

Team Coaching as a Change Lever

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In our VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) world, managing change is a constant challenge. Team coaching can help by accelerating change, enabling strategy, and fostering collective resilience, as demonstrated by Michael, a leader, and his team, who leveraged team coaching as a change lever.

Accelerating Change

Michael's team was formed post-restructure, facing the challenge of managing the implications independently – a common scenario in many organizations.

Without the capacity or capabilities for this, Michael partnered with me as a team coach. Initially, my work involved clarifying the team's purpose and their interaction between roles and functions. Next, we focused on behavioral norms, communication, stakeholder relationships, and priorities tailored to the team's environment. This intentional investment in these areas helped the team perform more effectively and move faster through the forming and storming stages.

Michael commented, "A critical part of our decision to restructure was investing in culture change. Team coaching involved a complete reengineering of how we operated as a team, as leaders, as a system, and as people."

Enabling Strategy

Simultaneously, the board implemented a new strategic plan. While the expected outcomes for Michael and his team were clear, the plan did not provide guidance on achieving targets in an environment where capacity and capability were already stretched.

Michael used McKinsey's 7-S framework to provide support and focus on key areas. He noted, "The first part of strategic implementation focused on hard-S's (strategy, systems, and structure), which was already in play. I realized that the soft-S's (shared values, style, staff, and skills) needed to align for our strategy to succeed."

I supported Michael and the team with their soft-S's. Evidence indicates that **shared values** help build a sense of belonging within a team and organization, ultimately improving performance. I helped team members articulate their individual values, understand which were shared across the team, and align them with organization-wide values.

We worked to understand the leadership **style** Michael needed to bring out the best in his team and what type of leaders they needed to be to guide their respective teams and support new strategic imperatives.

The team focused on areas of self-awareness and strength utilization. Collective strength within the team became more apparent, and gaps where **staff** development or change was required were highlighted. As a result, recruitment and development plans were tightly aligned with the team's strategic direction.

We also worked on developing specific **skill** sets to enable strategic execution. For example, a new communication approach was created, outlining individual team members' roles within that approach and identifying which communication channels and styles were effective in different circumstances. This resulted in increased team effectiveness and accelerated strategic implementation.

Fostering Collective Resilience

Resilience was a recurring theme in Michael's team. They unexpectedly changed location twice, suffered from financial constraints, restructured several times, suffered delivery issues from a system change gone wrong, and managed the implications of a global pandemic, resulting in a complete overhaul of their deliverables and work approach.

Reflecting on the experience, the team described how team coaching increased their comfort with the unknown, enabling more effective individual and collective responses to events as they unfolded and helping them bounce back from setbacks.

The team said, "Our collective leadership in difficult times meant that, ironically, traumatic events brought us closer together. We discovered depths of resilience we didn't know we had. We all believe the team

coaching work we undertook was central to us building our individual and team resilience.”

Wider Benefits

The positive impact of our work spread beyond Michael’s team to the entire organization. One team member said, “Everyone experienced the coaching ripple effect. Similar to the effect across our team, our team agreement, effective meeting structure, improved accountability, and better communication skills were new habits applied to every interaction we had across the organization.”

The ripple effect can be encouraged further by coaching individual team members in parallel with team coaching. The one-to-one coach could be a professional or, in Michael’s case, a proficient team leader. He said, “It was a chance to work with each individual member of the team on their unique leadership journey, focus on their positions and personalities, reflect on how they were impacted and changing, and help them customize key elements of the team’s collective journey in a way that worked for them.”

Change, whether planned or unplanned, is challenging and the norm. Traditional one-to-one coaching helps clients navigate VUCA worlds. However, focusing on teams collectively provides more opportunities to accelerate planned change, support strategic enablement, and foster collective resilience, all of which have a ripple effect across the entire organization.

Team coaching proves to be an effective change lever. In closing, Michael imparts valuable advice for others considering a similar approach. “Focus on and trust the process. Over time, you will find that outcomes have emerged from the system, developed organically, and differ from your original vision. Those outcomes may, in fact, be greater than what you anticipated at the start.”

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