

# COACHING TEAM THINKING AND TEAM INNOVATION MANAGEMENT

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In many companies, innovation is an elusive quality that is either present or not – rather than available as a process that can be trained and managed. Leaders aim for the illusive elixir of ‘team spirit’ when they ask, **“How can we manage teams and design an environment that consistently generates innovation?”**

## *Strong Team Coaches know their job is to develop team spirit.*

They support the structure and principles of innovation and provide specific tools to enhance the creativity and strategic thinking of individuals, teams, and organizations. Effective Team Coaching needs to be very topical and functional to a corporation's core aims yet seed innovative thinking as well.

Well-trained Team Coaches know how to unleash team spirit. What can a Team Coach do to build innovation? The Team Coach needs to assiduously support positive processing and flexible rapid thinking.

This requires a very specific kind of professional Team Coach training because the coach needs to know how to truly initiate the quality of visionary thinking and needs to access how the various team members become visionary. The Team Coach then assists to develop the team vision function as a key part of every single meeting. The right brain (visionary function) is by far the mastery function in the brain. By stimulating right brain processes, the Team Coach also creates synergy and assists the development of holistic thinking.

The Team Coach also supports and builds positive team experiences, linked together with positive language. High performance team coaching is about assisting people to build a new positive structure for sharing ideas no matter what their framework has been before, so that they stay willing to share their private expertise with other team members.

The general rule is that knowledge is freely shared as soon as a group of people have a common vision.

To develop vision, the Team Coach needs to provoke both curiosity and alignment towards results. If you were undergoing a Team Coach training program, you would learn the following how to's:

- First of all, we need to enjoy the team as a team. We need to celebrate the team presence. We need to experience the team values and appreciate them verbally. We need to focus on the contributions of members and align to the team purpose. Sometimes we need to create informal team events to bring people together so that they really get to know each other in a variety of contexts.

- The second thing we need to do is build team performance itself. We do this through specific emphasis on team coaching as a skill set that the team itself is learning to use for themselves.

- Third, we show them the power of team vision and how to create it well. Joint visioning assists general purpose awareness that allows each member to contribute to a common dialogue. It builds an effective unitary mind in the team. This now becomes a key part of the emerging genius of the particular team dynamic.

- Fourth, we invite members into team dialogue and provide skills to support each team member with their own connection into the process. Every single member of the team, no matter what they have said to themselves about the products and services of the company, needs to feel they can join forces together in dialogue towards the company's potential.



## THE ART OF BUILDING DIALOGUE

*Building real dialogue is a true art. It requires persistent, insightful listening and ‘fire lighting’ support from the Team Coach.*

To strike the match, the Team Coach needs to hold the context of dialogue and assist team members to suspend their assumptions. Insightful questions allow people with totally different habits, backgrounds, and viewpoints to contribute into the start-up conversation. To add fuel to the fire, the Team Coach needs to know how to treat the team members as ‘thought leaders’ so that each member relaxes and contributes. To build further, they need to assist the team to think long-term and discover the key steps in the long game that each project may create.

For the fire to really burn, all the participants must regard one another as colleagues. And as soon as possible – in each meeting – the dialogue needs to become playful so that members easily visualize together.

We can start a fire that burns for many years. A strong capacity for dialogue creates successful teams who have fun together. Long-term, they learn to build strong team support systems as they manage the tasks at hand. This process takes investment in key areas of team coaching skill sets by the whole team so that everyone learns to participate effectively.

## THE ART OF VIABLE CONFLICT

Another area that is relevant to the successful building of innovative expert teams, is the ability to assist the teams to handle conflict. Handling conflict is a big deal. It means that the Team Coach understands the specific, negative team dynamics that could emerge and create the most difficulty; the kind that could hobble the team spirit. This means

*a Team Coach needs a real understanding of how to work with different kinds of personality traits, social styles, cultural dynamics, and interest areas.*

The Team Coach needs to be able to find the positive undercurrents within any conflict at hand and show how the team can agree to disagree. This means the group can still find value and vitality in the project and task, combining dynamically different approaches.

