An Exploratory Investigation into the Perceived Effects of Team Coaching in the Construction Sector

Research

Author: Helen Dunlop

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Abstract

The research sought to explore two key objectives. The first to determine what perceived effects team coaching had at the individual, team and organization level and the second, to identify what factors contributed to these perceived effects. Using an Action Research methodology, four two hour coaching sessions were undertaken over a three-month period with three project teams using the Context Focussed model (Lane, 1992).

The perceived effects reported by individuals and teams indicated that team coaching had a positive effect on individuals and teams thinking, behaviour and awareness not only within the immediate team but also in the way they interact with other teams. The research was unable to determine the effects at an organisation level.

The team, the coach and the process were three key factors that contributed towards the perceived effects. The team through taking responsibility for their own actions and being willing participants; the coach through enabling the team to develop their own solutions, challenge the teams thinking, focusing the team on their goals whilst remaining neutral and independent. From a process perspective, two coaches were perceived to be useful.

Introduction

Coaching in the business context is primarily recognised for its one-to-one work with individuals (Zeus & Skiffington, 2001). Increasingly, the notion of 'team coaching' is starting to appear in business under various guises such as facilitation.

Although no definition exists for team coaching there is an acknowledgement that, like one-to-one coaching, it does focus on enhancing performance (Downey 2000; Gallwey, 2000; Katzenbach & Smith, 2003; Whitmore, 2003; Zeus & Skiffington, 2001). For one organisation in the construction sector working on a multi-billion

pound project, the performance of teams is critical to their success. Surprisingly, little empirical research exists on team coaching in the business context for the organisation to learn from.

As one-to-one coaching continues to evolve into a professional field in its own right and mounting evidence gathers as to the benefit for organisations (Jarvis, 2004; Jarvis, Lane & Fillery-Travis 2005) is there a case for coaching to evolve to the team context? If so, with what effect and what factors contribute to such effects? These two questions form the basis of this research and will help to inform the sponsoring organisation's team development strategy and increase the empirical research base from which the coaching community can draw from.

Team Coaching Defined

Given the scarcity of empirical research on team coaching in the business context, the researcher originally explored this area in the broader context of sport. However, it was difficult to do so as the term 'team coach' is applied differently, effective performance is difficult to determine and the performance timeframes vary.

In the sporting world, the coach is often seen as a technical expert through providing advice to the team or imparting skills based on their own experience as a sportsperson (Gallwey, 2003). In the business world, the coach has not necessarily worked in a similar role to the teams as the focus is on exploring the issue and getting them to come up with the most appropriate solution. Further, defining effective performance appears more complex in the business than the sporting world. Often, it is not as simple as winning or loosing a game or series over a season. Is it about profit, net margin, share price or something else over a financial year?

Those who have attempted to describe team coaching have used terms interchangeably such as coaching, facilitation, team development and team effectiveness which makes it confusing to understand exactly what it means in practice. Deeprose (1995) refers to coaches both as facilitators and coaches as does Gallwey (2003 p 177) when he states, "the coach facilitates learning".

For the purposes of this research the researcher will utilise a commonly used one-to-one coaching definition refined to suit the team context: "unlocking a team's (formerly individual) potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them" Whitmore (2003, p 8).

In addition the researcher will distinguish between a group and a team using

Katzenbach & Smith's (2003, p 45) definition "a team is a small number of people with complimentary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable". Teams are interdependent as opposed to a group where individuals work independently to produce results.

Application of Team Coaching - Role of a Team Coach

Downey (2002) describes the role of a team coach as one who enables the client to explore, to gain a better understanding, to become more aware and make a better decision then they would have previously made. Whitmore (2003, p 152) highlights the awareness element through stating that "the more aware a team is both individually and collectively, the better it will perform".

Principles of Team Coaching

Diedrich (2001, p 238) sums up the principle of team coaching by stating that "the coaching of a team is the process where the coaching has an ongoing jointly defined learning process (clear roles, responsibilities and goals) with both the team and the individuals, whereby the task is one of helping to establish and maintain relationship that provides the freedom to learn, that the team owns the problems as well as the potential solutions, with a focus on the here and now. Coaching is an iterative process for both the team and the individual that is developmentally orientated as opposed to being a problem-centred quick fix for the team". Despite the absence of a definition of team coaching, the role and principles are broadly congruent.

