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### A team development process based on the High Performance Team Coaching Model: a case study of team maturity management

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#### Abstract

Team coaching is currently used as a tool to help businesses cope with the process of managing team maturity. This article aims to present a team development process based on the High Performance Team Coaching Model. In the first part of the article, the theoretical essence of team coaching and the specificity of the team coaching process is characterized, together with detailing specific tools at each stage. In the second part of the article, the author describes the implementation process of the High Performance Team Coaching Model in business practice. The main research methods used in the article include literature studies and a case study based on the author's observations and experience working as a coach/trainer in a project team.

### Introduction

Nowadays, coaching plays a significant role in the process of both individual and team development. It allows them to create potential that they have not previously seen, set ambitious goals, shape motivations, and break external and internal obstacles to their implementation. Coaching enables individuals and teams to become a better version of themselves, also covering personal issues and those related to the broadly understood self-realization in life. Furthermore, coaching exceeds individual goals, which makes it a valuable method for group and teamwork in enterprises.

This article aims to show what team coaching is and how to plan a team coaching process comprehensively so that it can bring expected benefits and results, primarily in the context of managing team development. Theoretical considerations are supported by a practical description of how to use the High Performance Team Coaching Model in business practice in the process of managing team maturity. The author of this article applies research methods such as literature studies and a case study based on their observations and experiences in the work of a coach/trainer in a project team. They also try to answer the questions: which stages and tools of the team coaching process are crucial and what should be fundamental in a properly conducted team coaching process when taking into account team maturity?

### The essence of team coaching

Coaching leaves scope for interpretation for both researchers and practitioners, in terms of definition as well as delivering coaching sessions. Generally, it is assumed that every coach has their own definition of what coaching is, although it is worth basing the considerations on the most popular references in the literature.

Coaching became a part of the world of business mainly due to Sir John Whitmore and his book Coaching for Performance published in 1992. Whitmore defines coaching as the release of potential to maximize the activity and emphasizes that coaching is rather about helping to learn than teaching (Whitmore, 1992). According to International Coach Federation, coaching is a partnership between a qualified coach and a client (individual or group/team) in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires the client to discover and maximize their personal and professional potential by realizing their goals (ICF, 2019). It should be emphasized that coaching as a specific method for the development of individuals and organizations is neither training nor counselling or therapy. To a large extent, it draws from psychology but only focuses on the present and future (the so-called positive psychology) (Law, Ireland & Hussain, 2010).

Team coaching is an interactive process that focuses on areas and goals relevant to an entire team. Its essence is for team members to take responsibility for the team as a whole, and for realizing common goals and values (ICF, 2019). Carr and Peters propose a definition of team coaching underlining its systemic context. According to them, team coaching is 'a complex and systemic approach to supporting a team to maximize its joint talent and other resources enabling the effective performance of the team's work' (Carr & Peters, 2013). According to Hawkins, team coaching cannot be limited to one-day interventions on matters within a team. He points out that the concept of team coaching is loosely defined. Nonetheless, it is necessary to include important processes such as team formation, facilitation, and other team intervention processes (Hawkins, 2011).

The rationale for using team coaching may vary. First of all, team coaching can be a form of intervention when the team 'goes wrong'. It is then used to identify and overcome blockages, improve team management, or change the company's organizational culture (Lencioni, 2012). Secondly, team coaching is often necessary when creating a new team or team merger. What is more, it is often a tool supporting strategic processes in an enterprise. Shaw describes the need for team coaching: 'While an organization is at the stage of important transformations, then there is an instinctive reaction that a guru to inspire, an expert/consultant to make right changes, or an experienced coach to say what do are needed' (Shaw, 2016). Sometimes there is also a need to help the team improve relations with stakeholders (Matras & Żak, 2018).

Team coaching is currently often introduced as a systemic tool in an organization to improve the efficiency of operations. Its task is to prepare a manager/leader for the role of a team coach, not only by giving necessary tips on how to conduct the coaching process, but also by offering supervision (Bennewicz, 2017). It is worth emphasizing that team coaching is recommended for use at all organizational levels – from the highest to the lowest executive level, including executive practitioners.

