

WHITEPAPER

TEAM COACHING

VALUE CREATION THROUGH
TEAMING IN BUSINESS



**Gordon Institute
of Business Science**

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ABOUT PERSONAL AND APPLIED LEARNING AND TEAM COACHING AT GIBS

At GIBS, we take an integrative approach to learning and the Personal and Applied Learning department is an area established within the business school to be the custodian of expert facilitation and coaching faculty, best practice, and thought leadership in the domains of personal change and transformation.

This white paper was created to provide a perspective and guidance to organisations on team coaching and its impact, so that they can make informed decisions about how the approach can be used to add value to their businesses. Moreover, this paper represents a GIBS position on team coaching as a leadership development approach.

Ms Alison Reid, head of Personal and Applied Learning at GIBS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ms Amy Moore is a professional associate of GIBS, where she works as a coach (individual, group, and team), integrator, lecturer, and writer and supervisor of teaching cases. She also runs her own business, Link the Dots, focused on individual and team coaching and coaching supervision. Ms Moore obtained her undergraduate degree from Mount Holyoke College (United States) and her master's from the London School of Economics (United Kingdom). She is a Professional Certified Coach of the International Coach Federation and a certified coaching supervisor (Oxford Brookes). Over the last five years, Ms Moore has volunteered as a coach at the Gratitude Network, an organisation focused on the growth of high-impact and not-for-profit social entrepreneurs. She has published 15 peer-reviewed teaching cases (predominantly with Ivey and Emerald Publishing) and placed in five international competitions for her writing.



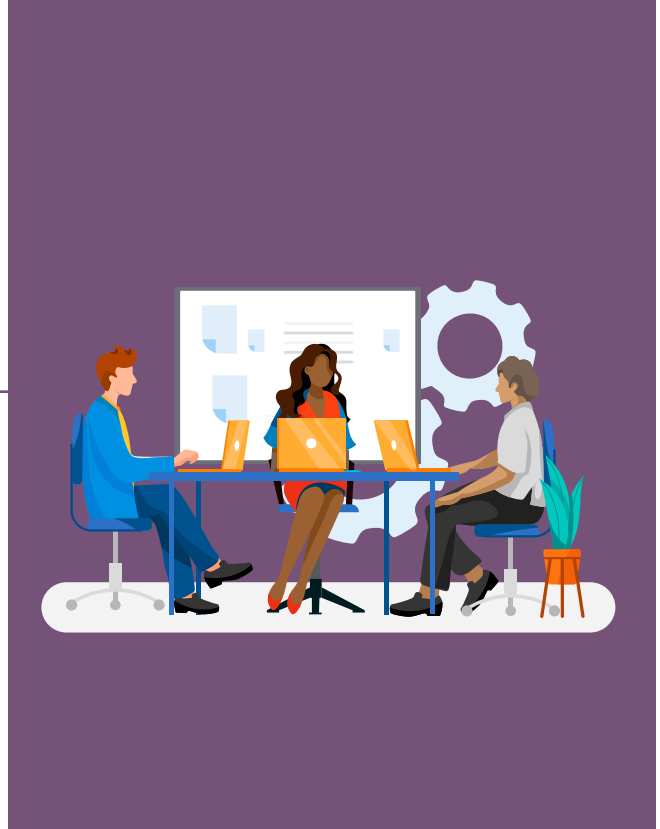
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Abstract

Worldwide, as complex, globalised, and evolving business environments have become the norm, there is an increased need for organisations and management teams to work together effectively. One way to achieve this is through team coaching – the practice of “helping the team improve performance, and the processes by which performance is achieved, through reflection and dialogue” (Clutterbuck, 2007, p. 77). Since team coaching is often referred to as an organisational practice but is a relatively new field, there is a need for a consolidated document that highlights the concept, process, and potential benefits of how team coaching can support teamwork within organisations. Therefore, the goal of this paper is to provide organisational leaders and learning and development practitioners with an indication of:

- Why team coaching is important;
- How the practice of team coaching can be used; and
- What to consider when designing a team coaching approach.



Business problem

Team effectiveness has become an increasing focus of leaders and human resources (HR) practitioners. In a dynamic period where organisations are thinking about how they manage complexity and change internally and externally, potentially diversifying their strategy while getting more out of the current resources they have, such focus requires a fit between strategy and organisational characteristics. It also necessitates new techniques and skills as well as effective collaboration and teamwork.

The Ansoff (1958) classic theory of diversification speaks to the necessity of strategic change in ranges of products and the exploration of new markets. According to Prahalad (2004), new threats and opportunities might be difficult to recognise as the dominant logic prevails. In today's context, this speaks to the importance of leaders needing peripheral vision to view trends to recommend new ideas to keep up and address current dynamic environmental changes (Moore et al., 2020).