Approaches to Team Coaching

The researcher could only find one methodology that was named team coaching in the literature, which is offered by Zeus & Skiffington (2002). Their approach involves four phases: 1) establishing the coaching partnership; 2) action planning; 3) the coaching cycle (review, reassess and feedback); and 4) evaluation and follow-up. Various other methods of working with teams to enhance their performance exist that align with the role and principles of team coaching but are labelled something else. These are Behavioural Change Models, Process Consultation and Facilitation.

According to Hackman and Wageman's (2005) literature review, two models of team coaching emerge which are based on theories of individual behaviour – operant conditoning and team focussed coaching. Operant conditioning refers to the direct reinforcement (usually positive) of particular task behaviours when exhibited by team members and is based on the principle of individual learning that behaviour is a function of its consequences (Wageman, 2001). Applied to teams, it involves three coaching stages: 1) providing instructions about how to behave, 2) monitoring the team's performance, and 3) providing performance-contingent consequences to the team (Komaki, 1986; Smith, Smoll & Curtis, 1979).

On team focussed coaching Hackman and Wagemen (2005, p 270) state that "Schwarz posits that coaches should provide feedback to a team in ways that help members learn new and effective team behaviours, especially in how they give and receive feedback. The coaching process involves three phases. First is observing actual group behaviour to note behaviours that are impeding the group's work and to identify behaviours not presently exhibited that might facilitate group work. Second

is describing to the group what has been observed and testing interferences about the meanings of those behaviours. And third is helping group members decide whether they wish to change their behaviours and, if so, how they might do so"

The Process Consultation approach developed by Schein (1988) focuses on "how things are done rather than what is done" (Schein, 1999, p 146). Team members must be involved in owning, analysing and improving the situation so that they have the skills to continue to enhance their performance once the consultant has left. The consultant engages team members in analysing group processes on two levels. The first is the substantive level whereby it examines how human processes affect work on a specific organizational problem and the second, is on an internal level to better understand the team's own interaction process that enhance or limit effective performance (Schein, 1988 p11-12).

Another method that is frequently employed when working with teams is facilitation. Cockman, Evans & Reynolds (1999) highlight four distinct facilitation styles. These are 1) Acceptant (neutral, non-judgemental style which gives clients space to talk without being judged or censured in any way); 2) Catalytic (uses focussed open questions and gives the client support and encouragement to make their own diagnosis and decisions). 3) Confrontational (helps the client by pointing out the discrepancies between beliefs or intentions and actions in practise so that the clients can recognise the discrepancies and have an opportunity to decide if they wish to change) and 4) Prescriptive (offers advice and wisdom). Heron (1996) identifies a futher three modes of faciltiation:1) hierarchical (power and control lies with the facilitator); 2) co-operative – power and control is shared between facilitator and group and 3) autonomous – power and control is given entirely to the group who self-direct their own learning. Such different categorisations indicates that the facilitation scale can range from directive through to non-directive leading to the proposition that potentially, team coaching could be viewed as another form of facilitation.

In summary, each of the approaches overlap to some degree with the notion of team coaching such as Cockman et al., (1999) Acceptant style of facilitation. This leads to confusion about exactly what team coaching is and is not with each approach being dependant upon the role consultants, facilitators or coaches advocate, the assumptions they make about the teams and the skills they bring. Subsequently, the researcher was explicit with the teams she worked with upfront about what they could and could not expect from her during the coaching sessions. It could also be argued that, with the exception of Process Consultation, each of these approaches have an element of 'teaching' or 'advice' which contradicts the "learning" element used in the definition of team coaching used by the researcher such as Heron's (1996) Prescriptive facilitation style which offers wisdom and advice.

Qualities of a Team Coach

In order to make the above methods work in practice, a team coach needs to understand what knowledge and skills they need to be successful. Although various

practitioners and academics have identified specific behaviours required, there has been little, if any empirical research to identify what a coach does contribute to the actual performance outcome.

According to Zeus and Skiffington (2001), qualities of a successful team coach include the following: the ability to develop commitment to a shared purpose and vision, good communication skills, listens, questions and tests all assumptions, the flexibility to facilitate or be directive as the situation demands, provide learning opportunities through encouraging self-directed learning with the emphasis on the process of learning rather than knowing and provides ongoing feedback. Diedrich (2001) reinforces these perspectives and indicates that team coaches also need to keep the coaching agenda focussed and nurture the ability of individuals to both observe and then to share what they have observed. Downey (2002) goes even further and indicates that team coaches do not necessarily need to know much about the work of the team.

