

THE TEAM COACHING POCKETBOOK

Erik de Haan

Drawings by Phil Hailstone

"Does a great job of both demystifying the art and craft of team coaching and also resourcing the reader with an armoury of skills and ideas for practice. De Haan's generosity in sharing his examples of both triumphs and disasters makes the book accessible and engaging."

Professor Charlotte Sills, Ashridge Business School and Metanoia Institute

"Do not be fooled by its small size. This pocketbook is jam-packed full of helpful ideas and interventions for busy leaders of teams and those who support teams. It distils considerable wisdom and knowledge for the novice as well as the seasoned team coach."

Associate Professor Liz Wiggins, Ashridge Business School

"Easily accessible and well laid-out; it is a neat reminder of the key elements that need to be addressed when coaching a team. Provides clear and simple guidelines for the team coach, such as using your own awareness to foster a productive team climate of trust and loyalty."

John Leary-Joyce, President, Academy of Executive Coaching

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TEAMWORK FOR TEAM COACHES

GROUP OR TEAM?



Please answer these questions first:

- Is a family a group or a team?
- Is a small village a group or a team?
- Is my department a group or a team?

Then look at this simple definition of teams:

A **team** is grouped around a core common task and goal, a group is not.

So if a collection of people have a common purpose, we will call them a team. Most groups at work are at least teams in part, as they will share in the common endeavour of their organisation.

Another definition:

Teamwork is essentially making the most of the team's common purpose (core task) or in other words, to get as close to the core objectives as we can.

Answers: Yes, a family is a team (normally) with closely aligned objectives. No, a village is not a team although some objectives may be aligned. Your department may be either: if working on the same results/projects together then yes.

TEAMWORK FOR TEAM COACHES

FROM INDIVIDUALS TO TEAMS

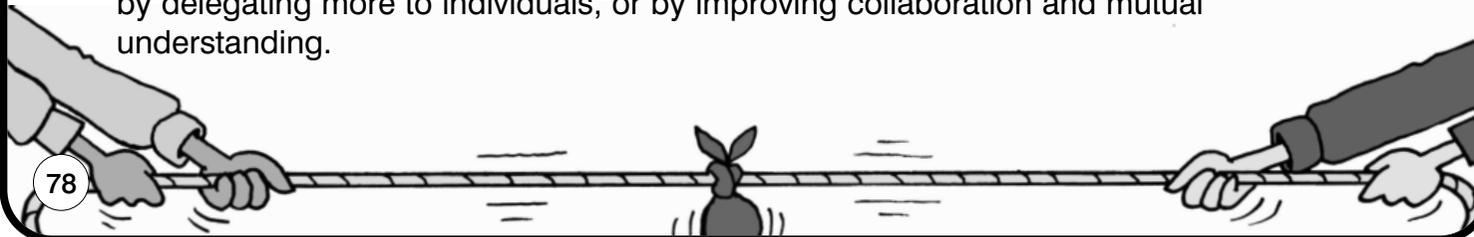


Contrary to popular belief, teams are actually less productive than individuals working alone. Best estimates show that on average three or four individuals are as productive as one team of six.

Ringelmann demonstrated this effect for 'rope pulling' in 1913: the combined pull of a team of N is much lower than N times the pull of an individual alone. The same is true for non-physical work. So individuals on their own are far more effective and efficient than groups and teams.

Not all work can be done by individuals, however, and most of today's complex work has to be done by teams consisting of individuals with a common purpose.

The art of teamwork is basically trying to make up for the substantial level of loss, recovering a little of the lost ground. It is through team coaching that this can happen, eg by delegating more to individuals, or by improving collaboration and mutual understanding.



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TEAMS BECOMING MORE COMPLEX



CASE EXAMPLE

In some ways every team is also not a team. The Board of Consulting Limited comprises four men and two women, of different nationalities. They have mostly risen through the ranks in the organisation and know each other well. They work well together in leading the firm as they line-manage partners and managers. In most areas of work they would say they are a team, and even where they disagree, they are committed to their shared purpose. However, the managing partner has become convinced that the firm should grow outside Europe into Asia, and in particular China. He is already moving ahead with this strategy. The rest of the team remain mostly unconvinced and cautious. This has led to the managing partner often being away in China and clearly less focused on the day-to-day running of the business. No one else has really bought into a China strategy, with most considering it a waste of their scarce resources.