## The role of the coach-leader in a process of managing the team maturity

Lencioni claims that 'Building an effective, consistent team is an extremely difficult, but at the same time, very simple task', which means that the process of managing the team maturity does not require the ability to understand extremely difficult issues and masterful tactics, but, above all, courage and consequences. In addition, Lencioni emphasizes that in contemporary times characterized by omnipresent information and rapid changes, teamwork remains the only not fully utilized source of lasting competitive advantage. Achieving a high level of team efficiency is extremely difficult and it is not easy to measure its direct impact on the company's results. According to Lencioni, assumed results are the real measure of a team's work performance and maturity. The Lencioni model of achieving teamwork efficiency defines efficiency measures aimed at overcoming five dysfunctions of teamwork (Lencioni, 2012). In reference to the model, the absence of trust in the team is the source of group dysfunctions. Members of effective teams trust each other and thus do not fear to discuss mistakes, weaknesses, fears and behaviors, and possible conflicts. They engage in conflict with the belief in finding the best solutions, which proves their commitment and responsibility for the results, which applies to the entire team (not only leaders). They put the good of the team above individual interests - they attach importance to the results of the entire team. Team coaching, which primarily aims at building trust in a team - a kind of teamwork foundation, is helpful in overcoming team dysfunctions and managing team maturity.

The key question is how to help the team and wisely manage the team maturity process. The psychologist B. Tuckman has identified five stages of

Tuckman's team maturity stage	Role of coach/leader
Forming	During the orientation phase, team members have a clear need to see structures. They need orientation and security to find themselves as a group and build mutual trust. The task of the coach/leader is: provision of professional information; providing a clear structure (general conditions, time structure, mileage); clarification of the background and purpose of a common task; demonstrating the competencies necessary for team members; ensuring a good atmosphere; creating a space to satisfy the need for distance; respecting initial resistance; providing protection against devaluation, if necessary; expressing confidence in the group's capabilities and competences. At the end of the orientation phase, as a rule, the contract should be updated and specified.
Storming	In the conflict and positioning phase, as a leader/trainer, you should set yourself up to be tested in terms of clout and professional competence (it is important to master the leader and show group members that you understand their needs and differences). Many conflicts in this phase can be hidden – the leader's main task is to present all processes and events that may negatively affect teamwork. The role of the leader in this phase is: to provide space and protection for conflicts, to play an active role in clarifying conflicts and, in the case of long-term conflicts, to allow group cooperation to be assessed. Feedback exercises are especially beneficial in this phase – they have an impact on making team members aware of what they think about each other and how they affect each other. Consequently, they prevent personal and group prejudices.
Norming	In the trust phase, as a coach/leader you can now savor the success of the process so far. You should give the group space to consciously perceive the phase by taming the subject requirements and in return offering exercises to strengthen mutual trust. The atmosphere in the team will probably draw you in, although it is worth remembering that the line between the manager and team members must not be blurred; the main task must not be lost sight of either. This phase gives a chance to gradually withdraw from shaping the process and take the role of a moderator – for this purpose, it is worth strengthening the professional competencies of team members and constantly emphasizing the need to discuss emerging conflicts in the group, also in the future.
Performing	In the phase of constructive cooperation, as a coach/leader you can limit yourself to observing the process, accom- panying work in a consultative way, delegating tasks, coordinating the course, or moderating cooperation. This can be difficult for those leaders who are symbiotically related to the group or individual, or for those who have difficulty in withdrawing.
Adjourning	In the phase, the main task of the coach/leader is to emphasize in advance (at the end of the previous stage) the importance of the parting phase for the mutual work, each participant, and the entire team.

Table 1. Role of coach/leader in Tuckman's Model (Gellert & Nowak, 2008; Kozak, 2010; Kozak & Sowińska-Wróbel, 2016;	
Zych & Zych, 2016)	

team development: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. Each of the five stages of team development represents a step on the team-building ladder. As the team members climb the ladder, they morph from a random assembly of strangers into a high-performing team that can work toward a common goal. The crucial is the role of the coach/leader in each stage of this model, which is presented in Table 1.

The work of a business practitioner shows that especially crucial stages in managing team maturity are these processes designed to build trust in the team (forming, storming, and norming). Their correct course has a positive effect on the overall teamwork.

# Team coaching process based on the High Performance Team Coaching Model

The team coaching process is fundamentally different from the individual coaching process. In individual coaching, there are two partnerships: a coach and a client (coachee), and possibly a process sponsor not involved in the coaching process. Team coaching is the work of a coach with a team, the work of a coach with a leader/manager, and the work of a leader with a team. Scoular draws attention to the high level of complexity of team coaching compared to individual coaching, which automatically translates into the adrenaline level of a team coach (Scoular, 2014). Therefore, the role of the coach leading the team coaching process is double. It requires the expertise of not only the methods and tools traditionally used in individual work, but also above average interpersonal skills and knowledge in the field of team functioning and operating. Thus, a person acting as a team coach should, in addition to experience in individual coaching, also have experience in working in a corporation.