An important part of working with a team is for the coach to understand and appreciate the impact that team dynamics and contextual factors may have on the performance of the team. Hackman and Wageman (2005) identified four conditions that may impact the effectiveness of a team coaching intervention: 1) structure of a team; 2) organizational processes to support the performance of the team (ie strategy, knowledge and skill); 3) timing of the intervention (ie is the team ready and able to deal with it) and 4) the critical team tasks. Team factors identified by Douglas (1983) include the level and nature of team members interactions, goals of the team, decision making processes, norms, standards and values, cohesiveness of the team, the influence of the team on its members, the climate within the team, the environment within which the team operates, the abilities, experience and attitudes of team members, time spent working together and the size of the team. Other factors include the motives of team members and the leadership of the team (Heron, 1999).

Effects of Team Coaching

Despite the acknowledged importance of team coaching in the literature to the firm's overall goals, statements such as the following quote from an article in the Sunday Times written by Coles (2000, p 26) are descriptive in nature and seldom backed up with empirical research as to the effect it has actually has on a team's performance: "we were each running our businesses independently. When we were coached as a team, we found we had similar initiatives, but were not benefiting form sharing experiences. Talking through ideas in a supportive, unthreatening environment encouraged people to be more creative".

However, some research has been conducted on the methods that most closely align to team coaching with mixed results. Komacki, Deselles & Bowman (1989) found that operant-based coaching does facilitate team performance whilst Kaplan (1979) reviewed research on the effects of process consultation on performance and found no evidence to support the hypothesis that it does improve it. Such limited research

indicates that there is still a need to conduct research on team coaching in order to increase our understanding.

Research Context and Aims

Increasingly, organisations are looking to multiple, international suppliers to work effectively as a single team in order to deliver complex projects successfully within time, budget, cost and to a high quality – regardless of the company hat they wear.

One such organisation in the Construction industry is doing just this. With a multinational workforce of over 4000 employees, this construction project is paving the way. Integrated teamwork was considered so critical to the delivery of the project that it has been incorporated into a contractual agreement with key suppliers that they all had to sign up to. This is unique to the construction sector as it meant that each contractor has had to change their traditional method of working in 'silos' and in 'isolation' from each other to deliver what they were contracted to do. Instead, each contractor has had to rethink their approach to ensure that they work effectively as part of multiple, cross-functional project teams - a first for the construction sector.

Team coaching was one option the organisation wanted to explore in order to help them foster integrated teamwork across suppliers. Subsequently, the research sought to answer the following questions:

1. What perceived effects does team coaching have on the individual, the team and the organisation?

2. What happened in the team coaching sessions that contributed towards the effects reported?

Conclusions from this research will help to inform the organisation's team development strategy. For the coaching community, it will generate perspectives on coaching for teams.

Research Methodology

Sample

Due to the construction project been under severe time constraints purposive sampling took place (Cohen, Manion & Morrision 2003). Four teams were approached (of which 3 accepted) who were deemed to fit the following selection criteria aimed at reducing sample bias: 1) criticalness of the team to the project stage; 2) the team's willingness to incorporate the time commitments of the coaching sessions into their project deliverables; 3) stability of the team over the research timeframe (as teams are constantly disbanded and reconfigured on the project); 4) outside the researcher's immediate client group to ensure an independent perspective in the coaching sessions; 5) no more than ten individuals in a team including the Team Leader; 6) Team Leader was comfortable being considered part of the team

with no special considerations given. The characteristics of each team are outlined in **Table 1** along with their coaching objectives. Each team is labelled A, B and C throughout the remainder of the text.

Table 1: Team Characteristics and Coaching Objectives (fit in methodology or data analysis section)

Dimensions	Team A	Team B	Team C
Nature of Team Activity	Construction	Construction	Construction
Sex	Male	Male	Male
Size	4	8	5
Levels	Different Suppliers up to Assistant Project Leader	Different Suppliers up to and including Project Leader	Specialist Suppliers up to and including Project Leader
Duration team been together	18 months	12-18 months	12 months
Time leader worked with team	18 months	9 months	12 months
Frequency team works together each month	24 hours	6 hours	20 hours
Coaching Objectives with % of objectives achieved through the team coaching sessions as reported by the teams themselves	To hold effective team meetings with a strong emphasis on financials (40%*) To be seen as setting the quality benchmark standard (60%)	Flush out key issues and put a plan of plan of action in place (20%) Review layout of team in order to increase communication, trust and working together (80%) Build trust and openness within the immediate team will enable the team to drive out waste and maintain programme deadlines (20%) Identify and agree common team objectives (20%)	How do we build a great relationship with Suppliers? (40%) How do we get Suppliers to ask us for information once only? How do we get suppliers to react to our advice or come and discuss it immediately with us if they are not satisfied with the answer? (40%) How do we escalate key issues up to senior managers for action and track progress without damaging existing relationships? (40%)
Contact of Coach with Team Leader	15 mins	90 mins (manager requested a meeting with the coach prior to each coaching session after the second session)	15mins
Number of team coaches	2	2 (for 3 out of the 4 sessions)	1

