



# TEAMING FOR RESULTS

*Re-engineering how Teams Work through Team Coaching*

Integra Leadership Inc

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Over the last two decades, coaching has emerged as a highly effective process to help clients achieve sustainable results. Organizations have increasingly utilized coaching to assist in leadership development, improving retention of employees, accelerating learning, promoting knowledge sharing and orienting new employees. The 2007 Conference Board of Canada survey found that 39% of employers offer coaching to develop their employees' knowledge and skills and that 96% of those employers rate their coaching programs as effective.<sup>1</sup> A study conducted by the Human Capital Institute found that 79% of companies surveyed rated executive coaching as either "good" or "excellent" in terms of its credibility as an effective leadership tool and estimate ROI as high as 500%.<sup>2</sup>

## THE EMERGENCE OF TEAM COACHING

While these facts speak volumes about the efficacy of coaching individuals within organizations, there is also increasing recognition that "no man is an island". As companies continue to search for that competitive edge, they are seeking new and innovative ways to build more effective, efficient and productive teams. While teams are created for many different reasons, there is one underlying expectation: *teams exist to produce results*. High-performance organizations recognize that teams are able to accomplish goals that could not be accomplished as well by an individual or diverse work group. Andrew Carnegie described teamwork as "the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results". Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith, authors of *The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the High-Performance Organization*<sup>3</sup>, assert that the key to the success of any team is the establishing of the following six factors:

- Shared purpose or mission
- Shared commitment
- Shared performance goals and measures
- Shared behavioral norms
- Shared team practices

- Clear roles

Establishing these success factors, however, does not happen without purposeful intention and intervention. As organizations look to teams to improve productivity and achieve sustainable results, there is an increasing awareness that attention must be given to developing an environment that allows teams to thrive. Research has shown that the most effective teams are not only able to take action and be productive but also focus on building effective relationships<sup>5</sup>. How then do teams increase both productivity and positivity? Team coaching has emerged as an effective and innovative approach to help create sustainable, high-performing teams that will enable organizations to achieve the results they desire.

*A team is a living system and a dynamic entity...*

Team coaching goes beyond working with the individuals within the team to working with the team as a complex and dynamic system.

Team coaching is unique because it draws from a number of different ideologies and theories. At the core is the use of systems theory which defines a system as a set of interacting units with relationships among them and recognizes that the system is greater than the sum of its parts. A team is a living system and a dynamic entity with characteristics that transcend those of the individuals that comprise the team. This system has its own rules, vision, personality and emotional atmosphere separate from that of the team members. As a result, team coaching focuses on the system as a whole and the interrelationships among the team. Team coaching is also aligned with research in emotional intelligence, which focuses on the emotional skills and abilities needed

to work with others. Additionally, team coaching is rooted in positive psychology and appreciative inquiry, both of which emphasize building on strengths rather than focusing on “what’s wrong”.

By leveraging strengths that the team system already possesses, both productivity and positivity can be increased exponentially. Research from the Gallup organization has shown that people who have the opportunity to focus on their strengths every day are six times as likely to be engaged in their jobs. Team coaching also draws on the large body of research into what makes relationships work. Interpersonal relationships are critical to the success of teams and must be nurtured. Katzenbach and Smith highlight the need to address positivity within teams, stating, “What sets apart high-performance teams...is the degree of commitment, particularly how deeply committed the members are to one another.”

## THE TEAM COACHING PROCESS

So how does team coaching work? First, it’s important to get an understanding of the team’s strengths and areas for growth. Team Coaching International<sup>6</sup>, one of the preeminent global organizations for team coaching services, team diagnostic products and training, has developed an assessment system that provides a whole team profile rather than assessing the individuals within the team. The Team Diagnostic™ Assessment tool<sup>7</sup> allows all of the team members to anonymously and candidly answer questions about the team in an on-line format. This information is then compiled to gain a graphic “footprint” of the team with respect to seven productivity and seven positivity factors. It provides a snapshot of the current reality of the team dynamics and creates a starting point for the team coaching process. The Team Diagnostic™ Assessment results are delivered to the team by qualified facilitators in a one- or two-day workshop which builds the framework for ongoing development of the team’s productivity and positivity.

Team Coaching International, in collaboration with The Center for Right Relationship<sup>8</sup> (who created the ground-breaking Organization and Relationship Systems Coaching), have identified six “team

intelligence competencies”. While these six competencies reflect the coach’s skill set, part of the goal of team coaching is to transfer these skills to the team itself. The intention is to create self-sufficient teams who take initiative and responsibility for their own sustainability.