A team without conflicts is often not a strong team. There will always be conflicts when people are encouraged to be independent thinkers, exploring each project both inde.



## THE ART OF BUILDING TRUST

We emphasize the value of building trust. What follows is called the RIDART framework, an acronym for the six key steps in building trust.

**R – Rapport** – Rapport often starts with our respect and listening to each of the team's players. It continues as we create fun as one of the themes of team communication.

**I – Invitation** – We invite deep participation. We urge people to move further into their joint endeavor. We are supporting the function and structure of the team as a collaborative framework. Personally, as a Team Coach, I am a little fierce about this focus. I genuinely hold that the team meeting is much more important than anything else we are doing. That means that even if we are very busy people and the team meeting has to be fast and furious, we can build our team process quickly. 'Fast' often works well because it assists people to innovate fiercely.

*People throw out ideas, and one idea builds on another (“What-if ‘this’?...what-if ‘that’?”). People then begin to see how ‘this’ and ‘that’ can come together and they have something much bigger between them to build with.*

**D – Dialogue** – needs to include:

**A – Agreement** – We need to carefully examine what we need to agree on.

-It also needs to include the willingness to disagree – Often we need to agree to disagree, and this kind of agreement sometimes allows for a much higher value than simple agreement because we start to build the common bridge.

*We need to be able to hear our differences, and we need to speak them.*

If you have people on your teams who are willing to stand up and talk about what still requires work or speak



frankly about their opinions when they think differently from everyone else – then you are building a strong team. You are establishing a framework for the team players to really think collaboratively. This develops a much higher intention to create visionary results for the company.

**R – Respect** – How do we create respect. People need to see themselves, each other, and their purpose with high value being added, and to understand that this collaboration can create something great. There are lots of reasons not to trust others on a team and to hold onto ‘private’ knowledge. It is easier not to share ideas, not to teach others, and not give freely of our resources. So, as Team

*Coaches need to build and demonstrate high respect for all individuals and support a genuine agreement to disagree.*

Gradually, people will see the team as ‘home base’, a natural place to share their best...and they do share freely!

**T – Trust** – All of the above factors – rapport, invitation, dialogue, agreement, and respect - will, over time, build trust. Trust is Respect enhanced by long-term experience! It takes courage and value-focus to genuinely give your heart to a team and set aside your own time and energy to do so...over time.

Trust naturally leads to a final function that the team coach needs to hold for each and every member; well expressed appreciation. We appreciate every single step, all of the way down the line. We acknowledge the work being accomplished. We appreciate that the members have made the team function preeminent whenever they are present together.

*A great team gradually becomes like a long-term band of jazz musicians.*

People don’t want sameness all the time, and they don’t want chaos. They want to live on the edge! Each member knows the common melodies of effectiveness, their team’s ‘rhythm.’ They know how to participate, and to integrate and expand the collaborative ‘joint tune.’ With the team’s support, they break out into their own ‘riffs’ of individual achievement as members and as sub-teams,

creating new ideas and building on what they’ve done. That allows innovative experience to permeate the whole team and everyone shares the reward. Effective teams gradually reform the structure of the company.

*Well-coached, cross-functional teams can continue to collaborate, share information, and build the corporate promise to the world over time.*

They become the company’s backbone, making sure that key values and visions will be shared and done. They represent the whole and do the work that the company wants to accomplish. This means that the teams continually grow the company and grow themselves at the very same time. The result is phenomenal for the companies that do the work to develop their teams. The company becomes much stronger. The teams become interpersonal units with people now holding the companies vision as co-leaders. All of this depends on you, the Team Coach.

*It depends on your willingness to be a fierce, vital part of the team, holding their structure over multiple meetings, assisting them to divide the work and go off and do it.*

You assist them to stand in Coach Position, seeing what they have accomplished so far, noticing that even in a difficult area they can – and have – moved one step ahead. This is what all members want: the ability to see that they’re growing as individuals, that they are building the team, and also building the projects well.

