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ANNIVERSARY

Team &
Group
Coaching
in an
Evolving
World



Team & Group Coaching in an *Evolving World*

What are the differences between virtual, in-person and hybrid team and group coaching? What are the unique needs of the different types of team or group sessions? What assessment(s) are beneficial for use in this type of coaching? How do you effectively measure the impact of a successful team or group coaching engagement? How to create engagement, foster inspiration, boost motivation and enhance accountability for participants? Uncovering the secrets of successful group and team coaching in an evolving world for both coach and clients.





A *is for* ASSESSMENT

How a team assessment leads to tangible coaching outcomes

By Leigh Ann Rodgers, MEd, CPF, CVF

Scroll through social media apps, search any website, or turn on the news, and it's nearly impossible to find a topic that's without controversy. However, there is one truth about teams on which we can all agree: teams get knocked off course from time to time due to changes in goals, budget cuts, staffing issues, and disagreements about how to work together.

When coaching a leader or a team that's struggling, it's critical to begin with a well-balanced understanding of the team's current state. Gaining clarity about a team's strengths and areas of opportunity offers leaders the full-picture perspective of their team's needs and challenges.

However, finding the capacity to do this is difficult because teams are complex and just plain overwhelmed. Quickly and effectively identifying team challenges isn't just important

– it's paramount to a team's success. Using a comprehensive framework in your coaching practice, such as the Better Teams Model, enables leaders to rapidly identify the key opportunities and confidently move into goal setting and informed action planning.

THREE WAYS TO ASSESS A TEAM

Typically, assessing a team begins with a discovery conversation with the leader. But while the leader's point of view is important, it can also be limited. Even the most open-minded team leaders have blind spots and biases.

To overcome bias, we encourage leaders to gather input directly from their team to gain a well-balanced perspective using one or both of these methods: interviews and team assessments.

Interviewing individual team members for 30 to 60 minutes allows a coach to understand what team members believe about the team's strengths, weaknesses, and greatest opportunities while simultaneously establishing trust and connection before the team coaching session. Remember, everyone has blinders and biases that may obscure the true team dynamics, and interviewing takes time.

Conducting a team assessment will complement or replace the individual interviews and gather input about the entirety of the team. Team assessments allow concerns to surface that individuals may have feared expressing. They also provide a baseline metric for how the team views itself. When a follow-up assessment is conducted six to 12 months later, progress can be measured.

BETTER TEAMS MODEL

The Better Teams Model encompasses all of the important dynamics, skills, and behaviors needed for a happy and high-performing team. Coaches use this model to help leaders and teams assess their performance and team culture. There are five core areas in the Better Teams Model:

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Aligned
- ✓ Ready
- ✓ Happy
- ✓ Trust



BETTER TEAMS MODEL

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The Better Teams Model™ includes the five core areas of a happy and high-performing team.

✓ Encourage a LEADERSHIP Mindset

In the model, leadership is not about the person who holds the title of manager. Instead, it includes the skill sets and behaviors every team member ideally possesses.

Look for the three characteristics of leadership in the team. First, do you see evidence of accountability? In happy and

high-performing teams, members are accountable to one another. Possessing strong communication skills is the second characteristic. Being communicative applies to one-to-one conversations, Slack messages, presentations, and more. Last up is proactive – being strategic and forward-thinking. If any of these characteristics are lacking, the team will struggle.

✓ Get ALIGNED About the Why, What and How

To be successful, it is imperative that the team is aligned. Teams must align and agree on mission & goals, roles & responsibilities, and methods. Lack of alignment in any of these areas will lead to conflict and impaired performance.

Ask questions to discover the root of conflict on the team, and chances are strong there will be misalignment about something. In fact, every change a team experiences will impact alignment. Like wheels on a car, teams must periodically re-align to be happy and high-performing.

✓ Ensure the Team is READY to Succeed

Teams must be ready to succeed. Check to see if the team is equipped with tools, access to information, and the people resources needed to do the work.

Additionally, inquire about the team's competence – what skills, experiences, training, or coaching do team members need? The third characteristic is adaptability. Formulate questions to understand how well the team manages change and demonstrates agility.

✓ Cultivate a HAPPY Team Environment

Sustaining high levels of performance and retaining talent is impossible if the team isn't happy. While teams often focus on achieving their goals, they may not place as much attention on the dynamics and culture of the team.

Without happiness, performance will decline over time, and people may choose to leave – or worse, become disgruntled.

