

WHAT IS TEAM COACHING?

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Defining 'team coaching' should be easy, shouldn't it? It is, after all, it is simply the act of coaching teams. While this may be true, it isn't that simple.

Like many disciplines that suddenly find themselves gaining momentum, team coaching is being pulled in various directions. It's this explosion of interest that has led to a range of definitions, a host of untested assumptions and a general muddying of the term. This can be confusing, and a little misleading. In recent months I've seen team coaching referred to as: coaching a group of individuals, hosting team workshops, running team building, coaching team leaders to improve their skills and much more. If this is confusing to veterans of the industry, imagine how the average client feels!

Most team coaching definitions don't seem to get to the root of why team coaching can be so valuable for clients. However, I like the definition initially outlined by leading team performance researchers Hackman & Wageman* in 2005 because it intimates the need for collaboration:

"...direct interaction with a team intended to help members make coordinated and task appropriate use of their collective resources in accomplishing the team's work".

– Hackman & Wageman*, 2005

Today, much of the existing team coaching literature focuses on 'team performance'. This reminds me of the early days of workplace coaching, where myself and many others were influenced by Sir John Whitmore's^ seminal 1992 book 'Coaching for Performance'. And, of course, it's no surprise that 'performance' appeals to clients keen for coaching to unlock further success in their organisations. Since those early days however, coaching has evolved from a simple focus on performance to become much more all-encompassing, for example; coaching for learning, development, transformation, growth, meaning and purpose, well-being, emotional intelligence and much more. Over time I believe that team coaching will also shift beyond a primary emphasis on team performance. Indeed, one could argue that team performance is the responsibility of the team and the team's leader, not the coach at all.

Following Hackman & Wageman's* definition my own beliefs are that collaboration is the most critical key to team effectiveness. I have developed my own approach to team coaching, 'relational team coaching'.

"Relational team coaching puts connectedness and collaboration at the heart of team effectiveness."

– Woudstra, Relational Team Coaching, 2018

In life, we learn, develop and grow in relationships. This is observable in all areas of life and, of course, it is no different for

teams in the corporate environment where outcomes are achieved through collaboration between team members, between teams and between organisations. Relational team coaching focuses on connection and connectedness through honouring the core principles of coaching – seeing the client as expert, encouraging their

own self-discovery, holding the client to account, and establishing psychological trust and safety. To me, these are the essence of team coaching and are why I believe team coaching can be so effective for teams of all kinds, no matter what challenges they need to overcome.



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