New such trends include importance of human-centric skills as a differentiator and competitive advantage for the future. Creating meaning and collaboration for organisations at a systems and unit level can help foster greater connection, co-creation, and care. Subsequently, this can have a direct impact on activity completion and bottom-line results. While individual coaching appears to be an established norm in organisations to help with this, team coaching currently is less part of an organisational development intervention. However, a team coaching approach used in conjunction with an overall HR/people management strategy can be a powerful way to improve quality of interactions and help embed accountability and scaling of work within and between teams.

The solution: Team coaching



Team definition

What is a team? Katzenbach and Smith (1993, p. 45) defined a team as “a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable”. Thompson et al. (2000, p. 9) built interdependency into their definition: “a group of people, who are interdependent with respect to information, resources and skills, and who seek to combine their efforts to achieve a common goal”. Some of the keywords we believe are important across both definitions include that a team is a defined, small entity with interdependencies, a common purpose, and individuals who have accountability to work towards a common goal.

How do teams differ from groups? While both words might be associated, they have different meanings. According to Merriam-Webster (n.d.a, n.d.b), a group is “a number of individuals assembled together or having some unifying relationship”, while a group discussion is “a number of people who are connected by some shared activity, interest, or quality”. The team definitions in the above paragraph highlight the shared connections, responsibility, and relationships of team members towards goals, and therefore the importance of working with teams to focus on the interdependencies and joint accountabilities. Refer to Figure 1.

What is team coaching?

Modern coaching initially emerged from sports coaching in the 1970s, with the understanding that improving individual performance is dependent on removing obstacles and helping individuals solve opportunities and problems for themselves, rather than being told what to do (Clutterbuck, 2007). While individual coaching is a well-established profession and industry estimated in global market size at \$20 billion per year (Willis, 2021), team coaching is a much younger discipline, often confused with different types of interventions.

Team coaching has various forms and thus multiple definitions in literature, but at the essence of team coaching is the concept of working together. Hawkins (2011, pp. 6–7), one of the acknowledged writers in the fields, said:

The current world challenges task us as a species to find a way of working together, across disciplines and borders, beyond local and self interest in a way that has never been attained before. In working together we need to generate new ways of thinking, for as Einstein so memorably pointed out, you cannot solve a problem with the same thinking that created it.

Since our business school’s mission is to “Improve responsible individual and organisational performance in South Africa and our broader African environment through high-quality business and management education” (Gordon Institute of Business Science [GIBS], n.d.), the chosen definitions we refer to below relate to our purpose. Three widely accepted definitions of team coaching include:

- “Helping the team improve performance, and the process by which performance is achieved, through reflection and dialogue” (Clutterbuck, 2007, p. 77);
- “Coaching a team to achieve a common goal, paying attention to both individual performance and group collaboration and performance” (Thornton, p. 122); and
- “A sustained series of conversations ... where the focus is on goal setting, deepening awareness and accountability. The focus of the coaching may be on the team as a system and/or strengthening individuals within the team. Team coaching links back to business, goals, focusing on results and relationships” (Britton, p. 18).

What often binds all the team coaching definitions together is a philosophy founded on a set of core beliefs (Woudstra, 2021, p. 26). The International Coaching Federation (ICF; 2022), the largest global coaching professional body that our School is aligned to, believes that every client or coachee is resourceful, creative, and whole. With this as a foundation, it is the coach’s responsibility to: clarify and align with the team what they want to achieve; encourage the team discovery; help facilitate a team-based approach to solutions and strategies; and hold the team responsible and accountable (Woudstra, 2021, p. 28)

Depending on the needs of the team, there may be a need for additional “add-ons” to the whole team coaching process, such as one-on-one coaching or a training session on a particular area. Moreover, team coaching often lasts longer – several months, on average – than other processes mentioned already.

Purpose of team coaching

Teams are complex, adaptive systems and team coaching can help build better connections within their internal and external systems, thus helping the team’s capability to manage current and future challenges (Clutterbuck, 2007). An effective team coaching approach should fit within an overall HR management strategy and use other supporting mechanisms to create accountability and support team momentum.

Some leading international organisations are using team coaching as a regular way to support their people. Marc Kahn, Investec’s global head of People and Organisation, indicated that the global financial services firm believes “the real value creation lies in team based orientations” (Coaching.com, 2020), more than individual coaching, since it is the relationships between individuals and the connections between them that creates value overall. Kahn has been known to say that team coaching is a 21st century approach to understanding value creation, performance, and leadership development, and if you catch this wave and position yourself in this fashion, you will be an early adopter to what will become mainstream (Coaching.com, 2020).

