Original article

Team coaching as a tool to improve team performance

Malgorzata Smolska

Faculty of Management and Economics of Services, University of Szczecin, Poland,
e-mail: malgorzata.smolska@wzieu.pl

ABSTRACT

Coaching is now used as a tool to develop the potential of leaders and even entire teams, especially when introducing groundbreaking changes in an enterprise. In the first part of the article, the essence of team coaching and the specificity of the team coaching process is characterized on three levels: team, leader, team–leader, together with detailing specific tools at each level. The second part of the article is aimed at presenting evidence of the impact of coaching on team performance.

Introduction

Currently, coaching plays a significant role in the personal development of individuals. It allows them to develop, i.e.: create a potential that they have not previously seen, set ambitious goals, shape motivations as well as break internal and external obstacles to their implementation. In short, it enables them to become a better version of themselves, not only in their professional life, since it goes far beyond its scope, covering also personal issues and those related to the broadly understood self-realization in life. What is more, coaching exceeds individual goals, which makes it a valuable method of group and team work in enterprises. The aim of this article is to show what team coaching is and how to plan a team coaching process so that it would bring expected benefits, primarily in the context of improving the efficiency of enterprises.

1. The essence of team coaching

Coaching is one of many practical forms of personal development and, though being a relatively young discipline of science, its origins can be sought in antiquity. Socrates, who used to say: "I cannot teach anyone anything, I can only make him think" [1, p. 29], is perceived by many as the father of coaching. He diagnosed the potential of his students with the help of questions asked, then guided them on the right path to achieve goals, not giving ready answers to their questions. It is worth mentioning that

many related disciplines influenced coaching and its perception at that time. The most important concepts of coaching development include: Creative Problem Solving (Osborn A., Parnes S.), hypnotherapy (Ericson M.), emotional intelligence (Goleman D.), intuitive intelligence (Hundy Ch.), system thinking (Senge P.), neurolinguistic programming (Bandler R., Grinder J., Dilts R., Bolstad R.), appreciative approach (Cooperrider D.), transpersonal psychology (Wilber K.), positive psychology (Csikszentmihalyi M., Seligman M.), sports psychology (Gallwey T.), personal development theories (Chopra D., Redfield J., Robbins A.), leadership theories (Blanchard K., Covey S.), development spirals (Graves C., Beck D., Cowan Ch.), theories of thinking efficiency (De Bono E., Buzan T.), motivation theories (Locke E.), learning theories (Kolb D.) and theories of creativity, the so-called multiple intelligences (Gardner H.).

Coaching became the part of the world of business mainly due to Sir John Whitmore and his book *Coaching for Performance* published in 1992. It gained credibility and popularity over the last two decades, although there is relatively little research on team coaching – according to Mr. Hawkins, team coaching "lags about 20 years behind" for individual coaching [2, p. 47].

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 practicing coach has its own definition of what coaching is, although it is worth basing the considerations on the most popular references in literature. J. Whitmore defines coaching as the release of potential in order to maximize the activity, and emphasizes that coaching is rather about helping to learn than teaching [3, p. 8]. According to International Coach Federation, coaching is a partnership of 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 [4]. It is should be emphasized that coaching as a specific method for the development of individuals and organizations is neither a training nor counseling or therapy. To a large extent, it draws from psychology, but only focused on the present and future (the so-called positive psychology) [5, p. 85-7].

As for the team concept, it is worth noting that in many contexts the term "team" is used interchangeably with the term "group", which is not a real statement. A team is a relatively small number of people (roughly three to twelve) who have common goals and share profits and responsibilities associated with their achievement. Team members set individual interests aside and act primarily for the good of all [6, p. 16]. Katzenbach and Smith distinguish a team from a group by describing team members as those who "develop a common approach and maintain team responsibility" [7, p. 68-70]. Importantly, according to researchers, it is preferred that team members have complementary (instead of common or similar) skills [8, p. 273-4]. This view is expressed in the currently used methods of behavioral profiling (Social Style Model, Complex Personality Profiles *Right Path*, Insights Discovery, Myers-Briggs Method – MBTI, DISC, FRIS) in order to verify styles of thinking and action of individual team members.