The six team intelligence competencies to create a systems-focused team culture are:

1. **Reveal the system to itself** – the coach becomes a mirror for the team and allows the team to see itself and how it is operating; it brings attitudes and behaviors to a conscious level. Once awareness is raised, the team then has the choice to stay as it is or to change.
2. **Pay attention to the energetic and emotional field of the team** – this is the mood, tone, personality or attitude of the team that the system (not the individuals on the team) is expressing; the coach notices and names the energetic and emotional field, without judgment, as a model for the team to be able to pay attention to this and better understand the spirit in which the team works.
3. **Highlight and develop “deep democracy”** – the concept of deep democracy comes from Arnold Mindell, a process-oriented psychologist, who asserted that in order for the whole to be represented accurately, all voices of the system must be heard, even the unpopular or marginalized ones. It is based on the assumption that there is value in every position and that every opinion is important for the learning of the whole system. Deep democracy allows diversity to flourish which results in increased creativity.
4. **Listen to the urge – what is trying to happen?** – the system itself is dynamic and is constantly adjusting and changing. Instead of focusing on the individual team members, coaches are attuned to the voice of the system and its path and watch for shifts that signal that the system is ready to turn.
5. **Reinforce co-responsibility** – for the sake of the mission of the team, everyone on the team is equally responsible and holds accountability for

team results...it's not "someone else's problem" but "everyone's job".

6. **Increase positivity and reduce negativity** – the focus is on highlighting strengths rather than fixing what is wrong. There is also an emphasis on leveraging positivity as a way to increase productivity. This competency includes reducing negativity by noticing and naming "team relationship toxins" as well as building practices and rituals that increase positivity in interpersonal relationships. Team members learn to apply numerous conflict resolution techniques.

## WHEN TO USE TEAM COACHING

There is a reason why team coaching has emerged as a preferred team work initiative. Today's workplace is a web of interrelated business relationships and teams – intact, cross-functional, project, virtual. Individuals are stressed by the expectation to perform under pressure, and they increasingly turn to their team for input and collaboration. Corporate governance legislation makes it crucial for leaders to create consensus for major change initiatives. There are several scenarios where team coaching can be particularly effective.

1. Team coaching proves particularly valuable when lack of collaboration and toxic behaviors amongst team members are at risk of negatively impacting results.

*One Fortune 500 company was challenged to come up with a brilliant solution fast: a team which was already one year into a multi-million dollar new product development project was floundering and not meeting targets. Several initiatives and remedies to create collaboration and productivity had been introduced – with little or no lasting impact. The original business plan had been adjusted to reflect lower targets, because critical milestones had not been met.*

*The specific challenges: Toxic behaviors and a lack of comprehension of how the various discipline*

*experts of a project are interrelated and thus interdependent. Finally the Global Director responsible for the overall project decided it was time to try a new team initiative as a last ditch effort to avert disastrous financial implications. The team took the Team Diagnostic™ Assessment. The team then reviewed the results of the assessment in a two-day workshop. The impact was groundbreaking. After about three hours of frank discussion, one of the team members, a highly qualified and highly respected scientist – who rarely publicly participated in discussions - decided to speak up and contribute candid and valuable input regarding team behaviors. His surprised peers gradually opened up as well and the discussion flowed freely to produce concrete results.*

*After the initial workshop, which resulted in a clear action plan, it took the team only a week to design a revised system of improved work processes and clarified roles to accommodate their new focus. Within four months of the team initiative, the group was on track against established targets and had successfully reached their first critical deadline. Some team members are indeed hoping to exceed their next set of targets.*

A whole project team is always greater than the sum of the parts of the team, and individual input is leveraged by the exchange the whole team has around the project. Toxic behaviors can derail the most promising team - almost nothing is more destructive to team results than this aspect in their interactions. Lack of trust, lack of transparency of roles and unclear goals all contribute to dysfunctional behaviors in teams. Team coaches identify these behaviors, the team addresses them, and, through interactive exercises which increase mutual awareness, team agreements are designed to which all members hold each other accountable. The toxic behaviors are addressed as present in the team, rather than as the fault of one or more individuals. The team also takes accountability for tolerating and at times fostering them. This helps alleviate fears of blame, and fosters an environment of trust and forward-looking thinking.

2. Team Coaching has been used with outstanding success during corporate change initiatives, such as mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, takeovers, expansions, or any situation that is characterized by changed and/or unclear direction.