Team coaching can have several objectives, which is why it is important to spend time with the team clarifying the purpose of the team coaching when thinking about a team coaching journey. From past experience through team coaching at GIBS, there are often three areas of focus: 1) to improve some aspects of performance (it is better to be as specific about what this is and looks like); 2) to make things happen faster; or 3) to make things happen in a different way (Clutterbuck, 2007). It is imperative

that – with the help of the coach – the team establishes the goal(s) of the coaching, rather being told by the coach or another external stakeholder. Depending on the scope and time allocated, team coaching can also focus on vertical development in addition to immediate goals/performance/ changes. For example, it can centre on deepening individual and collective awareness and adaptive capacities beyond the immediate goal or focus. The primary types of teams that can benefit from team coaching include executive teams, cross-functional teams, intact and new teams, and teams within matrix organisations.

Difference between team coaching and other team development interventions

Team coaching has often been confused with other processes, given its complexity. Team coaching is not team building (although it may be an output of the total process), process facilitation (focusing on solving particular problems or capacitating in a specific way), training (developing skills for a particular need) or consulting (giving advice on a specific problem or situation). See Figure 2 for different types of team development interventions.

Team Development						
Longer term, involves many modalities, many topics						
Time Frame	Team Building	Team Training	Team Consulting	Team Mentoring	Team Facilitation	Team Coaching
Process	Short, 1-5 days	Short, 1-5 days	Widely Variable	Staccato, hours over a long period of time	Short, 1-5 days	Longer term, months
Growth Area	Enhanced relationships	New knowledge or skill	Additional insights	New knowledge	Clarity	Achieved goals; Team sustainability
Team Dynamics; Conflict Resolution	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal, Advisory	Minimal	Minimal	Integral
Expert; Ownership	Instructor	Trainer	Consultant	Mentor	Facilitator and team	Team

Figure 2: Difference between team coaching and other types of team development interventions (Source: ICF, 2020)

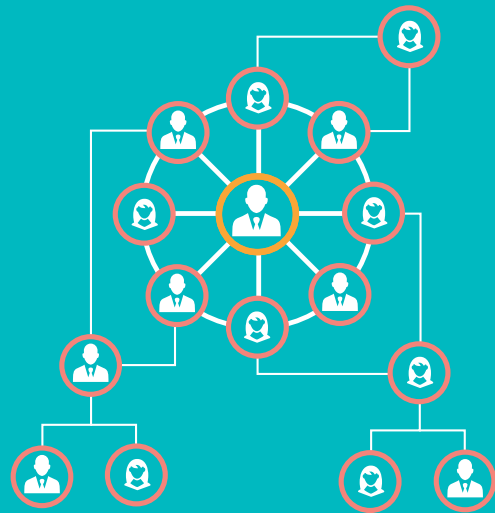
How our business school utilises team coaching

We offer a full range of coaching offerings at GIBS, including individual coaching, group coaching, action learning coaching, and team coaching. Our individual coaching may focus on an individual’s personal, professional or leadership goals, or a learning outcome stemming from a management development programme. Group coaching may centre on individual leadership development, using group interactions as a learning environment, but it may also develop interpersonal and even group functioning.

We use team coaching to support intact teams from an organisation and develop them in contextually meaningful

ways (this could be immediate goals, or long-term capacities like adaptation or innovation). However, we also provide team coaching in more time-limited ways. For example, teams might be composed to work together on a specific project/process/even simulation and in addition to supporting the project outcomes, we also coach the team to work well together in a way that will impact their functioning beyond the project. One factor we have found that is important in team coaching of almost all kinds is to work with the team leader individually as well. Optimal teaming is supported by a team that works well together as well as a team leader that is increasingly able to facilitate better teaming themselves.

Complexities of team coaching



Team coaching can be a much more complex, dynamic form of coaching than individual coaching. This is because a team, by its very nature, has more than one person involved and is more dynamic. There are interpersonal and intra-team relationships to consider, as well as rank and hierarchy. A team is part of a broader system and often has a variety of stakeholders, often with competing and different perspectives. As per Senge (2006, p. 68-69), “systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing ‘patterns of change’”.

A systemic perspective

While a systemic perspective is crucial in relation to all coaching, it is particularly relevant to team coaching. Ober (2010) emphasised the importance of “being aware of three worlds and how they interplay to produce outcomes”, namely: 1) the face-to-face world or interactions with a team and others; 2) the external world, such as the client’s business or organisation, customers, and key stakeholders; and 3) the deeper internal world (i.e., what mental models underpin the team and the organisation, and assumptions are being made about individuals, teamwork, and the organisation).