P. 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 team building

does not require the ability to understand some 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 team's work performance. The Lencioni model of achieving teamwork efficiency defines efficiency measures aimed at overcoming five dysfunctions of teamwork (Fig. 1) [6, p. 11].

Fig. 1. Five dysfunctions of teamwork
Source: [6, p. 13].

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 results of the entire team. The team coaching, which primarily aims at building trust in a team – a kind of teamwork foundation, is helpful in overcoming team dysfunctions.

 Team coaching is an interactive process that focuses on areas and goals relevant to an entire team. Its essence is to take responsibility by team members for the team as a whole, for realizing common goals and values [9]. 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 in order to maximize its joint talent and other resources enabling effective performance of the team's work" [10, p. 80-98]. 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 [2, p. 52].

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 [11, p. 76]. 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. Peter 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" [12, p. 101-3]. 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. 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.

Team coaching is frequently confused with group coaching, which, actually, is no way the same thing (Table 1).

Table 1. Differences between team coaching and group coaching

Type of coaching	Team coaching	Group coaching
Client	Entire team	Individual person
Goal	Common goal	Individual goals of each participant
Types of goals application	Most often used in the implementation of the following goals: – business (e.g. sales targets), – development, competence, – relational (e.g. improving communication in a team), – in the interaction of the two above types	Most often used in the implementation of the following goals: – development, – personal
Role of the coach	Facilitates the process of achieving a common goal of all team members	A coach proposes specific tools and techniques appropriate to the subject matter discussed
Profit from the process	Team	Individual
Application	Tools in team coaching facilitate the implementation of projects through support in achieving next stages of the goal by assumed the team	It involves searching for methods by means of which clients can improve their lives not only in the training room or at the workplace, but also in everyday life
Interactions	There is one boss for everyone (the coach supports the boss, does not make decisions on his/her behalf)	Some interactions take place at the group level, while the other take place in an individual form

Source: Own elaboration based on [13].

Team coaching refers to coaching inside an organization and involves the coach's work with a leader and his/her team on a specific team goal. For comparison, group coach-

ing involves the work of a coach with a group of people on the same subject, however it can be practiced within one organization or as an open class activity. Goals of group coaching of individual coachees (clients) are highly individual.

2. Team coaching process

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), 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 (which the coach looks at).

A. 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 [14, p. 166]. Therefore, the role of the coach leading the team coaching process is double. It requires expertise of not only 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 trainings, a team coach takes primarily: work on the team process (team coach should understand group processes and manage them), training structures (team coach uses facilitation techniques applied during trainings 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.

Basically, 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 on the basis of various tools in order to gather a full picture of the situation. The methods at this stage include: psychometric tests (usually performed twice at the very beginning and after the team coaching process), individual interviews with each team member and observations during team meetings.

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. The element of this stage is also 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 his/her action and the functioning of his/her team. The element of this stage is also the work of the leader with the team (which the coach looks at, who 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 aim of the stage is 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, there are several well-known model solutions that facilitate the conduct of individual team coaching sessions. These include: I-GROW (Whitmore, 2002); PRACTICE (Palmer, 2007); SPACE (Edgerton and Palmer, 2005); OSKAR (Jackson and McKergow, 2012); SOLUTION (O'Connel, Palmer and Williams) and ENABLE (Adams, 2015).

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 [15, p. 17]. Obviously, 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 his/her individual predispositions and current experiences as well as observation of changes taking place in a team.

2.1. High Performance Team Coaching Model

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

Table 2. High Performance Team Coaching Model

Team stage and team coaching function	Elements of the team coaching process	Activities
Beginning => Definition and initiation	**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

Team stage and team coaching function	Elements of the team coaching process	Activities
	2. Coaching – a team project Coach Leader	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 => 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

Source: own elaboration based on [10, p. 80-98].

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

3. Impact of coaching on enterprise performance

Scientific literature on research on team coaching is a subject of growing interest of practitioners in this subject, as it provides valuable indications on how to efficiently conduct the team coaching process. Research on coaching of managerial staff is approached with particular interest.

Wageman defined three key areas of team performance building: i) the ability to achieve satisfactory results and performance at a level that meets or exceeds clients' standards and expectations; ii) the ability to work efficiently and build interdependent teamwork in the future; iii) shaping learning and development based on positive team experience [16, p. 87].