Approach & Coaching Model

Given the exploratory, real time nature of the research an Action Research Methodology was employed (Coghlan & Brannick, 2003) which was integrated with the team coaching model selected by the researcher.

Given the absence of a team coaching model in the literature, the researcher selected the Context Focussed therapeutic model (define, explore, formulate, intervene, evaluate) developed by Lane (1992) as it has been used with groups, emphasises the context within which individuals operate, has a focus on enhancing performance and resolving real life problems- the main organisational driver behind the research. Furthermore, it closely aligns with the role and principles of team coaching and the researchers own one-to-one coaching model.

Importantly, the researcher mapped the Context Focussed model on to the Action Research methodology as follows: Define-determine context and purpose; Explore-diagnose; Formulate-plan; Intervene-take action; Evaluate-evaluate action. By using this integrated model, it allowed participants to direct their own change in each coaching session rather than relying on an outside expert to do so. This ensured that the coaching was iterative, relevant and critical to the achievement of each team's objectives.

Coaching Process & Data Collection Techniques

In order to allow enough space for teams to incorporate their learning on the job, four, two hour coaching sessions were scheduled with each team over a 3-4 month period. This was deemed a realistic time commitment by the teams and the researcher.

A coaching contract was established in the first coaching session which focussed on developing coaching objectives and establishing working guidelines for the remaining sessions. The second and third sessions explored the coaching objectives in more depth utilising the Context Focussed model (Lane, 1992).

At the end of each coaching session, individuals completed a self-reflection questionnaire that focussed on the research questions and what the team coaches could do differently at the next session to make it more useful. The final coaching session incorporated a team review which focussed on the same research questions that were completed by each individual along with the extent to which they had achieved their initial coaching objectives.

Data Analysis

Provisional, emergent themes were identified from the data and were paraphrased or renamed by the coders (researcher, co-coach and her colleague) to express underlying statements with quotes, statements or key words that typified the reported data (Lacey & Luff, 2001). Such analysis was undertaken independently by each coder and then

collectively agreed as a group to improve inter-rater reliability. Given there were three coders the majority decision was taken.

Once the key themes were identified and agreed, the coders would independently identified specific pieces of data from each data source

for each team that corresponded to the themes previously identified. Both numerical and textual coding was used (Lacey & Luff, 2001). This consisted of a word, a statement, a quote or a particular term along with the frequency with which particular words occured (Bell, 2003). Where quantitative data was collected, basic statistical analysis would be conducted (4825 Research Methods).

Ethical Considerations

A clear confidentiality statement was included on all documents that participants received stating that all data collected for the purposes of the research would be reported anonymously. High level themes were validated with each of the teams before it was included in the final report to avoid mis-interpretation of the data.

Given the small sample size, the protection of participants in the final report could be compromised and easily identifiable (Gill & Johnson 2002). Therefore, the researcher decided to delete any characteristics that would identify any of the teams to an employee reading the research.

Due to the researcher being an in house coach there was potential for her to bias the findings. To minimise this, the researcher decided to get another coach to work with her in the coaching sessions and another colleague to help analyse the data to provide more objectivity. Also, a provision was made to employ external coaches if the coaching required by the teams was outside the coaches' level of expertise. This ensured that the teams' time would be utilised effectively.

Research Findings and Discussion

Overall, the data reported by both individuals and teams was broadly consistent, although there were small variances between teams B and A&C which the researcher has attempted to explain in the discussion.

Research Question 1: What *perceived effects* does team coaching have on the individual, the team and the organisation?

A summary of the Reported *Effects* of Team Coaching perceived by individuals and teams is outlined in Table 2.

Individual Level

From an individual's perspective, it appears that team coaching has had an effect on individuals and the team's thinking and behaviour. In particular, it appears to have

increased individual's level of self-awareness such as *"I try to get my points across by bullying",* their recognition of other's perspectives and how they interact with other teams *"I attend more integration meetings…I go and give other teams more confidence with their own solution to the problem".* Such data aligns with Whitmore's (2002) statement that the awareness element of an individual and a team will help it perform better.

