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WHY REAL TEAM COACHING CAN POSITIVELY IMPACT BUSINESS RESULTS USING THE POWER OF COLLABORATION

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Abstract: In this article, the author connects the dots between teams, and the broader necessity to serve and positively impact the environment within which organisations operate. Team coaching, as one of the newest and least researched team development modalities, is defined. What team coaching is NOT, and the conditions for real team coaching to take place, are unraveled, in order that it can serve a team to truly thrive. The differences between teams and groups are explored, as it is essential to the topic. The role of a team coach is distinguished and put into context, of serving a team to transform to become who they aspire to become. In this way, they can fulfil their core purpose and vision in a coherent and values aligned way. The author's CORE model© for interpersonal team transformation is presented, which can serve as a framework to guide conversations so that they become a real team. A centre point of becoming a real team is collaboration. Real teams and thriving organisations positively impact the world in becoming a place more deserving to inhabit.

Introduction

How the world is presently unfolding is asking a lot of questions! Ones that are testing our essential nature as human beings – our core values and virtues, our inner callings and sense of meaning. However, amid the storm created from this human crisis expressed in wars, pandemics, poverty, climate change… still there is a peaceful place. Our inner core. A place where, if we connect with, answers will emerge effortlessly, and in the right environment.

Yet the ever-changing nature of the world requires solutions that we cannot just find

individually, but collectively. TEAMs, in their ideal existential shape, are the setting where we can collaborate to co-create change in the world, that not only will ensure our surviving, but thriving collectively.

Diverse organisations (companies, NGOs, governmental, educational institutions etc.) produce results that impact our social environment and nature. They are living bodies of interconnected and interdependent teams. *Real team coaching* is the way to help such living bodies function in their ideal state – in a collaborative meaningful way to positively impact people and planet. The fast-growing initiative Inner Development Goals (IDGs) indicate that, not only is there a need, but there is a will for meaningful change in the world. All this springs from our collective consciousness that we deserve a better world.

In this article, I will unfold the essence of real team coaching and how it can empower teams and organisations to collaborate for good. I will unpack the fundamental difference between groups and teams, and how a team coach can enable groups to become thriving teams if they chose to. Also, how we can harness the power of teams in the virtual environment, as it is becoming the new normal. The IDGs initiative and its significance in our ever-changing world will also be introduced to the audience. At the end of this overview, I will introduce my TEAM CORE Model™ a framework to guide a team coach in their journey.

Why Team Coaching

There has been an exponential growth in the last 25 years of individual coaching, the percentage of organisations using coaching, the number of practicing coaches, and the growth in training, accreditation, professional bodies, research and publications. Beginning with Hawkins (2017) team coaching is currently about 20 years behind, with many of the same difficulties that existed in the early days of individual coaching. Hawkins (2017) shares that amongst these difficulties are confusion for clients over what people are delivering when they provide team coaching; little in the way of research, literature, models or approaches; a lack of established training programs or accreditation. In the world of team coaching much of what has been done to date has been called 'team development' and done within the field of organisational development. According to Hawkins' (2017) research, only recently has team coaching emerged from traditional consultancy approaches to team development, from the coaching world and through learning from fields of high performing sports and professional teams.

In the literature review of Widdowson et.al (2020) 'team coaching' as a term is a relatively new concept. There has been overview of peer-reviewed papers on coaching published between 1937 and 2011. Over 70 papers out of 518 mentioned teams, and

only included six papers that used the term 'team coaching,' with the first of these being published in 1999. (Widdowson et. al 2020, Grant 2009).

History of Team Coaching

The historical roots of team coaching were found in the organisational development and more specifically in the work of Lewin and Tavistock. Senior Leaders were sent in programs where they would be in 'T' or training groups with the main purpose to learn experientially about the nature of group functioning and dynamics. (Hawkins, 2017) These early approaches led to much more work being done in developing teams within organisations and this is where approaches and methods for team building and team-away days were developed: Douglas McGregor (1960), Rensis Likert (1967), Bill Dyer (1977) in the United States, and John Adair (1986) and Meredith Belbin (2004) in the United Kingdom. (Hawkins, 2017)

Fifty years ago, the majority of leadership and management trainings were classroom-based, away from work, attended by individuals, taught by experts, based on theories and case studies of past successes and failures and cognitively oriented. (Hawkins, 2017).

