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choice

the magazine of professional coaching

Team & Group Coaching

The landscape of coaching many



GROUP & TEAM COACHING

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



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FROM ZOMBIES to EALOTS

Team coaching reawakens the spirit at work!

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These are actual quotes from coaching engagements of senior level leaders as they worked to create a new culture after merging five companies into one organization:

“Our teams are being blown apart and disembodied weekly.”

“Ugh, it’s like the walking dead around here.”

“Our leaders are asleep at the wheel.”

Sound like the genesis of an apocalypse? After losing momentum due to reorganization, leaders who expressed these statements found even the most talented senior people feeling dispirited and taking jobs with competitors due to uncertainties.

The new leadership team determined their first goal was to shift the water cooler conversation in 90 days from victimization in the change to a sense of personal control and contribution – from ‘I can’t’ to ‘we can!’

The goal was to stop the panic and knuckle-dragging dynamics that surrounded the enormous change and kept workers frozen in place. This international company set out to address that dynamic and engage the hearts and minds of their people as a paramount first initiative. As a result of that intention and a coaching initiative for 25 percent of the organization’s teams

in just six months, the company had a miraculous shift from 61.4 percent employee satisfaction to 90.4 percent in less than a year. Their teams also delivered unprecedented business results.

This article is not about that initiative, but rather about sharing insights gained during the process of coaching more than 60 teams simultaneously and witnessing themes we learned as coaches.

All leadership coaching is ultimately about change. Team coaching is the accelerant for how to navigate changing team dynamics during challenging times so each team member readily chooses contribution, and stays engaged and focused.

At a more basic level, team coaching is a transformational process where a highly skilled coach partners with a team leader (the manager/executive) to enroll the members in an active learning environment, and coach the team as they work together.

The engagement of many styles and personalities can prove difficult for even the most seasoned leaders. Surfacing truths that need to be addressed and are critical to developing strong teams isn’t always the easiest path and for those who have a high need to be liked, it is often left unspoken until there is an undercurrent that can sabotage best efforts.

THE SCARY TRUTH

An epidemic of numbing out is taking place in many organizations that are experiencing major changes due to growth, expansion, or reorganization. Many of these organizations are overrun by people who have lost their inner spark or zeal for work. Some are experiencing the blending of four or five generations working side by side for the first time in history and there is a clash of values and unspoken bias at play.

Silently trudging through the hallways, these team members often stumble through their work week hollow-eyed, and many feel they have sold their souls for a paycheck. They find little meaning in their jobs sensing that the work and the team is irrelevant. Recent Gallup surveys have shown employee disengagement at over 70 percent in the US, and 80 percent globally.

A new definition: Workplace Zombies are over-worked, dehumanized souls and shells of human beings who’ve lost enthusiasm and passion for work; they become infectious saboteurs who commiserate with others, fueling tensions. They drag others into their drama, creating a culture of victimization, which is why the Zombie apocalypse is upon us, signaling that this is the time to awaken others and get moving from daily despair back into the light of consciousness and choice.

Now more than ever there is a clarion call for elevating leadership and team coaching – the original zombie





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rescue kit – and a strong case for gifted team coaches who can convey coaching skills, leadership acumen and candid conversation skills in real time. An experienced business leader turned team coach can translate a wealth of teachable moments into the coaching process.

The question we asked is, why doesn't every business team have an experienced team coach? We found several excuses or hesitations regarding using team coaches:

1 Leader Promoted to Capture

Many new leaders were yesterday's star performers or high-level recruits who were promoted because the company feared losing them to a competitor. Instead of having highly developed leaders who have broader organizational experiences, companies can find themselves with a lot of ego management.

A star performer and competitive-spirited top performer is now leading a group of seasoned professionals and that can become a recipe for disaster if the leader is self-aggrandizing or ego-centric. When they focus more on self-preservation and impression management, they completely stymie the creativity of their team.

Another big challenge is a new leader pushing back as a result of feeling vulnerable, declaring, "Coaching the team, developing these people, is MY job. What will others think if I hire a team coach?" A leader who chooses to work with a coach quickly assimilates the power of that partnership to accelerate their own development and success.

Asking a question such as, "Who do you trust to explore your most outrageous plans and ideas?" can be a good starting point. The right team coaching process conveys leadership skills in real time to bring forward the gifts of each team member. In that way, it becomes sustainable leadership development versus just a short-term engagement. Becoming great with diverse teams of people is where a new leader can quickly gain traction and shine.