“Team coaching can be challenging and unpredictable, where one cannot control the outcome” (Woudstra, 2021, p. 7). According to Wheatley (2006 p. 9), a well-known organisational consultant and researcher, “there are no recipes or formulas, no checklists or expert advice that describe ‘reality’.... We must engage with each other, experiment to find what works for us”. Therefore, it is important within a team coaching space to create a space

“THERE CAN BE NO GROWTH IF WE DO NOT REMAIN OPEN AND VULNERABLE TO WHAT IS NEW AND DIFFERENT” (O’DONOHUE, 2007).

for team dialogue, surface and adapt to the themes that are emerging, and support collective meaning-making (Woudstra, 2021, p. 160).

Confidentiality

An additional complexity for team coaching is that of confidentiality, specifically feedback about the coaching process to the wider organisational system. What constitutes confidentiality needs to be clarified and contracted strongly with the team at the start of the team coaching process. For example, will the team coach provide feedback to another external stakeholder about the themes that emerge from the team sessions, or not? What would be shared by the team to other stakeholders about the overall experience? Since multiple individuals are involved in a team process, what is or is not shared needs to be discussed and agreed upon.

Potential benefits of team coaching

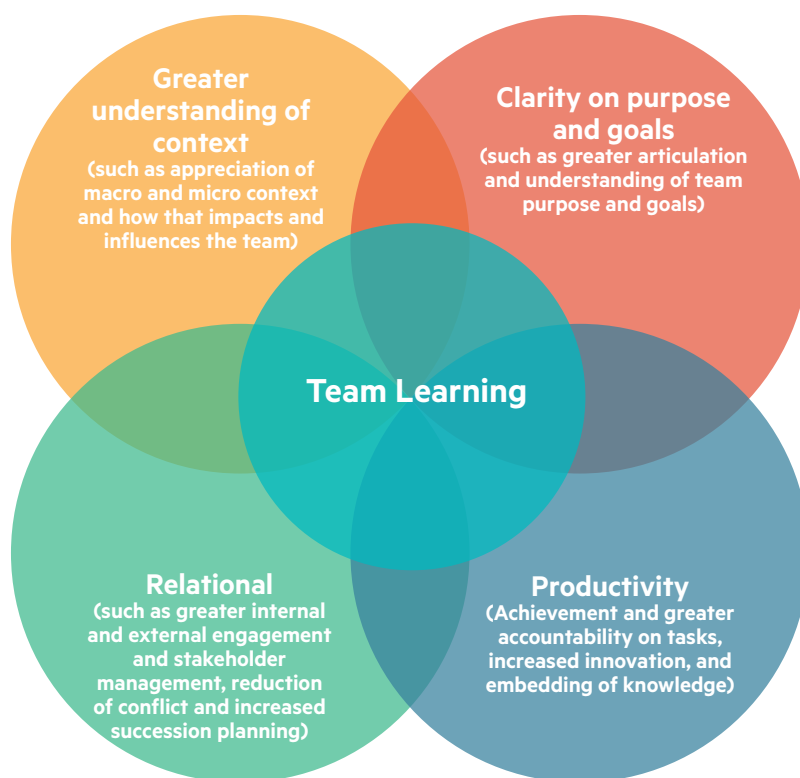


Figure 3: Dimensions of team coaching (Source: Created by the writer)

Team coaching has numerous benefits. First and foremost, the direct benefits should link to the purpose of the team coaching. Often these are included in the different dimensions indicated in Figure 3.

These areas, with the overall emphasis on team learning, are linked closely to the 70–20–10 principle,¹ which is a concept that individuals and teams learn primarily through job-related experiences (70%); second, from interactions with others (20%); and, lastly, from formal educational events (10%). Team coaching supports the 70 and 20 aspects particularly in two ways: 1) the team coaching session content is taken back immediately to the teamwork environment (thereby directly enforcing the 70% learning); and 2) the explicit conversations are facilitated and encouraged across and between all team sessions (which help to support the 20% learning).