The current complex, challenging and ever-changing environment puts pressure that requires new solutions. *"Now it is recognized that leaders and managers learn their most important lessons on the job, facing real challenges, working with others both in teams and across boundaries, through trial and error."* states Hawkins (2017, p. 65). Hawkins (2017) states that a number of companies have adopted the learning and development approach, which proposes: 70% learning on the job, 10% learning from workshops, conferences and courses and 20% coaching, *"which provides the essential glue that joins the theoretical learning and the practical learning together"* (p. 65)

The demands to coach whole teams versus individuals is rapidly expanding. (Coaching at Work, July 2013). Sports team coaching has drawn the attention and focus of organisations on how a team can play more to the sum of its parts, building on strengths, enhancing the whole, maintaining its morale and raising collective performance. (Hawkins, 2017).

Much of the growing interest in team coaching has come from a realisation of the limits of what can be achieved through individual coaching and leadership development, which can help create strong individual leaders but leave in place unaligned, poorly functioning leadership teams. (Hawkins, 2017).

Historically, team coaching as an emerging phenomenon draws inspiration from individual coaching, sports team coaching and organisational development. It is a necessity, a consequence of the demand of the external and internal pressures, and *real team coaching* can assist this process of becoming a real team.

Essence of Team Coaching

Thinking of team coaching as a helping modality for a team's development, the first word that comes in mind is 'emerging'. There is significant confusion around what team coaching actually is. (Woudstra 2021). Understanding its essence is critical as, first and foremost, it informs the team what the experience would be, setting clear boundaries and enabling informed judgement whether this is an appropriate helping modality with respect to a team's journey. Team coaching happens in the here and now. It follows the *client's agenda*, where the client is *the TEAM* as a one dynamic and interdependent whole. As Woudstra (2021) points out, coaching has spread into all walks of life and there are countless approaches to support individuals who are looking for greater meaning and purpose in life. These different approaches do not define the 'right' way as what works for one client won't work for another. The core principles shaping the coaching philosophy and the core competencies defined from leading professional bodies, amongst which the International Coaching Federation (ICF) is the largest, put at the centre of the process the client as the expert in his life and work.

Below we'll discuss few definitions of team coaching, so that the reader clearly understands the core of *real team coaching*.

The leading professional body in the world, ICF, defines team coaching as *"partnering in a co-creative and reflective process with a team and its dynamics and relationships in a way that inspires them to maximize their abilities and potential in order to reach their common purpose and shared goals."* (ICF, 2021).

The UK's professional coaching association 'Association for Coaching' recently released their 'Team Coaching Competency Model' where team coaching is defined as *"the application of coaching skills while working with a whole, intact team over time to improve inter-dependent members' abilities to work together collaboratively to achieve the team's collective purpose, potential and performance"*. (Association for Coaching UK, 2022)

Some of the leading professionals in the team coaching field define team coaching as follows: *"Partnering with a team to unleash its collective power, purpose and potential to connect and collaborate."* (Woudstra, 2021).

David Clutterbuck and Peter Hawkins collectively defined team coaching as *"Partnering with an entire team in an on-going relationship for the purpose of collectively raising awareness and building better connections in the team's internal and external systems and enhancing the team's capability to cope with current and future challenges."* (Clutterbuck, 2020)

My own definition of team coaching is *partnering with a team as a dynamic*

interconnected whole, with the purpose to generate awareness and energy so that they connect and collaborate to serve a compelling and meaningful purpose.

What unites the shared definitions above is *who* is coached, the *how* or the process of developing and the *what* – the anticipated result. In the table below the core elements of real team coaching are outlined.