Clearly even strong, unified teams can have enough disagreement not to be a team on certain issues. On the China question this is still a disparate group not a team.

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COMPLEX TEAMS



Teams are getting ever more complex. Take a work team that you yourself are part of (most of us now are part of more than just one team!).

Have a look at the list below and tick the ones that are true for your team:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multidisciplinary | <input type="checkbox"/> Geographically dispersed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multigenerational | <input type="checkbox"/> Working across time zones |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multicultural | <input type="checkbox"/> Working within multiple organisations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multinational | <input type="checkbox"/> Virtually working together |

More and more in the 21st century we find that all of the boxes are ticked, ie our corporate teams are rapidly becoming truly diverse.

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COMPLEX TEAMS



With diversity and geographical spread come new forms of communication and increasing demands. There are more and more pressures on teams and on team members individually, and they (ie we!) have to step up to ever-increasing challenges.

At the same time all these developments are bringing more diversity, which leads to even richer and potentially more creative outcomes (which is why this is such an unstoppable trend!).

More complex teamwork is being facilitated with constantly improving communications technology.



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RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD



Teams have porous boundaries, allowing influences in from the outside. Team members move between teams, and they bring in ideas, services, goods and people. Teams have been compared to baskets in this sense: 'containers with leaky walls'.

The porous boundaries also allow a team to trade with its environment: to deliver services or products, to put up a 'toll booth' (charging only those outside the team), etc.

Boundaries are therefore the place where teams deliver on their objectives: teams always work for something, and that something is outside the (current) team. As far as possible therefore, boundaries need to remain open, clear, safe and agreed.

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RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD



Boundaries can be more or less porous:

- The **least porous** are sects, totalitarian regimes and some rare autarkies or self-sufficient societies: they tolerate hardly any influence from the outside
- The **most porous** are dissolving teams where the common purpose vanishes, eg:
 - many cross-functional project teams
 - virtual teams that have vaguely agreed to ‘stay in touch’
 - LinkedIn or WhatsApp groups where no one ever posts much
 - gradually disintegrating teams, eg after a takeover

As a team coach it is generally worthwhile to reflect on **boundaries** and involve the team in such reflections, because so much happens at the boundary – and so many difficulties can be traced back to boundary issues.

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CASE EXAMPLE

WORKING WITH BOUNDARIES

The leadership team of a hospital has come through a period of massive cost-cutting. Now, finally, the Board has been reassured by regulators that they can begin to develop their services again and invest in their future as a (now smaller) hospital.

Motivation is still at an all-time low and raising morale is high on the Board's priority list. Together with their team coach they have decided to formulate a new strategy working with the extended management team, so as to start involving senior management. As a first step they have asked all department heads for a SWOT analysis. To everyone's great surprise nothing has come back by the deadline. They begin to realise how difficult it will be to engage people, even at this senior level.

Here there is a boundary around the Board, and another boundary around the extended management team that includes the Board. Motivation across this boundary is difficult partly because the Board is privileged, eg they 'have' the team coaching.

About the Author

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Erik is a leadership and organisation development consultant, psychodynamic psychotherapist, executive (team) coach and supervisor. He is the Director of the Ashridge Centre for Coaching and programme leader of the Ashridge Master's (MSc) in Executive Coaching, and the Ashridge Postgraduate Diploma (PG Dip) in Organisational Supervision. Erik is also Professor of Organisation Development & Coaching at the VU University of Amsterdam. He has written more than 150 articles and eleven books in different languages, among which are *Fearless Consulting* (2006), *Coaching with Colleagues* (2004, with Yvonne Burger), *Relational Coaching* (2008), *Supervision in Action* (2011), *Coaching Relationships* (2012, edited with Charlotte Sills), *The Leadership Shadow* (2014, with Anthony Kasozi) and *Being Supervised—A Guide for Supervisees* (2015, with Willemine Regouin). He serves on the editorial boards of several peer-reviewed journals, such as the *Journal of Philosophy of Management* and *APA's Consulting Psychology Journal*.



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He is very grateful to the publisher Ros Baynes for inspiring and provoking him to write about what team coaching is, and not about what it is not.