Team coaching is a method of working from the borderline of coaching and training. First of all, a team coach derives a coaching attitude, coaching structures (e.g. GROW model, value circle, creating a resource map, goal sheets) and coaching skills (listening and skillful asking questions) from individual coaching. Whereas, from training, a team coach primarily takes work on the team process (the team coach should understand group processes and manage them), training structures (the team coach uses facilitation techniques applied during training) or consultative workshop sessions (including SWOT matrix, force field analysis, de Bono hats) as well as coaching skills (mainly facilitation and moderation). The coach's work with a leader often takes the form of coaching combined with an advisory and mentoring process. The following stages can be distinguished in the team coaching process:

1. The stage of team diagnosis, i.e. identification of strengths and areas blocking a team in achieving better results to change. The diagnosis is carried out in parallel based on various tools to gather a full picture of the situation. The methods at this stage include psychometric tests (usually performed twice, once at the very beginning and once after the team coaching process), individual interviews with each team member, and observations during team meetings.

Team stage and team coaching function	Elements of the team coaching process	Activities
	1. Evaluation before the beginning of the team coaching process Coach Leader Team	The leader's approval Consent of team members Explanation of what team coaching is and the principles of cooperation Interviews among team members Diagnosis of the Team State Creating personality profiles of team members and identification of current weaknesses and strengths
Beginning $\Rightarrow$ Definition and initiation	<ul> <li>Designing a team – team project</li> <li>Coach</li> <li>Leader</li> </ul>	Team members Functions Structures Direction – where is the team going? Possible changes in the team's structure
	3. Start team Coach Team Leader	2-day initiating session: Outlining a vision, mission and goals for the team Analysis of clients' expectations Factors of the team's success Team values Learning about each other and underlining mutual cooperation agreements
	4. Individual coaching sessions Coach–Team members Coach–Leader	Learning and changing team members Shaping coaching skills by a leader
Middle ⇒ Review and adjustment	5. Ongoing team coaching (Team in the Process) Coach–Leader–Team Coach–Team Leader–Team Team member–Team member	Team coaching sessions Feedback Participation Full commitment Cooperation and productivity Modeling of the team leader Relationship coaching
End $\Rightarrow$ Integration	6. Review of achievements: Learning and Successes Team Leader Coach	Participation Full commitment Hopes and concerns about the sustainable development of team members
In focus of the model	Safety	Participation Full commitment Common determination of cooperation rules
Results	Team efficiency	Cooperation and productivity Improving relationships Learning and change Communication and participation Impact outside the team

### Table 2. High Performance Team Coaching Model (Carr & Peters, 2013)

- 2. The main stage, i.e. team coaching sessions. This stage involves working with a team on implementing changes in selected areas (often referred to as critical changes). Usually, the main stage processes include approximately 5-6 team sessions (however, it is worth emphasizing that these are purely individual issues, i.e. there may be a need to shorten or extend the coaching process by several sessions or the need to terminate it). Individual coaching sessions take place in an interval of 1–2 months. Another element of this stage is the coach's work with a team leader. Therefore, in parallel, 3-4 sessions are conducted to prepare a team leader to participate in the team coaching process. The aim of the coach's work with a leader is to support the leader in the development of competencies necessary to introduce a change in their action and the functioning of their team. Another important element of this stage is the work of the leader with the team (which the coach looks at and can intervene at any time).
- 3. The stage ending the process, i.e. the diagnosis of development after the closure of the team coaching process. The stage aims to show specific changes implemented by the team in its functioning during team coaching. This stage finishes with a summary, i.e. a session closing the process, based on the analysis of conclusions after the test carried out at the end of the team coaching process.

Currently, several well-known model solutions facilitate the conduct of individual team coaching sessions. These include I-GROW, PRACTICE, SPACE, OSKAR, SOLUTION, and ENABLE. The model aims to ensure the proper structure of the coaching process and the right pace of the coaching conversation, constituting a sort of guidance for the coach (Adams, 2016). This is a coach leading the process who decides which model to choose for a given session. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the coach's decision regarding the choice of the model is often intuitive and depends on their predispositions and current experience, as well as observation of changes taking place in a team.

The High Performance Team Coaching Model by Carr and Peters reflects the process of team coaching with the natural stages of team development. The model components, together with an indication of exemplary actions at each stage, are presented in Table 2.

The model indicates how to conduct the team coaching process to increase efficiency and broadly understood team effectiveness.