Table 1. Team coaching definitions – comparisons

Definition *Team Coaching*	*Who* **is coached**	*How* **is coached**	*What – anticipated results*
ICF	A team (and it's dynamics)	• partnering • co-creative, reflective process	• maximise ability, potential • reach common purpose, shared goals
Association for Coaching (AC)	A whole, intact team	• application of coaching skills • working over time	• improve inter-dependent members' abilities to work together collaboratively • achieve the team's collective purpose, potential and performance
Woudstra	A team	• partnering	• to unleash its collective power, purpose and potential to connect and collaborate
Clutterbuck and Hawkins	Entire team	• partnering • on-going relationship	• collectively raising awareness • building better connections (team's internal and external systems) • enhancing team's capability to cope with current and future challenges
Author (Hinova-McNamee)	A team (dynamic interconnected whole)	• partnering	• generating awareness and energy • connect and collaborate to serve a compelling and meaningful purpose

Source: Author's view.

What clearly stands out in all definitions of team coaching is that *a team* is coached. And the team is characterised as a whole, intact, entire, dynamic, interconnected. It is important to clarify what a team is, which we'll discuss further in this article. In terms of how a team is coached, it is the verb *partnering* that stands out, which in continuous tense enhances that this happens over time. Explicitly "over time" and "on-going" stands out in the definition of AC and Clutterbuck and Hawkins. The verb 'partner' itself speaks about the nature of real team coaching. It is a process that happens by choice and there is a balance between a coach and a team, where nobody is superior, as the client steps in as an expert on their work and processes, and a team coach steps in as an expert on team coaching. This expertise in team coaching is clearly outlined in the definition of AC. The ICF's definition stands out by clarifying more how the partnering process is unfolding, and it is through co-creation and reflection. Reflexivity is in the nature of coaching itself.

The anticipated results of a team coaching intervention vary in the analysed definitions and yet there is a common thread. In the end it is the client who defines what their desired results are as coaching is about the client's agenda. In a few definitions common, compelling meaningful purpose and goals stand out. Maximizing and unleashing collective power and potential are also a natural result of a coaching intervention in general. Verbs like *connect* and *collaborate* stand out and *collective* is repetitive as well. In Clutterbuck and Hawkins' definition, coping with current and future challenges and building better connections internally and externally of the organization, stand as unique elements. Raising and generating awareness are present in two definitions.

Based on the analysis, the author's conclusion is that *real team coaching* is: an on-going process of working with a whole (entire) team, using coaching skills to help it raise its awareness in a process where there is partnering, co-creation, relationships (internal and external) where collective power and potential are utilized so that a common purpose and goals are achieved and capabilities to cope with ever emerging challenges are developed.

As mentioned earlier (beyond definitions) *real team coaching is emergent*. Real team coaching is about being fearless to step into the unknown and let go of your agenda. As Woudstra (2021) points out real team coaching is going beyond pre-planned agendas, tools, techniques into the process of 'safe emergence' (Fritz Perls, 1951). Building a safe-enough container to meet a team with its dynamics in the here and now becomes a real mastery when lived every step of the coaching journey. Team coaching becomes a unique expression of a team coach and practice that is truly congruent with who he/she is (Woudstra, 2021).

Environment for effective team coaching –
creating a safe container for impactful results

An environment according to the author is the entirety of conditions necessary for a team to become thriving (often referred in literature as high performing). In the context of real team coaching, a team coach is responsible for creating such a fruitful environment. A fruitful environment ensures that the anticipated results of team coaching, clearly defined between a coach and a team, will be achieved. First and foremost, this environment needs to be psychologically safe. How the team coach shows up as a person and as a professional (being congruent) is another condition for creating a fruitful environment. This is creating trust wherein a coach adheres to a personal coaching philosophy that springs out of his/her core values and beliefs and alignment to high professional standards. Trust and psychological safety are interconnected constructs. Being true to a real coaching philosophy is embodied in the ability of a team coach to let go of their need to control the agenda, moving beyond the ego 'know it all mindset'. The ability to let go relates to a team coach's level of consciousness, maturity, wisdom and humility.