Having conducted research on 120 teams, Wageman classified them according to team performance into three groups: high, medium and low. Then she analyzed factors that diversified particular groups. She created a model that points to three important and three enabling conditions for creating team effectiveness. Wageman included significant teamwork conditions: i) a real team with clear membership rules and boundaries; ii) an attractive goal conducive to teamwork; iii) the right people with knowledge, skills and experience to meet the requirements of working in a group. Among conditions enabling the creation of team effectiveness she qualified: i) a solid team structure of less than 10 members who have a clear set of standards/agreements to specify rules of cooperation; ii) supporting an organizational context that provides information, time and other resources to perform work; iii) team coaching process conducted by a competent internal or external trainer, aimed at helping persons working individually and in a team [16, p. 88-90]. Furthermore, when conducting studies on Xerox Corporation teams, she came to the conclusion that the team's structure is more important to the team than team leader coaching. In conclusion, only well-designed teams use team coaching [17, p. 559-77]. In addition, coaching interventions that put emphasis on teamwork, strategy, knowledge and skills contribute more to the team's efficiency than interventions focused only on interpersonal relationships of individual team members. As a result, Hackman and Wageman proposed a team coaching theory, according to which the team's effectiveness increases as a result of coaching as long as the structural and contextual conditions are met and professional team coaching focused on the team's tasks is timely provided [18, p. 274]. By way of explanation, the term "timely" means that coaching interventions should be made when the team is ready to address them, which most commonly happen: at the beginning of the change implementation process (the aspect related to team effort, the so-called incentive intervention), in the middle of the change implementation process (the aspect related to the strategy, the so-called consultative intervention) and at the end of the process (the aspect emphasizing knowledge and skills, the so-called educational intervention) [8, p. 283].

The benefits of team coaching go beyond efficiency aspects. The analyzed studies emphasize the impact of team coaching not only on direct results of teams [10, p. 81] and the increase of team effectiveness [19, p. 41-58], but also on the increase of innovation, safety [20, p. 65] and quality of processes. The extensive documentation of the

case study proves that team coaching participants see changes in the increase of involvement in the team's work, mainly in the areas of learning, decision making, sharing information, as well as communication and participation.

The research conducted by the International Coach Federation also confirms the relationship between a strong coaching culture and the increase in the efficiency of individuals, teams and enterprises.

Firstly, when analyzing enterprises in which coaching and other interventions were implemented (in which coaching methods were not used), it was found that the impact of a strong coaching culture influences the increase of employees' involvement.
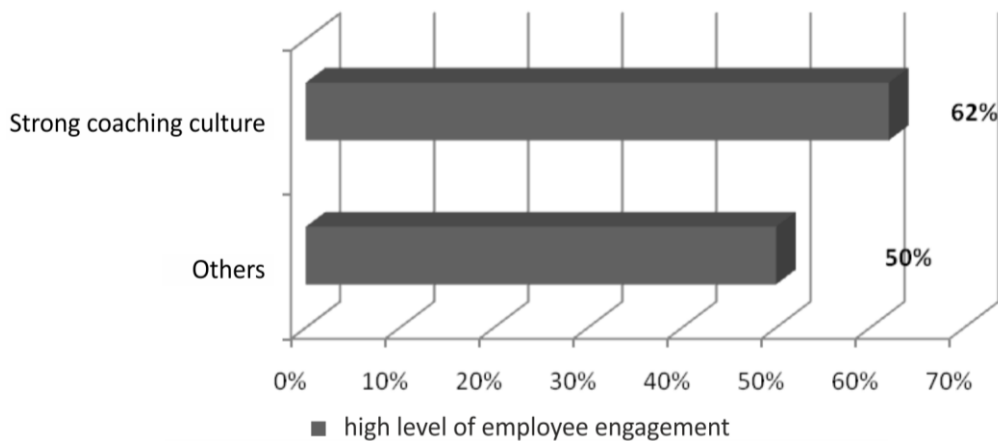

Fig. 2. The impact of a strong coaching culture on employee involvement
Source: own elaboration based on [21].