2 Contagious Victimization

"Us versus Them" cultures foster victimization at every level. One of our Team Advantage™ coaches, Allison Crumpler, calls this victimization an "Escalation Addiction." Working as a leadership team coach in two fast-growth organizations, she noticed it can take weeks after a code of conduct or team charter (foundational to team coaching) is created for all team members to grow accustomed to honoring it. They have the tendency to escalate a conversation to the leader or team coach – triangulating – instead of addressing each other when it feels important and urgent to do so.

Learning to approach each other to handle tensions and normalize conflict is part of the coaching process and a critical step for growing a high performing team. A coach can catch and prompt that kind of activity where a manager will often see that type of dynamic as an invitation for problem solving.

Triangulated conversation is the perfect entry for a coach to upgrade team member narratives and find better ways to communicate versus escalating time-wasting angst that leads to mistrust.

3 Assembly Line or Herd Mentality

Monday-to-Friday, 9-to-5 workdays are a 100-year old construct of the production line automobile industry. Want to get people to come to life again? Find ways to blend their aspirations, avocations and creativity with their work.

Having many generations working side by side now requires we rethink work environments and team work. The herd has changed; 100-year old formulas for success have to be reimagined.

Remote teams, allowing individuals to work virtually and bring a focused best effort is becoming a new norm. Loosely held teams can bring surfers, techies, new parents, creators, executives, project managers and sales professionals together in ways that form temporary or longer view work teams to attain specific and needed outcomes.

These teams live inside or outside of corporate halls and can fully focus on their unique contributions, communicating in huddles or shared doc meetings. It takes a confident manager or leader to harness the capabilities of innovation teams and a coach can support the leader to build confidence as they lead in new ways.

Offer to coach an innovation team as a pilot and look at the number of ways the team can drive changes, disrupt status quo and generate new ideas. It only takes one team to soar within the team coaching framework for others to want what they are experiencing.

DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF ZEALOTS

“Find a job that you love to do and you will never work another day in your life.”

- CONFUCIOUS

First a definition. A Zealot is a champion for the human spirit; a curious, passionate and courageous human being; a contagious change agent and enthusiast who makes no distinction between work and play. To them, work and play are really the same game! So how do we get to a place where organizations are full of creative and energetic people who are ready to play full out?

Think about it. Coaches help people from many professions and walks of life gain clarity and find purpose,

or meaning. We also do that for teams, which are a collection of people focused on a common organizational mission.

We help bring teams to life because we are equipped beyond other types of consulting or counseling to partner with team leaders and team members in five unique ways:

1 Knowing

Clarifying roles, expectations and daily ways of working adds to the team's knowing. When people know what to expect – even if that expectation is that they trust their teammates to speak the truth in real time – they feel a sense of freedom. Some call this transparency, though I have yet to work in an organization that sustains that transparency.

While much is taught about these basic communication or management concepts, very little is actually executed. Bringing role clarity, a team charter, and code of conduct to a team grounds them in a good start and foundation on which to build. In this early stage of team coaching a coach and team leader gain traction for how to address team dynamics.

For example, a team coach can readily uncover and speak to harmony or confusion. We can easily catch if there is a sense of purpose, or see when members are dazed and confused by changes around or above them. We can also more easily speak truths or create the inquiry around confusion because we don't have as much at stake – or risk - as the leader or team member.

Team members who have a sense of knowing are energized by focused performance instead of gaining energy from awfulizing in conversations with other team members. (Both are forms of teaming by the way – one serves success and one doesn't.)

2 Love

In this context, “love” can be thought of as recognition of unique contributions. Philosophically we help leaders gain the language of love. We encourage them to recognize and honor the contributions and strong archetypal energies of each player on their team. What do they appreciate or love about each person and what they bring to the effort?

We prompt a leader to notice the gifts of an observer or introverted team member, so the extroverted big energy isn't the only voice. It is no mystery that when people feel they are seen, heard, celebrated and loved, they stay engaged. They want to give more. They arise each day eager to be with their friends and work family because they are doing something that matters, and others depend on them. They experience exuberance more often. They can even ZEAL out as a result of their avocation – or fall in love with their lives and work.

3 Dialogue

Through dialogue, the uncomfortable and unspoken need gets addressed. Addressing the unspoken dynamics, limiting beliefs, tough conversations, habits and behaviors creates a flow of energy and allows people to come to life and work more fully.

A team coach can masterfully create the space for facilitated dialogue while a team leader will often unintentionally shut their people down. Coach team leaders in advance of the team so they experience the impact of team coaching and understand how to deal with the discomfort they will inevitably encounter. Teams have to learn to move through and normalize tensions and conflict, as that is often where the real answers and innovations are found. Most team leaders avoid conflict, and they haven't been trained to facilitate working through it. Part of the team coach's role is to help leaders do just that.