Woudstra (2021 p. 211) defines container as the 'psychological space' in which coaching takes place. It is the coach's role, as she points out, to help the team co-create a space in which knowledge, understanding, learning, energy, ideas, tensions and dissonance can be contained. Over time, the coach transitions their role to the team itself, which then maintains its own container.

Psychological Safety

The term psychological safety was introduced from Prof. Amy Edmondson. As she points out Psychological Safety is *"a belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes and that the team is safe for personal risk-taking".* (https://amycedmondson.com/psychological-safety/, seen on 24.08.23).

Peters and Carr (2013, p. 23) distinguish 'safety' and 'trust'. They argue that safety is a critical component of building trust. Their belief is that trust is more of a psychological label that is applied when people feel safe in a conversation, interaction, or relationship. Their view on psychological safety is an 'in-the-moment' experience that can be physiologically measured by tracking changes in a person's heart rate and blood pressure. (Gottman, 2012). This view bridges to the neuroscientific perspective. Trust is an emotion and is presented in the London Protocol of Emotions[1] as one of the 'intelligent emotions' interestingly grouped as one 'trust/love'. (Brown & Djendrovski, 2018).

Peters and Carr (2013, p. 23) also point out the importance of every member of a team to behave in ways that contribute to a safe environment.

Letting Go

In his ongoing studies of coach evolution towards greater level of maturity (Clutterbuck and Megginson, 2011), a recurrent theme is letting go of the need to control or manage the coaching conversation. Clutterbuck (2020) describes the most enlightened coaches as *'holding the client, while he or she has the conversation they need to have with themselves.'*

Humility

Humility in the context of team coaching according to the author comes from the inner core of a coach – his or her own stance, values, purpose, philosophy and the ability to let go of the need to control the agenda of the team. It requires a level of maturity, experience and consistent wholehearted committed work to personal inner development and professional development. Humility also stems from the unconditional belief of the coach in the team (an interdependent and dynamic whole) that it has and/or can build the capacity to solve its own challenges through finding creative solutions.

The amalgama of a team coach's presence and professional knowledge creates the conditions of a safe container within which the team development takes place. And as Woudstra (2020, p. 39) points out *"The work of a real team coach comes from the heart. It emanates from a deep trust in yourself and in the coaching process. This requires to know yourself – what you believe and stand for."* And as team coaching is emergent it requires constant adaptation to the team dynamics. It is very much akin to ancient Taoism where through observation of natural patterns and movement of nature one adjusts oneself to this flow.

Holding a safe space requires competences and capabilities. Hawkins (2017 p. 261) distinguishes between competencies and capabilities. While both in his view are about know-how, capabilities relate to how the team coach knows when and how to use and apply different skills. In addition, he refers to 'capacities' as relating *"to one's being, rather than one's doing"*.

In her overview Widdowson et al. (2020) explains based on what Drake (2009) has suggested in terms of coaching mastery that it can be mapped into four domains of knowledge: foundational knowledge, professional knowledge, self-knowledge, and contextual knowledge. Knowledge in its different dimensions creates the conditions to hold the space for a team to become a real team. Knowledge allows inner trust, trusting the emergent and unexpected process, enhances humility and the ability to let go.

In Figure 1 the author has presented the conditions that stem from a team coach as a person and professional to create a self-container within which an emergent process of team coaching takes place. A team coach's core is shaped based on the accumulation of self-knowledge, foundational, professional knowledge, and contextual knowledge.

Source: Author's view.

Figure 1. Team Coach's CORE

Widdowson et. al (2020, p. 40) in their thorough review outline the current research with the explanation of what foundational, professional, self and contextual knowledge is.