In addition, a strong coaching culture contributed to the increase in corporate revenues for the year 2015 (compared to the same period of 2014). The financial results obtained by enterprises in comparable industry groups were analyzed, as shown in Figure 3. Conclusion: a strong coaching culture is positively correlated with financial results.
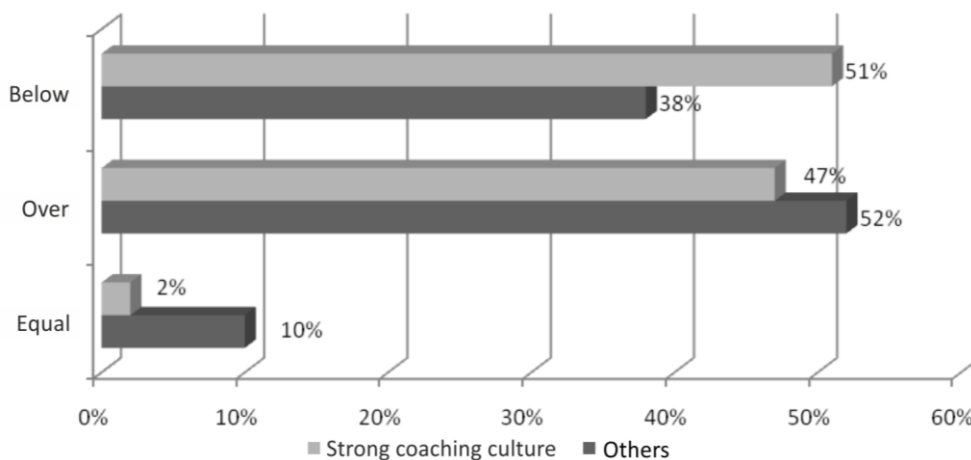

Fig. 3. The impact of a strong coaching culture on financial results
Source: own elaboration based on [21].

The most important observed indicators of the impact of coaching on an enterprise were also analyzed, as shown in Figure 4.

Fig. 4. Indicators of the impact of coaching on a unit/team/enterprise
Source: own elaboration based on [21].

In summary, a strong coaching culture contributes to improving a team's performance, employee relations, the well-being of employees and customer satisfaction, increasing engagement, productivity and emotional intelligence, developing leadership, lower turnover rates, faster employee adaptation in the context of entering new team roles, faster adaptation in the team as well as the increase in the number of internal promotions and in gross sales.

Conclusions

Team coaching, alongside the managerial staff coaching, is placed within business coaching, which is perceived as an important management function leading to the development of employees and, consequently, contributing to improvement of the company's efficiency. That is why people responsible for management of contemporary enterprises recognize the value of building a coaching culture. It enables employees of organizations at all levels to develop in terms of knowledge and skills, which in turn translates into achieving their goals, which are also a profit carrier in an enterprise. In summary, enterprises implementing a team coaching culture significantly reduce staff turnover, improve team performance, which directly contributes to financial efficiency, however, it indirectly translates into a higher level of job satisfaction of individual team members and a hygienic work environment based on a positive attitude

Conflict of interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.

Author contributions

The author contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Ethical statement

The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.

ORCID

Malgorzata Smolska (iD) https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1382-9566

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Biographical note

Malgorzata Smolska – M.A., assistant professor at the Department of Organization and Management at the Faculty of Management and Economics of Services at the University of Szczecin. Certified ACSTH coach (during ICF accreditation). Currently, she is the vice-chairman of the West Pomeranian Regional Group IPMA Poland and the Coordinator of the Directional Team on Quality and Education Programs in the field of Management. Scientific interests: coaching, shaping the relational capital of enterprises providing training services, and the impact of relational capital on the level of innovativeness of enterprises in the training sector.

	Coaching zespołowy jako narzędzie podnoszenia efektywności zespołów
STRESZCZENIE	Coaching jest obecnie stosowany jako narzędzie do rozwoju potencjału liderów, a nawet całych zespołów, zwłaszcza w momencie wprowadzania przełomowych zmian w przedsiębiorstwie. W pierwszej części artykułu scharakteryzowana zostanie istota coachingu zespołowego oraz specyfika procesu coachingu zespołowego na trzech poziomach: zespół, lider, lider–zespół wraz z wyszczególnieniem specyficznych narzędzi na każdym z poziomów. Druga część artykułu ma na celu przedstawienie dowodów wpływu coachingu na efektywność zespołową.
SŁOWA KLUCZOWE	coaching, coaching zespołowy, efektywność

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