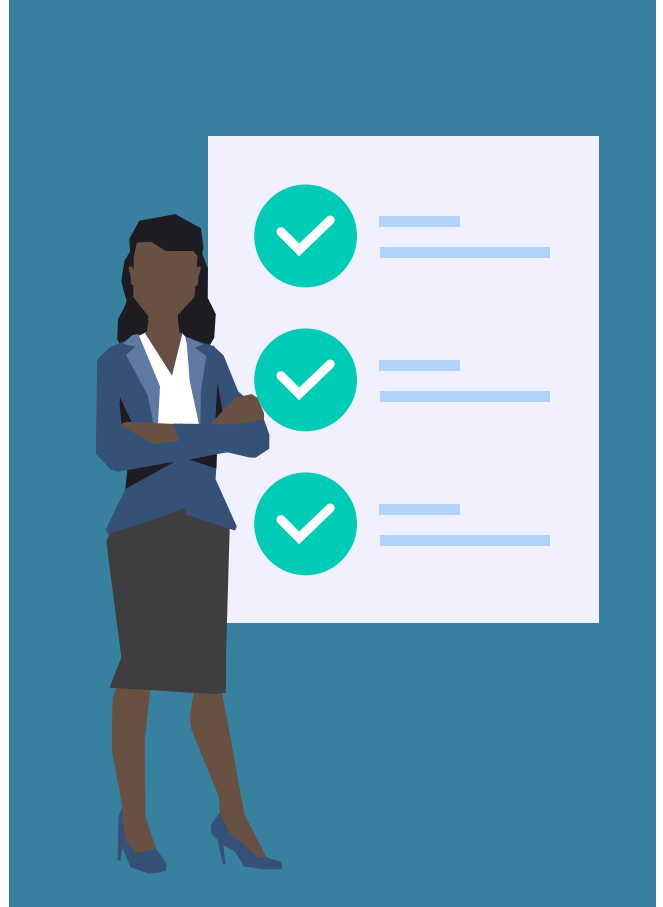
Alison Reid (personal communication, September 5, 2022), the director of GIBS's Personal and Applied Learning centre, where individual and team coaching resides at the business school, listed some of the benefits of team coaching:

Teams are interdependent groups of individuals, the units in which work gets done. These can be temporary, permanent, flexible, virtual, flat, hierarchical or matrix teams. But they are all complex adaptive systems with dynamic interactions. Performance, thriving, and impact are all dependent outcomes of how well these work groups function. In many cases, it can be hard to work both in a team and on a team at the same time. Team coaching is therefore a powerful support to guide a team to be better functioning in their context, to thrive, and to increasingly develop the capacity to change well.

Often the indirect results of team coaching are multifaceted. Teams may be more able to be psychologically safe, relating to a higher learning zone, which then translates to an increased performance zone. Additional benefits from team coaching in some literature point to a reduction of conflict (Kets de Vries, 2005) within and between teams, increased innovation (Rousseau et al., 2013), an improvement in the quality of team communication internally and externally, and increased succession planning and general knowledge management (Clutterbuck, 2007).

¹ The model was originally attributed to Morgan McCall, Michael M. Lombardo, and Robert A. Eichinger, who were researching key developmental experiences of successful managers.

Attributes and practices of a good team coach



A team coach should have the same competencies as an individual coach, as well as knowing the additional dimensions needed for working with a team. Tanya Stevens (personal communication, September 7, 2022), a professional associate at GIBS and founder of boutique leadership consultancy BeClear, shared:

A team coach needs to be extremely skilled in understanding human, team, and organisational dynamics, able to surface and respond to the systemic issues at play in a team coaching session and the journey overall. I was grateful to have several years of individual coaching and group facilitation experience before offering team coaching to clients, as it is a more complicated, complex, and nuanced form of coaching.

Some of the attributes and practices of a good team coach are highlighted in the subsections that follow.

Reading the organisational culture and context

Team coaching works within the system. Therefore, it is important to be able to read and understand the context of the client, the forces shaping that (on a micro and macro level), and the different stakeholders involved.

A strong ability to contract

A team coach should always be thinking about the “ABC” within coaching: always be contracting. This means regularly checking in with the group on where they are in the team coaching, the process, and progress. While contracting can have various dimensions, Woudstra (2021, p. 7) mentioned the “six Ps of contracting”, namely: *purpose* (clarifying the purpose of the team coaching); *practical* (the practicalities, such as frequency, duration, virtual/physical, etc.); *professional* (what team

coaching is and is not and what the team coach brings); *power* (decision-making within the team coaching); *psychological* (expectations and individual and group safety); and *partnerships* (different stakeholders and agreements between them who will be involved in the team coaching).

“Safe emergence” and psychological safety

Real team coaching is about going beyond the pre-planned agendas, tools, and techniques of “safe emergence” (Perls et al., 1951). To do this, the coach must be able to create a safe space, along the lines of what Schein (2013, p. 21) indicated as humble inquiry or “the fine art of drawing someone out, of asking questions to which you do not already know the answer, of building a relationship based on curiosity and interest”. Additionally, the coach must be able to understand the dialogue that is happening and help to facilitate a process of reflection on what is being said as well as what is not being said (Clutterbuck, 2007).