Team Level

Creating the space and time to openly discuss and surface issues appears to have enabled teams to become closer and to work more cohesively together. This suggests that there is a need for teams to create the time and space for dialogue to occur. It also appears to foster the development of inter-team relationships for two out of 3 teams (a and c) such as *"gave insight into possible future supplier / client dialogue".* This infers that the impact of team coaching goes beyond the boundaries of the immediate team, which may affect those teams, or individuals that the team interfaces with.

Evidence from Table 2 indicates that team coaching has helped teams A and C to build both inter and intra team relationships *"more open with each other and with other individuals and team we work with (ie XYZ team – means if we have a good relationship with team it means less aggression, less emails and more time to spend on other things)".* These findings again validate the results, which suggests that the impact of team coaching goes beyond the boundaries of the immediate team. Despite this, both the individual and team review data indicates that team coaching is difficult to put a tangible benefit on. This means that organisations that utilise team coaching need to realise that each team's coaching reporting metrics will be different dependant upon the coaching objectives agreed.

Table 2: Summary of the Reported *Effects* of Team Coaching

Level of Analysis	Reported by Individuals	Reported by the teams
Individual	**Increased level of self awareness** " That I try to get my point across by bullying" "I will try harder to see the other side" "We are all making other teams dependant on our guidance" **Recognition of other's perspectives** "Realisation of different perspectives to what I thought was straight forward issues" "Some surprising insights into colleagues thoughts" "Gave another view on looking at solutions and issues we need to work on"	**Changes in individuals behaviour both within and outside the immediate team** "taken a different approach to office layout than would have previously done" "emailed less – talked more" "I have looked at the relationship with (Supplier) differently. Traditionally we don't trust suppliers. I have been open minded and given them the benefit of the doubt than I previously would have put my foot down…and getting a better response back from them" " I attend more integration meetings with other teams…I go and give other teams more confidence with their own solution to the problems"
Team	**Proactively manage intra-team relationships** (team A & C) Realised importance of managing perception of external team "gave insight into possible future supplier / client dialogue" **Creation of time and the space/forum for open discussion** "allow team to work together" "open discussions were had" **Sense of frustration** (team B) "highlights difference rather than commonality" "not all members on board" Lack of time to address issues in depth Frustration of team around lack of goals **Team works together** "achieved a common understanding" "bought us closer together" More cohesive team Improved consensus **Space to surface issues** "Another way of looking at the daily challenge and resolving them" "opened up divisions"	**Build inter and intra team relationships including external suppliers (**team A and C**)** "bought us closer together as a team" "more open with each other and with other individuals and team we work with (ie XYZ team – means if we have a good relationship with team it means less aggression, less emails and more time to spend on other things)" "better communication with those higher up than us (ie now get Financial Forecast)" **Limited benefit in terms of time, scalability and others** "there is only so much you can do in four 2 hour sessions" "we are only 4 in X000 people on the project" "other teams not wanting to work together with us" **Team Self Awareness (**team B**)** "we need as a team decide to what we want to do and then work through it" "we could have got more o the sessions overall than we did" Individuals in the team need to attend the sessions

Organisation	Inference that team coaching is useful for the organisation	Difficult to place a tangible benefit on team coaching (team A)
	"if its good for us it must be good for the sponsor"	"cost versus time"
	Improved sense of teamwork	**Builds integrated team working**
	Creates possibility for collaborative environment	"drives the team ethic"
	Positive action	"the more things we work through the more we realise the importance of working as one big team"
		"improve communication across the XYZ project"
		"creating quality time together outside of day to day operational challenges"
		"it would have been helpful if you (the coach) had worked with other sub project teams to reinforce teamwork for the good of the project, relationship and communication across the project
		"Beneficial to use with teams who are made up of multiple suppliers, or within a company that has very different business areas"
	Not sure yet (team B)	

Organisation Level

Even though team coaching was reported to build integrated teamwork through statements such *as "drive the team ethic"* and *"beneficial to use with teams who are made up of multiple suppliers, or within a company that has very different business areas"* it appears to be too early to say how team coaching ultimately affects the organisation.

One reported limitation of team coaching is time *"there is only so much you can do in four 2 hour sessions"* and magnitude *"we are only 4 in X000 people on the project"*. This implies that the number of coaching sessions may be restrictive and that it is difficult for such few teams being coached to drive the overall teamwork momentum required across the project.