- *Foundational knowledge:* The literature suggests that a team coach needs to have knowledge of group dynamics, team psychology, team coaching models, theories on stage development of teams, and types of teams, including virtual teams (Grijalva et al., 2020; Hawkins, 2017; Leary-Joyce & Lines, 2018; Mathieu et al*.,* 2017; Carr & Peters, 2013; Thornton, 2019). Regarding what model a team coach should use, Thornton (2016 p. 123) has commented *"models have their uses, if we remember they offer a starting point, not an end point".*

- *Professional knowledge:* Professional knowledge refers to the competencies and methods based on research and scholarship used by practitioners to engage in coaching

practice and reflect on outcomes (Drake, 2009). Professional knowledge is about 'what I do' or the doing (Alexander & Renshaw, 2005). Van Nieuwerburgh (2017) suggests that coaching skills along with the coaching process are key elements to successful coaching.

•*Self-knowledge:* Self-knowledge refers to the awareness, maturity, and wisdom based on personal development of practitioners and their clients as they participate in coaching (Drake, 2009). One's 'way of being' stems from the work of Rogers (1975) who proposed the term to refer to a person's ability to build empathy and a relationship with another person. He continues to say that this happens when a person is secure enough in their own self, that they can focus on the other person, almost putting their own agenda and thoughts to one side.

•*Contextual knowledge:* Contextual knowledge refers to the subject matter expertise, organisational savvy, and strategies based on a systemic understanding of the client's issues and objectives in coaching (Drake, 2009). It is evident in the literature, the importance of the team coach not losing sight of the wider picture, seeing the client as part of a network of relationships, referred to as systemic team coaching or systems thinking in the coaching literature (Hawkins, 2011, 2014, 2017; Leary-Joyce & Lines, 2018).

What is NOT team coaching

What Clutterbuck (2020 p. 118) points out is that team coaching is NOT *"coaching individuals, who happen to belong to the same team (although the team coach might do this additionally), coaching only part of a team, coaching a group or a reporting team (except where the intention is to support the group in becoming a team), team building (although this may be a side benefit of the team coaching activity) – there has to be an outcome focus, process facilitation (aimed at solving specific problems), one-off intervention such as off-site workshop, but it is a partnership over time focused on a joint purpose, training and consultancy focused on fixed methodology."*

Understanding what team coaching is NOT, a comparison between other team development modalities will be done. This will create clear boundaries as when starting to work with a team there should be a clear understanding about what exactly team coaching is and what the role of a team coach is. Upon my own reflection, this topic came to the forefront a few years ago when I was asked to coach a team, and although spending a significant amount of time explaining what it was (to the leadership team and during the initial meeting with the team), the whole way through the three coaching sessions the team was talking about 'team training', as in their experience and minds they needed fixing, and the solutions for them to become a coherent team, were expected to come from outside. Naturally we removed ourselves from this project as the

team obviously was not ready for such an intervention. It raises again the importance that early on, before a possible team intervention occurs via team coaching, that a leader and a team to be educated on what real team coaching is, how it is different from other team development modalities and what the difference between a team and a group is. Many groups perceive themselves as teams, which they are not.

Team coaching as we discussed is a client-driven process, meaning the client chooses the focus of the conversation while the coach listens, ask questions and shares observations. Moreover, the coaching intervention is designed to create awareness as a catalyst for learning and growth. (Woudstra, 2021). Results come as manifestations of the client's intentions, and within a safe container which the team coach creates. Team coaching serves to accelerate a client's (team) transition to become what they aspire to become.

"A team is not a problem that needs to be analysed and solved but a potential to be unfolded" – Daniel Meier (2005)

As Woudstra (2021 p. 28) points out *"Coaching, counseling, training, facilitation and consultancy all have their distinct standards, trainings and professional bodies. The knowledge, skills and behaviours of each role are different, and each has a different intent. If you are not clear about your role, then client won't be either and, most importantly, your impact will be diluted."*

Comparing the roles in each of the development modalities let's see where the team coach stands:

Table 2. The different roles in team development modalities

ROLE	BEHAVIOUR
consultant	Researching, diagnosing, analysing, advising, solving problems, presenting reports…
trainer	Developing curriculum, teaching concepts, skills, knowledge, strategies, tools…
facilitator	Designing an agenda and managing the meeting process, allowing the team to focus on the content…
team coach	Partnering, holding the space, contracting, listening, questioning, direct communication, creating awareness, checking progress… *"Not for the faint-hearted"* (Woudstra 2021, p.26)

Source: Woudstra, 2020, p. 28.

