in managing team reputation varies over time.

Based on responses from a survey of team coaching practitioners, Hawkins (2014: 156–166) offers a perspective on the qualities required for an effective team coach. He divides these into general competencies and capabilities, including contracting, rapport-building, use of questioning and facilitation methods, and reviewing; systemic capabilities, including understanding systems levels and organizational politics, and linking team coaching with other aspects of organizational change; and capacities, ranging from self-awareness and self-ease, through to ethical maturity. At a basic level, most of the competencies and capacities would also be expected of a competent one-to-one coach – it is the adaptation to team dynamics and interconnecting systems that differentiates the team coach's role. The range of tools and processes the team coach requires is therefore wide and arguably much wider than for one-to-one coaching.

A central issue in team coaching, and one that is essential in contracting, is clarity of responsibility. There are typically four major stakeholders in externally resourced team coaching: the team; the team leader/manager; other team members (i.e. apart from the manager); and the sponsor. Many teams are in fact composed of sub-teams, with considerable variation in their willingness and ability to collaborate.

Issues that need to be foreseen and managed include:

- The team leader's behaviour or competence may be one of the primary reasons for poor team performance – hence there is a potential for conflict of loyalty.
- The team and the leader may have different agendas, as may the sponsor.

How team coaching is different

We have already explored how team coaching differs from individual coaching. However, it is often confused with team leading, team building and team facilitation. In each case, there are some overlaps in role, but also considerable distinguishing features. Tables 19.1 and 19.2 illustrate some of these overlaps.

Team coaching is also different from group therapy, although some of the same techniques may be used on occasion. Corey (2004: 4) describes some of the values of group therapy as 'practising new skills ... feedback and insights of other members as well as the practitioner ...

Table 19.1 Differences between team leading and team coaching (Clutterbuck, 2007)

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Leader-as-manager</i>	<i>Leader-as-coach</i>
Task goals	Setting goals for and with the team Developing commitment to the goals Reviewing progress against the goals	Helping to establish processes for setting and reviewing goals Exploring alignment between personal, sub-group and team goals Helping to explore the causes of setbacks/progress failures
Learning goals	Establishing the development needs of each team member Agreeing PDPs	Helping to establish processes for integrating individual and team development plans
Visioning	Articulating the team's ambitions internally and to external stakeholders (e.g. higher management) Contextualizing the vision within the corporate vision	Testing the quality and viability of the vision and how it influences day-to-day activity Helping the team to articulate the <i>values</i> behind its vision
Coordination	Ensuring that everyone understands their roles and responsibilities Reviewing and improving work processes, in consultation with the team Planning and strategizing	Giving feedback on processes and procedures; and on how the human factor affects these Helping the team to question its processes and approaches Developing strategy skills
Problem-solving and decision-making	Demonstrating effective decision-making and problem-solving behaviours, by involving team members and achieving consensus	Helping the team to improve its problem-solving and decision-making processes
Conflict management	Taking pre-emptive action to identify, discuss and prevent potential conflict Mediating and agreeing rules that will reduce conflict	Giving feedback to ensure that conflict is recognized Improving the team's ability to manage conflict
Communication	Demonstrating effective communication Being available when needed Creating opportunities for communication to occur	Helping the team to understand the theory and practice of communication Helping the team to investigate and learn from communication failures
Learning processes	Ensuring the team takes time to reflect and review	Helping the team to build the skills and processes of reflective dialogue
Boundary management	Protecting the team from external threats and interference Acquisitioning resources	Helping the team to review and improve its boundary management
Performance management	Clarifying expectations of performance Conducting appraisals Recognizing and rewarding performance	Exploring the influences on performance at both individual and team levels

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opportunities for modelling'. However, the members of a therapy group have few of the characteristics of a team; the aim of group counselling is to achieve individual improvements, rather than a common goal. A clue to the difference lies in Corey's explanation: 'The role of the group counsellor is to facilitate interaction among the members, help them learn from each other, assist them in establishing *personal* goals, and encourage them to translate their insights into personal plans that involve taking action *outside* of the group' (Corey, 2004, emphasis added). Team coaching, by contrast, emphasizes *collective* goals and action *within* the team.