Table 3: Summary of the *Contributing Factors* that Appear to have Influenced the Reported Effects of Team Coaching

Level of Analysis	Reported by individuals	Reported by the teams
Team	**Willingness to work together** "All attempting to agree on a positive way forward" "pick up live tasks" "open discussion"	**Team ownership and responsibility** "we got to some solutions" "developed team issues and an agenda" "team could have been more explicit about what we wanted" "some preparation for the office move"
	Recognition of other's perspectives "people have differences in terms of priorities" "realised the need to listen to others perspectives" "differing priorities must be listened to"	**Team took action** "we were proactive – you didn't drag us" " we actioned the items from the sessions"
	Team saw insights into their own behaviour (team A and C) "We see the faults that we complain of in others" "made the team look into themselves"	**Individual ownership and responsibility** "we turned up" "talked honestly about ourselves" "we could have got more out of the sessions overall than we did"
Coach	**Allowed everyone to have their say** "allow everyone to have their say" "involve all members of the group"	**Ensured everyone had a say** "made sure everyone's views were heard"
	Provided connectivity and focus between each session "Helped to maintain focus for the sessions" "Perseverance" "keeping positive "focus on points trying to discuss"	**Lateral thinking** "we do things automatically makes us think" "reflective" "agile minded" "look at things in a different way" "think on your feet"
	Provided observations on teams behaviour and helped them reflect on it (team A and C) "made the team (the coach) look into themselves" "continue to find our failings" "identify the key drivers and issues in our statements"	**Encouraged team self reflection** "focus back on ourselves" "pointed out our tendency to discuss and not decide" "ability to turn people's thoughts on themselves or pointed it out" (the coach)
	Challenged the team's thinking (team A and C) "made us think, made us challenge our preconceptions" "challenge what we were saying to make us think" "raised questions"	**Ability to challenge team's thinking** "asks us why we do it and how" "question where we are coming from" "searching for underlying issues or hidden agendas"
	Take control (team B) "controlled the disbelievers" "control the meeting" "stop the debating"	**Two coaches** (team B) "need to have 2 coaches as we are a tough group to work with" One person can observe and pick up on things whilst the other is talking
	Helped team identify their own solutions (team C) "help us drag solutions into the open" "explore solutions"	**Helped team reach own solution** (team A) "drove the answer out from the team" "helped us drive out our own team solution instead of

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		giving it to us" "we identified and analysed our own problems"
		Independence and neutrality (team A and C) "felt like you were one of us – independent – rather than speaking the (organisation) language to us" "open minded – no preconceived ideas on how you expected us to react" "coach to come with an open mind – no preconceived ideas and go with the team"
		Understanding of the wider work context "appreciation of what we are doing in this type of environment"
		Remain focussed "when we got bogged down in the detail, helped us get back on track" "good steer"
Process	**1-2 coaches for each team** "like (coach 1) doing the talking, (coach 2) listening and making sound pointers" "we need to have 2 coaches as we are a tough group to work with"	**Influence of other initiatives on the team** "XYZ Quarterly event – the exercise you did (the coach) helped spread the word (ie we are helping others to help us succeed)" "heavy workload outside the sessions meant that your focus is elsewhere in the sessions"
	*Team identified coaching objectives based on their respective business challenges and opportunities	**Awareness of Coaching sessions** (team A) "know we have the next session to bring any issues up" "session raised our awareness in our day to day activities"
	*Worked through the D.E.F.I.N.E coaching model with 2 out of the 3 teams (team a and c) with one team (team b) using only the first, second and fourth stages of the model	**Collect data on the team prior to the coaching sessions (**team B) "would like to see coaches collect data on each individual in the team prior to the session…so we knew how the team worked"
	*Four 2 hour coaching sessions 2-4 weeks apart over a 3-4 month timeframe	
	*Development of team objectives Two teams (a and c) agreed their team coaching objectives . Subsequently, each session contributed to the overarching objectives agreed and were made more explicit in each session. However, one team (b) could not agree which objective to work on. Subsequently each session had a different team objective.	

**Coaches observations only

As outlined in Table 3, on average 40% of the team coaching objectives were achieved which does not appear commercially viable from an organisation's perspective. This proposition is not surprising given that approximately 70% of the team coaching objectives are behavioural based which would probably take more than three 2 hour coaching sessions to successfully achieve. This suggests that the

teams may have used team coaching to help them figure out how best to address less tangible objectives such

as "build a stronger relationship with (our supplier)" and *"build trust and openness within the immediate team"* on which it is difficult to put a commercial value. As one team indicated *"we are never going to sort it in a forum like this as it's been an ongoing issue for at least 6 months on the project"*.

