

## The ultimate in being an internal team coach

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Being internal to an organisation is challenging for the one-to-one coach, but even more so to the internal team coach. But perhaps the ultimate challenge in this context is being the team coach to the top team while also being a key member of that same team.

I've been fortunate to co-supervise Helen Zink, a coach based in Auckland, New Zealand, through much of her journey in such a dual and complex role. All through, she has kept a journal of her experiences. Now, she has captured them in a book that captures not only her own experience, but the experiences of the team leader, team members and other stakeholders. Such multi-perspective reflections are rare enough in coaching generally, but – to my knowledge -- unique in team coaching. For other internal coaches, this is a deep insight into what is possible. For independent coaches coming from the outside of an organisation, it raises some challenging questions. Among these:

- How does the external coach support individual clients and teams between coaching sessions?
- External coaches' perception of what is happening in the client's world is largely limited to their own observations and what the client chooses to tell them. The internal coach, being more intricately connected with events day to day – and particularly relating to the client's or the team's involvement with the evolving system around them – has greater opportunity to recognise the complexity of the environment. At the same time, however, the internal coach may not observe patterns arising from the corporate culture, because they are part of the culture.

The combination of internal coach, external coach and frequent supervision is a powerful one. I hope Helen's book stimulates a lot more experimentation that results in wider appreciation of the role of the internal coach and the value of internal-external partnerships.

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