The owner of the decisions to solve the team's challenges is the team. The team coach helps generate their awareness by which they own the process of becoming a real team, which usually relates to how they work together (how they: structure and manage meetings, engage in dialogue, make decisions, engage with stakeholders and other teams, work with ambiguity and change, challenge and support one another, hold each other to account, consciously and continuously learn as a team. (Woudstra, 2021).

Other elements to compare between team development modalities are: who is the client, how long the team intervention is, what the purpose of the intervention is, and who is the expert in this intervention.

Source: Author's view based on ICF's Team Coaching Competencies v 13.11.

Figure 2. The Team Development modalities

It is certainly visible that Team coaching clearly stands out compared to other modalities on both criteria – time and ownership. In real team coaching the owner of the process is the TEAM, as pointed out in this article. In other team development modalities, the owner of the process is the expert who can be an instructor (team building), trainer (team training), facilitator (team facilitation), consultant (team consulting), or mentor (mentoring). As Woudstra (2021, p. 31) points out, coaching a team is slower than facilitation, *"but the gains outweigh the investment of time."*

In terms of time, team consulting and team mentoring may vary. Mentoring can have a staccato rhythm and occur over a longer period of time.

Hawkins (2017) presents a continuum of team coaching which is shown in Figure 3.

Team Facilitation	Team Performance Coaching	Leadership Team Coaching	Transformational Leadership Team Coaching	Systemic Team Coaching
Process Focus During Team Events	Task and Process Focus	Task, Process and Stakeholder Focus	Task, Process, Stakeholder and Organizational Transformation Focus	Task, Process, Stakeholder, Organization and System Focus

Low — COMPLEXITY — High
Internal — FOCUS — External

Source: Peters and Carr, 2013, p. 19.

Figure 3. Continuum of team coaching and team interventions

The complexity of the team intervention grows from team facilitation to systemic team coaching as it becomes even more holistic when including stakeholders external to the organisation. To reach such complexity, a client needs maturity. It is the author's own observation while coaching a leadership team some years ago that they were ready to be coached to become a real team, but when challenged from the author as a team coach towards the end of the coaching process about engaging external stakeholders, there was resistance.

The simplest beginning of a team coaching process is facilitation. The origin of facilitation means 'the act of making something easier' (Woudsta, 2012) And indeed the act of facilitation is to make it easier for the team while managing the process for them.

As Peters and Carr (2013) argue, facilitation is legitimate team intervention and may be an element of team coaching. The author's observation is that it serves well in initial sessions (1 or 2) as it is a 'warm up' for diving deeper to a space where the team feels empowered to think for themselves and embrace ownership. *"But its focus on process instead of content is insufficient for helping a team to accomplish its work over time and in the everyday workplace"* (Peters and Carr, 2013, p. 19).

There is another level of depth when a team coach coaches a team. In comparison to Hawkin's (2017) continuum where complexity grows through including external stakeholders, as they are part of the broader system (environment) within which a team operates, Woudstra (2021) moves to levels that go deeper in complexity which