When coaching a team around happiness, ask questions about connection. Do team members feel connected to their leader and team? If the team is hybrid or remote, it's more likely for people to feel disconnected or excluded. Happy teams are also engaged. Find out how much team members enjoy what they do and if they're leveraging their strengths.

The third characteristic of a happy team is fulfillment. There's tremendous evidence that people desire to be fulfilled by their work and to believe that what they're doing matters. Simply ask each team member: "How does your work on the team fulfill you?"

✓ Build and Nurture TRUST

Sustaining high results and retaining employees is impossible without trust. Trust is difficult to build and easy to destroy. To explore if your team has high trust, ask questions about how often they're candid with one another.

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Can they have difficult conversations while feeling supported and heard?

Also, can team members be appropriately vulnerable with each other and ask for help? Finally, trusting teams are interdependent which can be observed as collaboration or asking for input and feedback from one another.

THE WRONG WAY TO USE A TEAM ASSESSMENT

Assessments are rich with data about how the team views itself. Often, repressed conflicts emerge, which can provoke sensitivities and defensiveness. Without a skilled coach to guide a team through a debrief of their team report focusing on both strengths and opportunities, the report by itself could do harm. An objective coach has the skills and ability to make the debrief process an empowering experience that leads to specific actions.

People value autonomy. They are more motivated when given the opportunity to choose what matters and what they want to do. We find that teams respond well when they're provided with the team report and asked how they see themselves so they're able to determine what it means, and how they will use that data. That's empowering!

Sometimes, teams enter the coaching session anxious, defensive and disgruntled, then leave excited and inspired by their choice of where to focus on and what to work toward. Other times the team enters the process open and excited to explore their dynamics and motivated to find new ways to increase their happiness and performance.

Either way, coaching is pivotal in the exploration and ultimately agreed-upon actions the team will take to be happier and higher performing.

Use the Model with your Coaching Clients

Using the Better Teams model, you can listen for the 15 characteristics of a team. When you hear your client sharing a strength or a frustration, you'll be able to identify the characteristic and ask probing questions to help the client further explore.

Introduce the model to your client and ask them to share where they see their strengths and greatest opportunities. Whether you are working with a leader or a team, this model can be used to open conversations about all of the team dynamics. It's easy to use the model as a starting place for assessing the team. To get a more thorough understanding and collect metrics on the team's view of themselves, they can complete the Better Teams Assessment online.

Using a team model when coaching leaders and teams ensures that your client considers all areas of their team to be ready to identify specific action steps that will cultivate a more happy and high-performing team. ●

A CASE STUDY

SITUATION OVERVIEW

After working remotely for 2+ years due to the pandemic and realizing that focus on the team as a whole had been overlooked recently, the leader of this 9-person team decided that it was time to hold a virtual 'off-site' meeting to re-energize, realign, and reconnect with one another. Better Teams was brought in to facilitate their first-ever virtual team off-site.

Better Teams was provided with background information that the team members respected one another, continued to achieve milestones despite the virtual transition, and were generally getting along very well. While this team was a good team, they desired to be great - but an unidentified roadblock was getting in the way of their greatness.

SOLUTION

Knowing that a productive conversation about how to become a great team begins with identifying areas that must shift and change, our first step was to assess the team's strengths and areas of opportunity. Therefore, each team member completed the Better Teams Assessment so that a team report could be created and used for a team discussion about their dynamics.

OUTCOMES

The insights discovered from the assessment were enlightening but not surprising. Some of the challenges holding the team back from greatness were passive-aggressive behaviors when mistakes were made, only speaking with the manager instead of to each other directly and being uncomfortable sharing input with their peers.

We also uncovered that there was little clarity on team roles and responsibilities, processes, and how decisions were made. Despite these challenges, this team had several great strengths. For example, they were supportive of each other and stepped in to help when needed. They were also close and identified themselves as being 'like a family'. They rallied together to solve problems and always performed well in front of outside parties.

By facilitating an open dialogue about their Better Teams Assessment process, the team was able to identify specific areas to focus their collective attention. Specifically, the team agreed to:

- 1 Commit to giving and receiving constructive feedback. They recognized that this was an important area in which they needed help, and so they asked for additional training in order to be effective. They also agreed to hold quarterly team conversations to identify and reinforce rules of engagement and discuss their particular form of team norms.

- 2 Articulating and communicating roles and responsibilities. When a project involves multiple factors, the team needs additional clarification on the roles and who makes decisions. They have all agreed to use the RACI method and matrix so that each and every person is clear on their roles and responsibilities.

All in all, this good team now has what it takes to be great - or as we at Better Teams like to say, 'Happy and High Performing'.