*A venture capitalist in New York knew he had a problem: One his companies was headed by a CEO who lacked the courage to resolve a difficult issue that was bleeding the company dry. The venture capitalist firm had bought this company, planning to grow it from \$25 million to \$200 million in the next five years, but halfway through 2007, revenues were on track to come in at \$17 million by year's end. The venture capitalist initiated a team coaching process for the three member team: the CEO, the CFO, and the COO. While it often looks at first glance that the contentious issue rests with one person, it turned out in this case, as it often does, that the team unwittingly supports the dysfunctional behavior of one person. The team was coached by two coaches and additionally, one team member was coached individually.*

*After five months of no obvious change, one day the breakthrough occurred: The CEO finally overcame his hesitations and placed a call to end the long-standing business relationship which had cost the firm millions over the years – thus also ending some friendships. All involved acknowledged that it was the team and individual coaching that was the essential ingredient in a context where business was going sour and the personal integrity of the CEO, CFO and COO was being called into question. The CEO was able to muster the courage for this crucial step because of the continued support of the team over time. In the six months after this event, the team reported that the CEO retained his courage and the story of how he took such bold action is now ingrained into the new culture of the old company. They also saved \$1.2 million in the first month after the CEO took this bold step.*

3. Top leaders in organizations have very unique challenges for which team coaching has proven to be an effective support mechanism. CEO's are responsible to provide vision, and they are held accountable to create high commitment and high performance – thus they need to establish strategic practices to create communication channels and alignment with their leadership team. In one study, 26 CEO's were asked what worked best for them in facilitating strategic change<sup>4</sup>. They named several vital ingredients: courage to confront reality, the mutual support of a close-knit leadership team, a team that shares a vision where goals are tied to a higher purpose, and the ability of top leaders to lead by presence, predictability and persistence.

*The top team in a division of a global healthcare company was struggling with strategy and roles. The firm was growing rapidly, and the focus of business unit leaders needed to change from product development to strategic planning toward a larger vision – they were spending too much time being reactive, and putting out fires.*

*In this case, the coaching process began with coaching some individual leaders – seven of the nine individuals were subsequently promoted. The executive team then implemented the Team Diagnostic™ Assessment and team coaching. This resulted in better communication, new understanding of roles and the definition of new essential leadership competencies for succession. The division has since expanded by creating several new sections, and is well on track with their aggressive shared performance targets.*

*Once a team learns the skill sets... minimal intervention... is required.*

The environmental culture that is created through team systems coaching is the perfect venue for



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CEO's to implement their vision and strategy while creating buy-in.

All three examples above share this element: once a team learns the skill sets of how to effectively work together, minimal intervention from coaches is required, if any. The transformative nature of the assessment combined with the follow-up coaching assures not only sustainable results for the team, but also a ripple effect emanating from team members down to their reports.

## CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

What does it take to create an effective set-up of a team coaching initiative?

Here are some key success factors:

- 1. Have the right participants on the team.** Team members must be key figures involved in the goals of the team.
- 2. Start the team initiative early enough.** Don't wait until it's time for damage control. If the team is new, and the stakes of potential failure are high, the early support will save much time and money.
- 3. Help participants see themselves as part of the team.** People who are subject matter experts often work in isolation and need help in understanding how connected, interrelated and interdependent their area is to the successful outcome of the project.

**4. Create buy-in.** Careful introduction and preparation the team will help create buy-in and set expectations. It is the first step in the team bonding.

**5. Regular follow-up.** Subsequent coaching sessions, frequent or infrequent, help redesign the team agreements and strengthen team commitments and relationships. This creates the sustainability of the previous teamwork that generates outstanding team results.

**6. Support from the organization.** It is critical that the stakeholders crucial to a mission are involved and understand purpose and objectives of the initiative. There should be buy-in from the stakeholders, and they should be updated as to the progress and successes of the team. This invites reciprocal communication which will in turn support the team in reaching their objectives.

## CONCLUSION

Teamwork and team initiatives have been around for decades. The new team system design introduced here addresses the issues that teams face today, many of which did not exist as a challenge years ago. Corporations and non-profits have the same challenge: all have to achieve more, with less resources, in a rapidly changing world. Team coaching helps the team get to the heart of the matter faster, it shows results earlier and it improves company culture more effectively than most other initiatives that have previously been used. Team coaching gives organizations that competitive edge they seek; it allows them to achieve the results they desire.

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## **Integra Leadership Inc.**

Integra Leadership was established in 2006 as a result of the market's need for a global coaching organization. With a focus on North America, Integra is a global market leader in delivering enterprise-grade coaching to its clients worldwide. Integra sources the world's finest coaches and ensures seamless and effective delivery of a diverse spectrum of coaching services.

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