In summary, such evidence suggests that both individuals and teams benefit from team coaching in terms of thinking and behaviour. For two teams (A&C) this not only occurred within their immediate team but also in their relationships with other teams. Also, one team (b) reported that team coaching had increased their level of self-awareness.

Research Question 2: What happened in the team coaching sessions that contributed towards the effects reported?

The team, the coach and the process were three key factors that were found to have contributed towards the reported effects. A summary of the *contributing factors* that were reported by individuals and teams is outlined in **Table 3.**

The Teams

Both individuals and teams acknowledged that they contributed to the session by taking ownership and responsibility for their own actions. Teams' willingness to work together and the need to listen to others perspectives were two further factors that were reported by individuals to have contributed towards such effects with teams A and C indicating that they also reflected on their own behaviour *"made the team look into themselves"*.

From the coaches' own observations of the teams, it appears that team B was not so comfortable working with ambiguity (unlike the other two teams) which may help to explain the need for control wanted by the team from the coach and the frustration they experienced in the sessions. Combine this with the fact that this team worked together on a monthly basis considerably less (on average 72.5%) than the other two teams, and the fact that Team Leader requested time with the coach prior to each session suggests that this team did not appear as mature or cohesive as the other two teams and that maybe there was a tension between the team and their leader. Such evidence indicates that team dynamics may play an important part in the outcome of the coaching sessions. This notion is reinforced further as team B's coaching objectives are focussed on tasks which are typical of a new team starting to form (ie identify and agree common team objectives) as opposed to the other two teams where their objectives were focussed on how they can enhance their existing performance and or their relationships with external teams.

Team Coaches

Evidence from Table 3 indicates that team coaches need to allow time for individuals to have their say and provide connectivity and focus within and between the coaching sessions. For teams A and C, the coaches also needed the ability to provide observations of the team's behaviour and help them reflect on it *"made the team (the coach) look into themselves"*. Individuals in these two teams also reported that the coach challenged the team's thinking through testing their preconception, raising questions and *"searching for underlying issues or hidden agendas"* along with helping the team to identify and reach their own solutions such as *"helped us drive out our own team solution instead of giving it to us"*. This suggests that these are important components of the coaching process all of which are mentioned by Downey (2002), Whitmore (2003) and Diedrich (2001). Independence and open mindedness were two more additional characteristics of a coach that were reported by teams' A&C and not mentioned in the literature.

Such evidence indicates that in some instances, it may be beneficial for a coach to know little about the team apart from understanding the wider team context. However, team B requested that the coaches find out more about their roles which suggests that this might not always be the case. Furthermore, organisations may want to consider this when selecting a team coach rather than looking for consultants or experts who can provide the teams with an answer to their challenges.

Process

From a process perspective, the Context Focussed model used by the researcher was made explicit to varying degrees for each team although it was not reported by participants as contributing towards the perceived coaching effects. This suggests that the actual process may not be as important to the teams as opposed to what the coach says or does.

Furthermore, team B requested that the coaches collect data on individuals prior to the session so that they knew how the team worked. This suggests that in some instances it may be appropriate for the coach to conduct a team diagnostic with individuals prior to the coaching session, which in turn may help inform the coaching objectives, although this was not the case with the other two teams suggesting that the coach may need to consider the dynamics of the team and adapt their style accordingly.

The two teams who had two team coaches (A and B) appeared to value this - *"(we) need to have 2 coaches as we are a tough group to work with"*. Comments by individuals such as *"I like (coach 1) doing the talking, (coach 2) listening and making sound pointers "* supported this. Team C only had one team coach and said that they didn't need a second coach. This may be due to their level of maturity and cohesiveness as indicated by the higher level relationship objectives they sought to

achieve in the coaching sessions. Again, this suggests that the number of coaches may be dependant upon the dynamics of the team.

In summary, the team, the coaches and the process all contributed towards the reported effects with individuals in all three teams agreeing that team coaching contributed "reasonably" towards the achievement of their coaching objectives. This suggests other variables such as the dynamics of a team may also affect the outcome. Interestingly, the data suggests that for some teams it may be more important what the coach says or does rather than the process itself indicating a need for coaches to explicit about their way of working upfront and have the ability to work in the moment.