A depth facilitative approach

Clutterbuck (2007 p. 59) referred to the fact that systems that play out in teams are “far from static. We can describe them as oscillating systems, because they move from one state to another, as internal and external stimuli produce individual changes in emotion and perspective that lead to collective changes”. Therefore, team coaches need to be comfortable with ambiguity, changing perspectives, and the ability to recognise and surface – where appropriate – individual and collective emotional states.

Pairing with a team coach partner? Internal or external coaches?

Given the complexities mentioned about team coaching, it is often recommended that two coaches partner together to

provide a team coaching offering. This is an approach that many international team coaching training programmes recommend (Global Team Coaching Institute, 2022). The coaches need to be able to contract closely together in terms of ways of working together; different responsibilities (e.g., one individual taking the lead during a session and how the other can support the coach and the team); and how to debrief learnings. Equally important is to know whether coaches internal or external to the organisation should be chosen to work with the team.

Knowing one's own coaching philosophy and guiding practices – being able to capacitate learning and change

There is no one “right” way to coach a team and it falls upon the team coaches to know and be able to articulate their own coaching philosophy and guiding practices. It is strongly encouraged that team coaches have a professional qualification in team coaching and are aligned to one of the international coaching bodies. Team coaches must be able to facilitate

processes and conversations that link to learning and change on individual, team, and systemic levels.

Reflexivity and supervision practice

While some of the content above is about coaches’ ability to work with and reflect on team processes, it is vital that the coaches are aware of potential parallel processes. This term refers to coaches’ ability to understand what is happening within themselves if they are being triggered by anything within the teams and how that might impact their facilitation of a team session. Equally important is how coaches (if co-coaching a team) work together and how they contract ahead of time around how to work together and support each other.

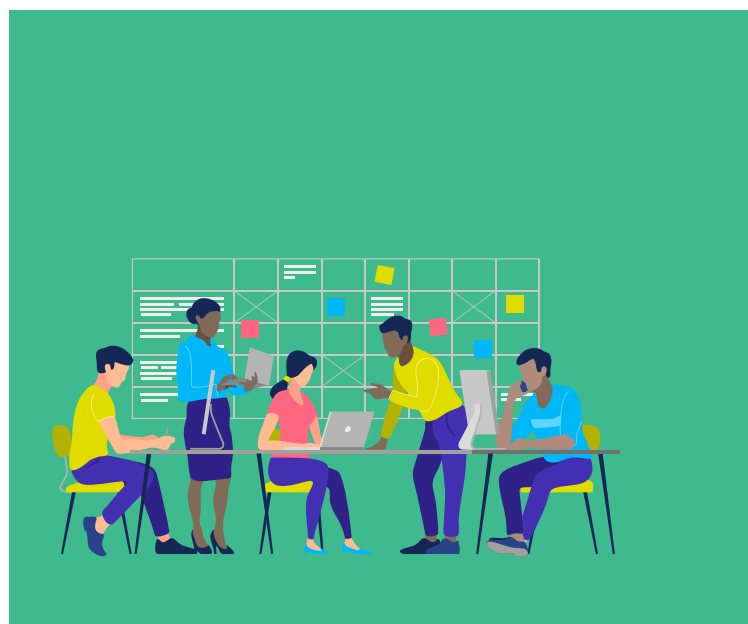
One practice that is highly encouraged is supervision – a formal process of professional support, which helps to ensure the continuing development of the coaches and their coaching practice. Meeting regularly with a supervisor while working with a team is considered standard practice by international team coaching accreditation bodies (Association for Coaching, n.d.).

Team coaching – process considerations

There are a variety of considerations for team coaching linked to the intention and purpose. On the one hand, there could be an “ongoing team coaching” journey that is designed and delivered over a year-long period; on the other, there may be a “bespoke intervention” that is a once-off. For any team coaching approach, there are process considerations, including what we refer to as a “scaffolding approach”, which is a design that is deliberate and tailored to meet the needs of an individual team. Some of these considerations are outlined in the following subsections.

When to conduct team coaching

Some may argue that team coaching is best conducted when new teams are formed. This builds on the philosophy of Watkins (2013), which indicates a few key objectives need to be achieved in the first 90 days, including team formation and goals. Other authors argue that team coaching could take place at any stage of a team’s development as long as the coaching is contracted appropriately (Clutterbuck, 2007).



How to get team buy-in

It is important to receive general agreement from the team that they would like to go through a team coaching journey, and that the intention of the coaching is linked to the organisational system overall and treated as an organisational development intervention (Scheepers, 2012). Consequently, the positioning of the coaching is crucial, especially the boundaries of what is discussed in the team sessions and how this will be handled from a confidentiality perspective.