Table 19.2 Team coaching versus team facilitation (Clutterbuck, 2007)

<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Team coach</i>	<i>Team facilitator</i>
Use/generation of feedback	Gives or helps team use and also receives feedback	Helps team generate mutual feedback
Engagement	Within the team or engaged with the team	Detached from the team
Learning process	Shares the learning process	Directs/manages the learning process
Action/monitoring	Provides intellectual, emotional and practical support through the changes	Provides process support for the changes
Relationship	Reagent	Catalyst
Learning conversation	Coach acquires learning or change through the process	Facilitator remains largely unchanged
Enablers	Working within team dynamics	'Directed dialogue' – structure emerges from the facilitator's observations
Outcomes	Team and individual achievement	Understanding team dynamics Agreement on team direction and method

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RELATIONSHIP WITH THEORETICAL TRADITIONS

While team coaching in sport is closely associated with *sports psychology* as a source of evidential and philosophical grounding (Weinberg & Gould, 2007), these do not necessarily provide a basis for understanding team coaching in the workplace. The extent to which sports coaching approaches can be transferred to the workplace is hotly disputed. Katz (2001) points to a number of fundamental differences in context between the two roles:

- Sports coaching is about winning/beating the competition; work teams place greater emphasis on cooperation and collaboration.
- Sports coaching involves a great deal of practice for periodic short bursts of exceptional performance; coaching in the workplace is typically about achieving consistent, long-term performance improvements. (Exceptions, where the analogy may work better, include emergency services and the military.)

Coaching is only one of many influences on team performance in the workplace – resource availability, team structure and task design all play an equal or greater role.

According to Keidel (1987), there are three layers of interdependence in sports teams:

- 1 Pooled, where team performance is the sum of individual performances (e.g. baseball or cricket).
- 2 Sequential, where team performance relies on a mixture of individual and orchestrated performance (e.g. football).
- 3 Reciprocal, where team performance is more than the sum of individuals (e.g. basketball).

The equivalent work teams might be: sales, where everyone works independently; assembly manufacture, where work is passed from one to the next; and a cross-functional task force, where there is continuous involvement by all team members. Using the wrong analogy, or an analogy that fits only partially, can be disruptive to team performance.

Team coaching relates to *performance coaching* in that teams have goals that must be achieved. Goal clarity is typically seen as being at the heart of performance coaching, although Megginson (2007) and Clutterbuck (2008) argue strongly that too narrow a focus of goals is dysfunctional. Like individuals, teams have a variety of potential or real barriers that prevent them achieving their performance potential. These include:

- the tendency towards social loafing (Ringelmann, 1913)
- poor prioritization of goals
- failings in leadership
- collective self-limiting beliefs.

The task of the team coach includes helping the team to identify barriers to performance, designing appropriate strategies to overcome those barriers and creating the time and motivation to implement those strategies. It also involves stimulating open dialogue around individual and collective behaviours that contribute to good and poor performance.

All teams that have been in existence for more than a short period have a history. The members may also import into the team their own history (or baggage) from other teams, either within the organization or outside. Awareness of one's own and others' histories and their impact on collaborative behaviours may be low. Psychodynamic conversations can help the team recognize, accept or challenge, and manage these histories.

Cognitive behavioural approaches are sometimes associated in team coaching with motivational processes by identifying and eliminating behaviours that are not conducive to achieving collective goals or collaboration, or by embedding new behaviours that are. A specific application here is the development of coaching and co-coaching behaviours within the team. Because effective coaching is a consensual activity, it requires an attitudinal and behavioural shift on the part of the line manager as coach and on the part of other team members as coachees. (In practice, much of the coaching may also take place between peers within the team.) Agreeing and implementing appropriate feedback systems is integral to this behavioural change process.

However, cognitive behavioural approaches also have a role to play in helping the team develop more rigorous decision-making processes. 'Groupthink' is a constant danger in the team context (Janis, 1972). For teams at the top, the frequency of substantive decisions is also associated with team (and organizational) performance (Mankins & Steele, 2006). Effective decision-making requires processes that challenge rationalizations and raise awareness of psychological traps in thinking – for example, our tendency to attach higher significance to events that have strong emotional impact (Hammond, 2006).

Solutions-focused coaching and *positive psychology* approaches provide an alternative perspective for team coaching methodology. The solutions-focused team coach helps the team

extract from its experience the strengths and characteristics of its behaviours and processes when things are going well. S/he uses questions such as:

- What positive moments were there in this gloomy period?
- What happened to make them different?
- What can we learn from these highlights that would help us tackle the issue differently?
- How can you create more of those moments – make them the dominant theme?
- If you had already resolved the problem, what would you and others have done?