Conclusion

Sponsoring Organisation

As team coaching appears to have had a positive effect on individuals and teams in terms of their thinking and behaviour within and outside the immediate team, it is recommended that the sponsoring organisation continue to use it. This is further supported by the fact that two out of the three teams perceived team coaching to have helped them to foster their relationships with other teams – the essence of what the organisation is trying change in the construction industry.

Critical to the success of continuing team coaching is the need to employ coaches with a similar philosophy and skills as those used by the researcher and her co-coach as opposed to a consultant who typically provides expert advice to teams. For those teams who struggle to identify and agree on coaching objectives upfront, the coach may consider conducting a team diagnostic to help inform the development of such objectives. However, the team diagnostic should not be the primary focus of the coaching sessions which is often the case with facilitated sessions, rather the emphasis be placed on what the coach says and does with the team in the moment when exploring their coaching goals.

In addition, teams need to be willing to participate in the sessions, develop their own solutions to their coaching goals and take ownership for their actions – all with the support of their coach.

In order to get maximum value from team coaching it may be worthwhile for the organisation to gain momentum across the project by coaching other teams so there is a critical mass. As one person said *"it would have been helpful if you had worked with other sub project teams to reinforce teamwork for the good of the project, relationship and communication across the project".* For the organisation this will be a difficult decision to choose between delivering the project on time and the costs and resource taken to coach teams.

Coaching and Academic Communities

For the coaching and academic communities, changes in individual's thinking behaviour is not something that is mentioned explicitly in the literature on team coaching nor does it mention that it fosters the development of inter and intra team working. Based on these findings, a new team coaching definition may be articulated such as *"enabling changes in individual and team thinking and behaviour within and outside the immediate team"*. An independent coach helps teams to explore their coaching goals through raising their level of awareness, challenging their thinking and assumptions, helping them to reflect and develop their own solutions. For those Academic Institutions who train team coaches, they may want to utilise the coach qualities identified in the research as a basis for future research to determine which attributes (if any) can be utilised effectively across different teams and sectors.

Importantly, the research highlighted some core characteristics and activities of team coaching as follows:

- It has time-bound coaching sessions with willing team members (different from facilitated sessions that are usually a mandatory initiative and are often one off)
- Coaching activities focus on specific job related coaching goals via a contract developed and owned by the team (not by the sponsor who typically engages a consultant for a specific purpose)
- There is no formal team diagnostic upfront (unlike Process Consultation, operant conditioning and team focussed coaching)
- The team develops their own solutions with the support of their coach (similar to Process Consultation and unlike operant conditioning and some of the facilitation styles employed by consultants which tend to provide expert advice)
- The coach is neutral and independent from the teams they work with (unlike operant conditioning whereby managers or leaders often act as coaches to their teams)
- Requires a skilled coach who can adapt to the dynamics and needs of the team in the moment whilst keeping the team focussed on their coaching goals (unlike operant conditioning and some of the facilitation styles employed by consultants which tend to be more prescriptive and structured in their approach)

As such, team coaching could be seen as more exploratory in nature as opposed to structured, diagnostic and advice driven more typically employed by other approaches. Interestingly, the Process Consultation method employed by Schein (1999) and the Acceptant style of facilitation identified by Cockman et al., (1999) most closely aligned with the researcher's and her co-coaches approach to team coaching. This suggests that regardless of the definition, coaches need to be absolutely explicit about their approach so that teams know what to expect which will help to avoid confusion about what the coach is there to do.

In summary, it appears that team coaching may be useful in provoking changes in individuals and teams thinking and behaviour through raising their level of awareness which in turn enhances inter and intra teamwork. As the findings are limited given the small sample size and self-report nature of the study, further research needs to be conducted to determine whether or not this directly affects performance.

Given that the teams achieved 40% of their coaching objectives in fewer than five hours, this suggests that team coaching may be useful for organisations to consider using in their quest for integrated teamwork. Furthermore, it begs the question: What would it take for the remaining 60% of the objectives to be achieved? Clearly, there is a need for further research to investigate and isolate different variables that may impact upon the reported results such as the relationship of the team leader with the team, task performance and the wider organisational systems.

Finally, it seems that team coaching can indeed be usefully applied in the team context regardless of the definition. It could be concluded that team coaching may indeed be an emerging field in its own right in the world of business, although further longitudinal studies in different contexts with different teams needs to be undertaken before this hypothesis can be validated.

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About the author

Helen Dunlop

Email: helen_dunlop@onetel.com