4 Game

Want to unleash creativity and energy for performance? Turn the work into a game. The team coaching formula we've used at The Pyramid Resource Group for 26 years is called the Team Advantage™ (Team + Game + Coaching = Team Advantage™), and we have coached thousands of teams during the lifetime of this program.

Focusing on a game plan that the team creates and one that is oriented around a compelling and thematic business goal is one of the secret ingredients. The coach helps the team establish the meaningful goal in a democratic way – it has to be one that the team designs and agrees to and that stretches the team to go beyond expectations and mandates. It must require new ways of thinking about what the team and often, the entire organization is up to. It will pull people forward, versus being a mandate that serves only shareholder interests

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and it must be attainable by this team and their leader.

The results have been impactful and measurable. Even a goal as big as eradicating a disease state for which we have a therapy for one large pharma company just before the outbreak of a possible pandemic virus. While all of the teams we coach achieve outrageous business goals they set out to attain – in just four months – the real power of the engagement is that team members become bolder and more intentional about how they interact. That is the real win.

They make agreements to stop withholding or dancing around truths that need to be addressed in their code of conduct and team charter. They are all in as a team member, seeking ways to contribute. There is a peer accountability that is beyond what the leader can imagine. Combined, these are the most consistent changes we witness which increase trust, collaboration, and innovation. While it sounds simple, it requires a wise guide and brave coaching to exact.



5 Bravery

Use their language but speak directly instead of tap dancing around what keeps them playing small. If you feel a need to step into the space and stop the action, if you feel an intuitive nudge in your soul, speak it. If you mess up, you will have the chance to apologize, but find your courage to say what is there to be said.

Internal coaches and HR/OD business partners can stop short of really challenging the leadership teams because they might risk their jobs. We understand that challenge which is another reason for partnering with a masterful external coach who can boldly coach the team without the same risk. Some professional coaches also stop short of being brave when they feel the contract is on the line if they speak straight to a leader who is part of a situation or problem to be resolved. You have to develop some grit in this process and risk losing the contract if you label the truths no one else will address.

The first question to sort with the leader and the team to neutralize the impact might be, “What will happen if everyone here speaks the truth they haven’t spoken?” Then be quiet... for a very long time if needed.

Capturing the language used within the team to offer new perspective is one gift of the bold and masterful team coach. When you hear someone declare, “I am struggling with (pick any scenario),” call a time out and instruct them, “Change your language here and use the word ‘play’ instead of struggle.” When they restate their challenge as “I am playing with this notion that... (same scenario) you can see imagination in action. Their countenance changes, the energy in the room changes and often there’s laughter and a release of tension. They are contagious. They elevate the larger game for the organization and spend time innovating rather than complaining or moaning. They maintain a peer accountability and call each other out when there is a sense of overwhelm or stuckness.

You may have a lot of tools, but without a proven process, even professional and well-trained coaches can get stuck. Remember you are a temporary member of that

team and contract for your role at the start of the engagement and with every team member. You will also find that team members who have been part of a successful team coaching experience easily partner when moved to other teams and consciously, or unconsciously transfer the communication skills and individual leadership skills learned.

Coaching is a process that derives from sports, along with other disciplines – business, psychology, neuroscience and ontology. And team coaching is a natural extension of leadership and executive coaching. Every leader has a team. Wouldn’t it be interesting if every team had a coach too?

One last lesson to share is that you discuss your full range of capabilities for coaching a leader and a team before you contract for executive coaching only. Make it a practice not to sell services to a leader while in the process of a partnership for their personal and professional development. It can be awkward to bring up the team coaching once you are in the process of the engagement. So, establish your credibility and any certifications in the early stage of the contracting.

WORK & PLAY – SAME GAME

“You’ve achieved success in your field when you don’t know whether what you’re doing is work or play.”

- WARREN BEATTY

Team coaching is a big opportunity for you to bring yourself more fully to life and play a big business game, too! If you are having fun, the team will have fun, too. My grandma used to say, “Honey, if you ain’t having fun, you ain’t doing it right!” That line has served as a reminder for me when I am too serious in my work.

That doesn’t mean you have to be an entertainer; rather that you bring a lightness to the notion of the team partnership. Coaching has been called forth at this time to reawaken people to determine what lights them up. Coaches are partners for the human spirit’s conscious awakening. Our work matters in a world teetering between the complete chaos of a zombie apocalypse and one of enlightened sapiens who understand our role on the planet – to keep the garden and to live and work together for a greater good.

It is time for us to bring people to life at work – one leader, one team and one organization at a time! Ready? •

Want to get people to come to life again? Find ways to blend their aspirations, avocations and creativity with their work.