Potential additional diagnostics

There are many types of additional diagnostics that could be brought into an overall team coaching approach. Interviews could be held with internal and external stakeholders to discuss and capture perspectives on team behaviour. More formal diagnostics specifically relating to teams, such as a Belbin team diagnostic or Lencioni team assessment,² could help teams understand some of the team's overall strengths and potential weaknesses. Table 1 outlines other team diagnostic ideas.

Type of instrument	Potential benefits
Belbin teams	The Belbin team instrument helps teams think through their individual and team behaviour work preferences.
Enneagram team report	The Enneagram team report explores individual team members' core motivations and patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving; and how the team members can communicate and motivate each other for desired impact.
Lencioni teams instrument	Helps teams identify building blocks for ways of working together, starting with building trust and finishing with delivering on work output.
Lumina team assessment	Allows teams to explore their strengths and risk factors as well as how other people view them.
MBTI team assessment	This assessment explores a team's functioning through an individual and team perspective, especially in relation to problem-solving, communication, and conflict diagnostic.
Perrill diagnostic	The Perrill diagnostic explores different factors, which impact a team working together: purpose and motivation; externally facing processes; relationships; internally facing processes; and learning.
Strength Development Inventory (SDI)	SDI looks at how a team views its strengths, overdone strengths, and conflict styles, with the aim of improving relationships
The Leadership Circle Collective Leadership Assessment (CLA)	The CLA provides a view of how employees view current collective leadership effectiveness compared with the desired collective effectiveness.

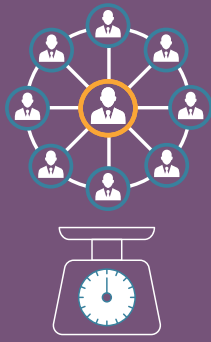
Table 1: Types of potential team assessments
Source: Created by the author

“COACHING IS ALL ABOUT A JOURNEY AND NOTHING ABOUT INSTRUCTION OR TEACHING. IT IS AS MUCH IF NOT MORE ABOUT THE WAY THINGS ARE DONE AS ABOUT WHAT IS DONE” (WHITMORE, 1992).

When not to undertake a team coaching journey

Equally important to think about is when team coaching should not be used. If the team is not working as a functional team, perhaps a different type of process should be encouragement. If the organisation is facing larger systemic issues, such as changing the culture within the area that the teams were functioning, other organisational development initiatives might be appropriate. An example could be facilitating discussions or sessions with the executive team about how each business unit is supporting the overall business's strategic change, and behaviours and actions to support that. Another consideration should be the team leaders' willingness to engage with the team coaching and if they are unable to do so, perhaps it is not the right time for such a journey.

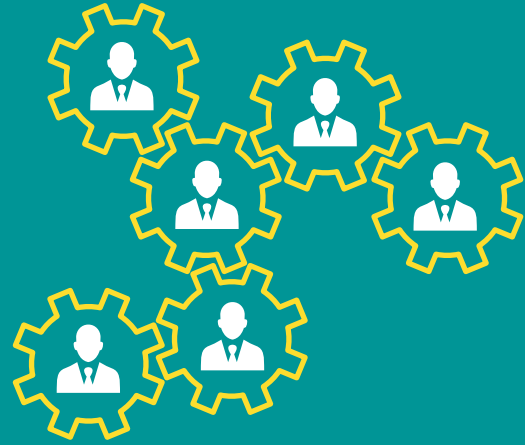
²The Belbin team diagnostic is related to Meredith Belbin's research on successful teams and the diverse mix of behaviours contained within them (see www.belbin.com). In his book, *Five dysfunctions of a team*, Patrick Lencioni has a team assessment that helps teams potentially identify blockages to effective teamwork (see www.tablegroup.com).



How should the team coaching be measured?

Having conversations and knowing how the team coaching is measured is a vital area to reflect and agree upon before the coaching starts. Opinions vary from those who believe there is not consensus amongst academics of the best way to evaluate team coaching (Grover & Furnham, 2016) to ideas that team coaching could be measured through many different ways, for instance: by looking at return on investment on an individual and team basis, or from the perspective of business results. For individuals, there could be pre- and post-assessments covering self-efficacy, including behaviours, a sense of well-being, engagement, and self-insights. As Levenson (2009, p. 117) asserted, “What is important for coaching impact measurement is that the context within which the [individual] operates dictates the behaviours necessary ... to positively impact business results.”