### Case study

The assumptions of the High Performance Team Coaching Model were applied in practice by the author of this article during the coaching process in team X, in the period from September 2019 to February 2020. The need to implement a team coaching process conducted by a coach/trainer from outside the organization was noticed by the Board of Directors in June 2019 after changes were introduced in one of the teams performing implementation projects in the IT sector (enlargement of the six-person team, including the team leader, by three additional employees). The Board of Directors noted a huge lowering of motivation and decrease of efficiency in the new team, reflected in the delay in the progress of the current project.

During the six-month coaching process with the team X, the coach worked out a total of 111 manhours, performing the functions of a team coach/facilitator in sessions with the entire team (50.5 hours in total), a coach in individual sessions (49 hours), and a careful observer of the team at the workplace (11.5 h).

 Table 3. Simplified team coaching process concerning the team's maturity stages

Team's maturity stage	Team coaching process	Duration (hours)
Forming	Stage 1. Team evaluation Stage 2. Designing a team	19.5 2.5
Storming	Stage 3. Start team Stage 4. Individual coaching sessions	14 12
Norming	Stage 5. The team in the process	35
Performing	Stage 6. The team in the process Stage 7. Summary session	25 3
Adjourning	Out of process	

Below is an abbreviated course of the coaching process in team X using a High Performance Team Coaching Model:

### Stage 1. Evaluation before the beginning of the team coaching process (diagnosis of the team)

**Meeting 1.** The coach/trainer, after getting acquainted with the whole team, explained what team coaching is. After jointly establishing the rules of cooperation, coaching contracts were signed by each of the team members (including the leader) for participation in the coaching process (duration of the meeting: 2 hours). Additionally, on that day, a working meeting with the entire team was organized,

during which the coach-trainer, after receiving the prior consent of team members, acted as an observer (duration: 1.5 hours). After the working meeting, the coach-trainer also made observations of employees during their work (duration of observation: 6 hours).

**Meeting 2.** The coach/trainer conducted a meeting among all team members aimed at identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the team (duration of the meeting: 2.5 hours). Then a short workshop aimed at introducing each participant to the individual style of thinking and acting using the FRIS methodology was conducted (workshop duration: 3 h). The day ended with individual interviews among all team members (interview duration: approximately 4.5 hours: average 20–30 minutes per conversation with each team member).

**Tools used during the diagnosis of the team:** coaching contract, SWOT analysis, a study of participants' thinking and actions using the FRIS methodology, individual interviews with each team member, and team observations during the working meeting and at the workplace.

**Conclusions of the coach/trainer at stage 1:** In team X, a division in the so-called old and new crew was visible, which had a negative impact on relations within the team, deepened the state of limited communication of some team members, and increased internal conflicts. This contributed to a decrease in the motivation and lack of commitment of the entire team. The team was in the process of being formed. The performed diagnosis justified the implementation of the team coaching process. In addition, new employees probably (which requires a more detailed diagnosis) showed some shortages in competencies in the field of implementation IT projects, which justified the need to conduct internal training for them.

#### Stage 2. Designing a team-team project

**Meeting 3.** The coach/trainer organized an individual meeting with the team leader, first of all notifying them about his conclusions resulting from the diagnosis and examining his observations about the situation in the team. The second part of the meeting took the form of a real coaching session in which the coach asked questions about the team's project from the leader's point of view, namely: the role and functions of individual team members, their assignment to the team structure and possible modifications/improvements in this area, as well as the general direction of team development. There were also questions about the role of the leader in the team – present and future, and the prospects related to expanding the competencies of the team leader with

the ability to conduct coaching sessions in a team (duration of the session: 2.5 hours).

**Tools used during the team project:** skillful listening and asking accurate questions, working with a metaphor.

**Conclusions of the coach/trainer at stage 2:** The leader placed his trust in the team in the current composition, while being aware of the current problems and the challenges associated with them. He had a comprehensive vision of the development of the team and its members, but as he admitted – work under time pressure related to ongoing work on the implementation of projects often makes it impossible to communicate them properly, which may cause uncertainty among some team members. In the near future, he intends to undergo individual training, enabling him to be prepared to perform the role of an internal coach, and thus the proper and ethical use of coaching tools while working with the team.

### Stage 3. Start team

The coach/trainer conducted a two-day initiation session for the team, the so-called session zero, during which team members:

- worked on outlining the vision, mission, and strategic goals for the entire team (3.5 hours);
- analyzed project stakeholders and their various expectations (2.5 hours);
- created a matrix of key success factors for the implementation team in the IT sector (2 hours);
- learned about each other: emphasized their role and contribution in the team, talking and analyzing their strengths and weaknesses on the team forum, which are revealed in the course of everyday professional struggles (3 hours);
- built a team identity: the process of identifying shared values (3 hours).

