

WBECS 2019

Team coaching for Beginners

WORLD BUSINESS AND EXECUTIVE COACH SUMMIT

Top 10 Tips for team Coaches

by **Georgina Woudstra**

Team coaching is often confused with other team interventions like team building, team training, team consulting or team facilitation. All these interventions have their place, however they each stem from a different philosophical stance and purpose to team coaching. In the same way that I didn't become an executive coach to offer clients advice or therapy, I didn't become a team coach to advise teams how to be the best they can be. So, the first step to becoming an effective team coach is to get your head in the right place and assume the mindset of a team coach, in other words, that the team is creative, resourceful and whole, and the team has the answers to their own needs, not the coach!

It can be confusing because there are so many books, articles, surveys and models describing what teams need to do to perform. Even the most popular books on team coaching focus more on what the team needs to DO rather than how to BE a team coach. So, to get you off to a great start, here are my top 10 tips for Team Coaches:

• REMEMBER YOU ARE A COACH!

First and foremost, get clear in your mind the role of the team coach and use this to guide your thoughts and actions. Embody coaching when working with teams through your stance and your presence. Remind yourself that the team has the answers, even if they seem elusive! Remind yourself that it is your ethical responsibility to be clear on the distinctions between coaching and, other 'helping' professions.

• TRUST THE COACHING PROCESS

Masterful coaches learn to trust the process of coaching. If you're a coach, then you might be thinking "that's a no-brainer"! However, as a coach trainer and supervisor, an interesting phenomenon seems to happen to coaches when working with teams- they take control! By this, I mean they can impose their own model of team performance, they prescribe an approach for the team, they plan an agenda for each team coaching session and frequently show up as a team expert who ask questions! Remember that coaching is an emergent process, the client sets the agenda and defines what good looks like. Yes, it can be challenging to work this way with teams, but becoming a masterful coach is also challenging, and it requires that we shift from saying that we trust the process to living that belief.

• ESTABLISH IF THE TEAM IS READY TO BE COACHED

As with individual coaching, not everyone is ready to be coached. It is the same for teams! Sometimes I find clients asking for 'team coaching' because it's a trendy name, or someone has suggested they hire a team coach. Indeed, we coaches are confusing the market ourselves by offering what we call 'team coaching' and delivering team training or team building.

Teams who are ready for coaching have a desire and positive energy to engage in a process of learning and change. They are committed to explore what success looks like for them, and to take active steps in the direction they set for themselves. They are informed about coaching and the role of the coach, and the organisational culture the team is in encourages development and learning. The team's leadership is fully engaged and is committed to taking responsibility for the team coaching outcomes and to holding the team on track through the coaching programme.

• WHO IS THE COACHING CLIENT?

I have discovered that many coach training organisations want to tell you who your client is in team coaching, advocating clearly for one of the following: the team leader, the team as a whole, the organisation, the organisation's stakeholders, or the organisation's customer's or even their grandchildren!

I recommend that you keep a more open mind and explore this question in some depth with the person who contacted you about team coaching, and then with other stakeholders. A team coach can offer powerful coaching to the team leader alone, supporting them to become a better team leader in which case the team leader is the client. A coach can also work with the team as a whole, and in this case, it is critically important to know who the 'client' is and for this to be transparent to all involved, otherwise this is likely to create unhelpful dynamics in the team coaching.

• CHECK FOR CHEMISTRY WITH THE COACHING CLIENT

I have run many workshops for team coaches over the last decade. I often ask the coaches "Do you offer chemistry meetings for potential new clients?" Most coaches say that they do. I then ask those who are already offering team coaching, "Do you offer chemistry meetings for potential new teams coaching clients?" Surprisingly, almost no coaches respond that they do. This may well be an indication that the coaches are suffering from role confusion and have morphed into facilitators or trainer! A team chemistry session isn't a must however, good chemistry is about getting the right match and is key to the success of a coaching experience, so establishing fit before diving into the work is essential and ethical.

• CO-CRATE THE RELATIONSHIP

A mistake I have made too often, and I believe it is a common one, is to speed up the process of co-creating the relationship with a team under the pressure- real or perceived- to get to task as quickly as possible. Being in a team situation can be stressful for many people, who can feel vulnerable and fear being exposed in a group. Taking the time to create a safe a supportive environment that builds ongoing mutual respect and trust, provides the container for your work as a team coach.

• CONTRACT, CONTRACT CONTRACT!

As with individual clients, teams frequently have only a superficial understanding of what they want from coaching at the start, defaulting to commonly used phrases like 'we need to gel more' or 'we need to be more cohesive as a team'. These terms can be somewhat abstract and mean different things to different people. I like to begin team coaching by agreeing the initial contract (for example 'to gel more') and then entering into a discovery phase in which awareness is raised to the degree that the most impactful development areas emerge with clearer clarity. These can form a team development plan, which shapes the agenda for the coaching programme.

• DEVELOP YOUR OWN SIGNATURE PRESENCE AS A TEAM COACH

Developing your signature presence is the road to mastery for a team coach. Many coaches put their focus on learning tools for team coaching, yet the most impactful 'tool' is your own presence

and your 'Way of Being' as a team coach. Coaching Presence is the ability to be fully conscious and create spontaneous relationship with the client, employing a style that is open, flexible and confident. Signature Presence is about owning your unique way of being as an intervention in and of itself.

Yet, there are many ways that our presence gets disturbed in team coaching, like feeling the pressure to perform, or team dynamics. Such disturbances can trigger us into hurrying the team towards action or thinking ahead to the next activity that you have planned rather than being in the moment, present to the here-and-now. By being more present in each moment you are more attuned to the team, the situation and to your own intuitive sensing. From this state, you are likely to ask better questions, one that go to the heart of the team's real needs rather than you pre-determined ideas.

- **MAKE USE OF YOURSELF**

This is intrinsically linked to your signature presence. When you coach a team, you enter the team's 'field', meaning the living system which is configuring and shaping the team. "Use of self" means allowing your own sensations, feelings, and observation to create insightful interventions with the team. The unique way you make use of yourself when coaching teams can't be captured or replicated, because it comes from you and what you sense, feel and notice. Use of self takes practice and confidence and requires our presence to attune to what is going on around us.

- **GET THE ECS TEAM COACHING COMPETENCIES IN YOUR BONES!**

The ECS Team Coaching Competencies provide you with a coherent map of the skills and capacities that masterful team coaches have in their bones! Distinct from the many models on team effectiveness, the ECS Team Coaching Competencies place the focus on the coach's learning and development. By embodying these competencies coaches become equipped to truly coach teams, meeting teams where they are at and journeying alongside the team towards its potential.

If this content is valuable to you, be sure not to miss Georgina in her live online coach session at **WBECs** in June, 2019. The **WBECs** Pre-Summit is a month-long, free learning experience taught by carefully hand-selected speakers covering the most important topics of 2019 in a variety of coaching disciplines.

Sign up at wbecs.com/georginaw and get access to Georgina's workshop as well as 50 other immersion trainings, implementation mastery sessions, live coaching demos, thought-leader panels and much more - at absolutely no cost.

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