The discipline of *family therapy* (Nichols & Schwartz, 1991) may also inform team coaching processes, by focusing attention on the systems within the team and in the team's interactions with the external world. Like the family therapist, the team coach helps the team to recognize interaction patterns that might otherwise not have been apparent and helps the team to establish new behavioural norms, which may have a positive impact on the entire team system. One of the most obvious applications here is overcoming a problem that team leaders who have attended behavioural training programmes (e.g. in coaching skills) often encounter – the team members may be resistant to the new behaviours, with the result that the leader is rapidly rehabilitated to behave as before. Viewing the change as a team change, rather than one of leadership style, and addressing the team from a systemic perspective can provide a powerful means of ensuring that the intended new leader behaviours stick.

Team coaching can also apply much of the learning relating to *group therapy*. Therapy and coaching generally differ in that the former emphasizes cognitive and behavioural dysfunction and the latter emphasizes building on existing competencies. This broad differential can be observed between group therapy and team coaching. However, many teams do exhibit dysfunctional behaviours, especially in terms of conflict, groupthink, collective avoidance or delusion, resistance to change, defensive behaviour, and so on (Corey, Covey, Callanan, & Russell, 1992). Group therapy has well-established processes for managing all of these issues.

In *developmental coaching*, the objective is self-awareness. Collective self-awareness is a more complex concept, which requires an integration of self-knowledge and knowledge about the fears, motivations, ambitions and emotions of other team members. By raising collective awareness – through dialogue and use of mutual feedback – the team coach equips the team to engage in systematic, sustainable change. Team coaching also shares with developmental coaching a focus on assisting transitions between developmental levels or stages. Where developmental coaching incorporates models of individual maturation (e.g. Erikson, 1974; Kegan, 1982), team coaching helps groups achieve transitions in collective maturation. The most common model for this is Tuckman and Jensen's forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning (Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). However, this model appears to relate only to project teams with a finite life, or to the early stages of new teams of other types. There does not seem to be a substantive model relevant to stable teams in their maturity (and possibly, decline).

Several models have emerged to frame team coaching. Among general weaknesses of these is that they are either focused on high performance at one extreme or dysfunction at the other; that they are based on linear approaches rather than systemic; and that they have little support from the literature. Exceptions are Hawkins' 5 Cs model and, more recently, the PERILL model. Hawkins (2014) proposes five foci for exploring team dynamics: Commissioning (what our stakeholders require of us), Clarifying (what the team is there to do), Co-creating (how the members work together) Connecting (what they do when they are not together) and Core learning (how the team as a whole develops and learns). Clutterbuck (2018) synthesizes – from a mixture of literature analysis, supervision and education of team coaches and a detailed investigation of the characteristics of high performing teams in one of the five largest dot.com multinational companies – a framework for analysis that explores the systemic interactions between five contexts: Purpose and motivation, External processes and systems, Relationships, Internal processes and systems, and Learning systems. These interdependencies and interactions are mediated by leadership qualities and approaches.

EVALUATION

The paucity of evidence-based literature on team coaching makes it difficult to conduct a substantive evaluation.

Some observers contest the validity of team coaching as a genre, on the basis that it is no more than facilitation or team development, and that part of the essence of coaching is that it is an individual process. Taking these arguments in turn, we have already discussed a number of salient differences between team coaching and facilitation. The validity of these distinctions is still open to debate. An argument can be made, for example, that there is enough similarity between the two roles to depict a sub-genre of a coaching style of facilitation, or alternatively, a facilitative style of coaching. As to whether coaching can only be an individual process, interesting forms of peer coaching in groups have been described by, among others, McNicoll (2008). Group supervision can also be seen as a well-established analogy of coaching (Hawkins & Smith, 2006).

Team coaching can be highly demanding of the coach since there is the need to manage simultaneously the coaching process and the interactions of team members. It requires considerable skill to avoid common pitfalls, such as:

- assuming the team leader's role or responsibilities – an ineffectual leader may abdicate difficult tasks or decisions to the coach
- becoming subverted into existing group norms or thinking patterns
- creating dependency – the degree of intimacy and frequency of interaction can gradually create conditions where the team looks to the coach to solve its problems. Instead, the team coach should be focusing from the beginning on helping the team learn how to coach itself.