From a team basis, different measurement tools could be used and there are varying opinions about what could and should be used. Bill Ryan, a research fellow at the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations at Harvard University, mentioned discussion at the group level about the impact; micro case studies to harness stories specific to the team coaching; and a survey to gain a quantitative understanding of the team coaching impact (HJFleadership, 2010). On the latter point, Ryan mentioned the measurements of team ground rules and boundaries, team information systems, team coordination, and team processes (Levenson, 2009). Research (De Haan, 2008) on successful coaching outcomes has found that successful outcomes are largely dependent not on the coachees’ methodology or specific practice used, but more on the strength of the coaching relationship.



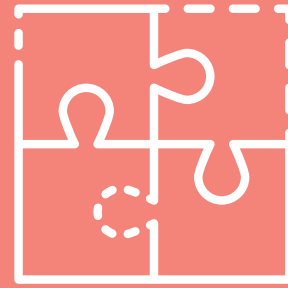
Team coaching in action

Bjefke Breebaart (personal communication, September 27, 2022), a learning and development consultant at the South African Reserve Bank, has been using team coaching as a methodology for team development since 2016. She has seen that team coaching – utilised sometimes as a “once-off” or longer-term, six-month engagement – helps build deep trust and respect within the team, developing and relationships, and creating a new sense of language for working together.

Team coaching can invite a safe container to navigate how to move forward, which has been increasingly important post COVID and for hybrid ways of working, both in terms of new people integrating in the team as well as for intact teams. (Breebaart, personal communication, September 27, 2022)

Choosing the right external team coaches is a significant part of the process. Breebaart looks for certification in one-on-one and team coaching, as well as an integrated, humanistic approach. Furthermore, potential coaches must understand the context and operating environment of the South African Reserve Bank.

“HOW WE THINK DOES
AFFECT HOW WE TALK.
AND HOW WE TALK
TOGETHER DEFINITELY
DETERMINES OUR
EFFECTIVENESS”
(ISAACS, 1999).



Dr Gloria Mbokota (personal communication, September 27, 2022), a professional associate and full-time faculty at GIBS who spends approximately 30% of her time working as a team coach, asserted that she is often contracted to work with teams for two reasons: 1) to help dysfunctional teams get to a place where they can work together; and 2) to help functioning teams transition to becoming a high performing. Dr Mbokota's process for either brief is to use a customised assessment that identifies themes to focus on, and thereafter she works with the team to give feedback, unpack the issues, and have them identify what they would like to work on and measurements of success. While a dysfunctional team might need more time to build a safe environment for sharing and establishing how to work together, a functional team might move more quickly into the space of innovation and creativity. Dr Mbokota usually works with teams for a four- to six-month period, meeting typically every three weeks with identified teamwork between sessions. “Team coaching is a great space to work within as it is the intersection between problems and opportunities, individual and team behaviours, and the organisational context. I find it very stimulating and rewarding” (Dr G. Mbokota, personal communication, September 27, 2022).

Snowy Mahlangu (personal communication, October 3, 2022), the head of Talent, Learning, and Inclusion for Marsh (Middle East and Africa), who often coaches teams within the organisation, shared:

The team coaching approach is not a one-size set process; it depends upon the needs of the team. Typically, the approach I use is one of discovery and design, and then a customised approach to what the team coaching process should be as well as impact measurements – with work for the teams between sessions.

In particular, Mahlangu believes that team coaching helps to build on the trust and relationships between individuals within the team, especially when she uses the “hot seat” approach in team sessions, where every team member, one at a time, is given feedback by the whole team on how they contribute positively to the team and what could be an area of development. “Through this, accountability is increased on an individual and team basis, which has a positive impact to team relationships and results” (S. Mahlangu, personal communication, October 3, 2022).

Conclusion

Sir John Whitmore (2017, p. 21), a founder of the coaching profession, said that “coaching and high performance come out of awareness and responsibility”. We hope that this white paper on team coaching has stimulated some ideas for you, and that you have a better idea of why, when, and how to use a team coaching journey to stimulate team learning that will have a direct impact on the team's clarity on purpose and goals, their relationships, and productivity.

To conclude, leaders need to consider new approaches to help ensure organisations have teams that work well together to reach the organisational ambition. Team coaching – if correctly applied – could be one mechanism to do so. As workplaces become more diverse, organisations more interconnected, and work becomes more complex, deepening the capacity to work well together creates value for organisations. This value can be about immediate impact, but can also support sustainability and future-proofing by helping to embed the network and culture of the organisation's team.

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Gordon Institute of Business Science

University of Pretoria

26 Melville Road, Illovo, Johannesburg
P O Box 787602, Sandton, South Africa, 2146
011 771 4000 | Acumen@gibs.co.za