**Tools used during the start team stage:** skillful listening and asking accurate questions, working with the metaphor, SMART concept, GROW model, stakeholder map, key success factors matrix, creating a hierarchy of team values.

**Conclusions of the coach/trainer at stage 3:** The team tried to integrate and although conflicts and communication deficiencies began to emerge, they attempted to carry out the tasks entrusted to them by the coach-trainer. The joint session stimulated individual members of the team to act actively and to feel the so-called driving force of the team and revealed fundamental discrepancies in determining the direction that the team should take. During the session, several topics for individual sessions of the team members were clarified, which, if the team members wish to continue, will be carried out at a later date.

### Stage 4. Individual coaching sessions

After stage 3, five individual coaching processes (for five team members, including the leader) were initiated. The topics discussed during individual sessions were dominated by those related to playing a role in a team, resolving conflicts, managing work time, stress during the implementation of key projects, delegating tasks, division of work and responsibilities among team members, as well as uncertainty related to the chosen development path. Two out of the four team members subjected to individual sessions raised the issues of personal life - unclear relationships and conflicts in this area, significantly affecting the lower morale of these employees during their daily professional activity. Individual sessions with the leader were also initiated, aimed at clarifying and strengthening his role in the team, as well as preparing him to participate in the team coaching process.

Number of individual sessions conducted in step 4: 10 (12 hours).

## Stage 5. The team in the process, that is, proper coaching sessions

During this stage, a total of eight proper sessions were conducted, during which the team actively worked on the implementation of system changes in its structure, as well as on the implementation of the project. Sessions 1–3 were held weekly, while sessions 4–8 were held monthly. In session 3, devoted to relations in the team, each of its members could play the role of a coach for their teammate for a moment. The last two sessions at this stage were conducted by the team leader, the coach/trainer acted as an observer. The following topics were discussed during the session:

**Session 1.** Our current project – vision, mission, and strategic goals of the project (duration: 4 hours).

**Session 2.** Identifying project stages and tasks within each stage and assigning responsibility to the implementation of individual tasks. My role in the team – verification of individual tasks assigned to team members and verification of expectations in this regard (duration: 6 hours).

**Session 3.** Team relationship analysis (duration: 4 hours).

Session 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Monitoring of the project implementation (duration: about 2 hours per session).

Tools used during the Team in the process stage: skillful listening and asking accurate questions, working with a metaphor, SMART concept, GROW model, Action Learning, Balint's group training, a method that activates experiencing, Design Thinking.

**Conclusions of the coach/trainer after stage 5:** An increase in the involvement of team members and an improvement in the current relationships in the team was noticed. After session 8, the team was ready to function without the facilitation of a coach/trainer whose role had been taken over by the team leader.

During this stage, team members who had previously entered the process of individual coaching actively continued it. The coach/trainer also conducted four additional individual sessions with the team leader.

Number of individual sessions conducted in stage 5: 20 (30 hours).

### Stage 6. Summary session

The session aimed to summarize the current achievements of the team. The coach/trainer played the role of a moderator of the coaching process to encourage team members to share their reflections on the team coaching process, as well as express hopes and concerns related to the further development of the team and its members. The coaching process was summed up with a short anonymous evaluation questionnaire, during which team members assessed the coaching process as follows:

- nine out of nine team members indicated the positive impact of coaching on improving project implementation;
- nine out of nine team members indicated the positive impact of coaching on the improvement of intra-team relations, cooperation, productivity and communication during the project implementation;
- seven out of nine team members indicated the positive impact of coaching on learning processes and changes in the workplace;
- five out of nine team members pointed out the positive impact of coaching, going far beyond the areas of the team and the current workplace. Duration of the closing session: 3 hours.

### Conclusions

Team coaching is currently perceived as an important management method, which is helpful to cope with the process of managing team maturity. The High Performance Team Coaching Model helps to organize the course of the entire team coaching process and although it is up to the coach/trainer to decide what the final shape of the coaching process will be (the number of sessions at each stage, their duration and thematic scope), it is worth using this model as a reference point not to miss any of the key steps during the process. Using this model is important especially for people who are just starting their experience with team coaching, requiring a wide range of coaching and facilitation competencies from the coach.

The High Performance Team Coaching Model used in the article is one of the many tools optimizing the course of the coaching process in a team, so it is worth making further research in this area, aimed at presenting the use of specific models in business practice, as well as measuring the effects of their impact, both in the perspective of short and longterm for the leader and the team.

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