While one-to-one coaching now has broadly accepted codes of ethical practice, the ethics of team coaching, as a relatively new workplace discipline, are much less distinct. Some of the ethical issues that have emerged in workshops include:

- In individual coaching, the well-being of the client normally comes before that of the organization. But how does the coach balance the welfare of an individual versus that of the team as a whole?
- The team has been set very challenging goals, which demand long hours. The coach can see that this is having a negative effect on the home lives and health of some team members. The team say they are prepared to live with these conditions for a period, because the project is a high-profile one and will be beneficial in terms of their careers. However, the coach suspects that some people are going along with this view because they do not want to let down their colleagues.
- When is it appropriate to advise breaking up a dysfunctional team, and when should we try to fix it through coaching?
- When is it not appropriate to take on a team coaching assignment?
- The team leader is manipulative and dishonest towards the team. The coach knows his/her real intentions, but the team does not.
- It is clear to the coach that there is a serious issue which the team is avoiding (e.g. the dysfunctional behaviour of a key member who has unique knowledge or special client relationships). The team leader has warned the coach against addressing this issue, but s/he knows the team cannot make real progress without dealing with it.

The answers to these dilemmas are not always straightforward, especially given that there are multiple stakeholders involved in a team coaching assignment.

EMERGING ISSUES IN TEAM COACHING

As the practice and evidence base for team coaching evolves, it is inevitable that the focus for enquiry will also evolve. Some of the themes which now occupy researchers in the field include:

- *Team maturity.* Laske (2015), in particular, has examined the implications of different levels of socio-emotional and cognitive maturity among team members in terms of interpersonal dynamics and what team coaching can achieve. A particularly difficult scenario is when the team leader is less mature than members of the team. There are also questions about how mature the team coach must be in order to cope with variations in maturity levels among team members.
- *Team coach supervision.* The complexities of team coaching compared to one-to-one coaching suggest that team coaches have greater need of supervision, and this conclusion is supported by a study I conducted with Alison Hodge (Clutterbuck and Hodge 2017). However, the nature of supervision provided is highly variable. The Association of Coaching Supervisors and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council have both taken an interest in developing good practice and standards for team coach supervision and in establishing a body of knowledge about the differences between one-to-one and team coach supervision.
- *The impact of team coaching.* If team coaching aims to improve team performance, what are the measures of team performance? It is unclear whether generic measures of performance exist or are possible, or whether performance is entirely contextual. An alternative perspective is that team coaching aims to correct team dysfunctions (Lencioni, 2002). However, there is similarly an absence of any evidence-based models of team dysfunction that would permit a credible generic measure.

The nature, context, content and skills base for team coaching are still evolving and it is difficult to predict what standards will eventually emerge. There is an urgent need for empirical research to determine the roles and boundaries of team coaching, the minimal competencies and experience required to be effective in the role and good practice in such areas as contracting, process management and evaluation. Team coaching may be the newest kid on the coaching block, but it is growing up fast!

FURTHER READING

Gersick, C. (1988). Time and transition in work teams: Toward a new model of group development. *Academy of Management Journal*, 31, 9–41. (This article offers a ground-breaking evidential analysis of team working.)

Thompson, L. (2000). *Making the team: A guide for managers*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall. (The most comprehensive and approachable analysis of team dynamics.)

Wageman, R., Nine, D., Burruss, J., & Hackman, R. (2008). *Senior leadership teams: What it takes to make them great*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press. (This book builds on Gersick's evidential analysis to draw conclusions about the timing of coaching interventions.)

The three books most often referred to on the specific topic area of team coaching are:

Clutterbuck, D. (2007). *Coaching the team at work*. London: Nicholas Brealey.

Hawkins, P. (2014). *Leadership team coaching*. London: Kogan Page.

Thornton, C. (2010). *Group and team coaching*. London: Routledge.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Currently, team coaching, as described in this chapter, is focused mainly on senior leadership teams or high-risk project teams. What would be the value of offering team coaching to a much wider spectrum of teams at different levels? What would need to happen to bring this about?
- Different definitions of team coaching emphasize either achieving specific and immediate performance goals or building longer-term sustainable capacity. Are these definitions compatible or do they describe two discrete approaches?

ONLINE RESOURCES



WEBLINK.eps

To access videos, journal articles, case studies and useful web links relevant to this chapter please visit: <https://study.sagepub.com/coxhandbook3e>

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