relate not only to the team coach's capacity and maturity but also to the client's (a team) capacity and maturity. Woudstra (2021)'s 'team development', 'team process coaching' and 'live team coaching' variations of team coaching are presented in the author's view below in Figure 4.
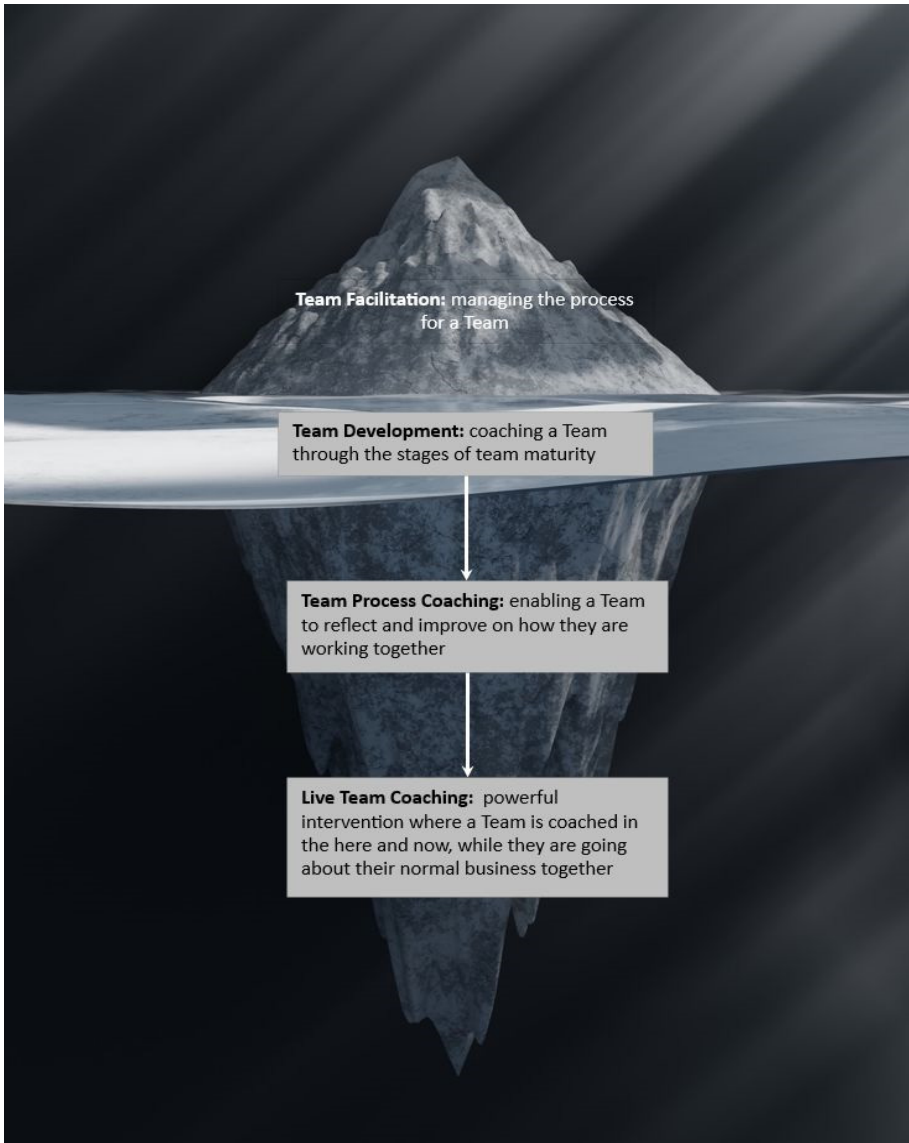

Photo credit: Simon Lee

Source: Author's view based on Woudstra, 2021, p. 32-34.

Figure 4. The Iceberg of Team Coaching (author) including Woudstra definitions

In the author's view, moving from facilitation to team development, to team process coaching and to live team coaching is going deeper vs Hawkin's (2017) perspective going wider. This depth requires a mastery of skills like letting go and being humble. In essence this is the space where a team coach masterfully uses herself/himself as an instrument that enables and inspires sustainable change for a team.

Both movements, deeper and wider, are necessary as is the nature of the environment within which teams operate.

Comparison between team coaching and group coaching

We compared the team development modalities based on the criteria, role (behaviour), time and ownership (who is the expert?). It is important to compare team coaching with another modality 'group coaching'.

Group coaching focuses on the learning and development of individuals in the group, where the individual experience is enhanced by learning in a group context. (Woudstra, 2021)

Woudstra (2021) argues that group coaching is growing in popularity as it is often more effective and economical than providing one-to-one coaching across a company. It is clear that the differences between team coaching and group coaching is both with the client and the goal.
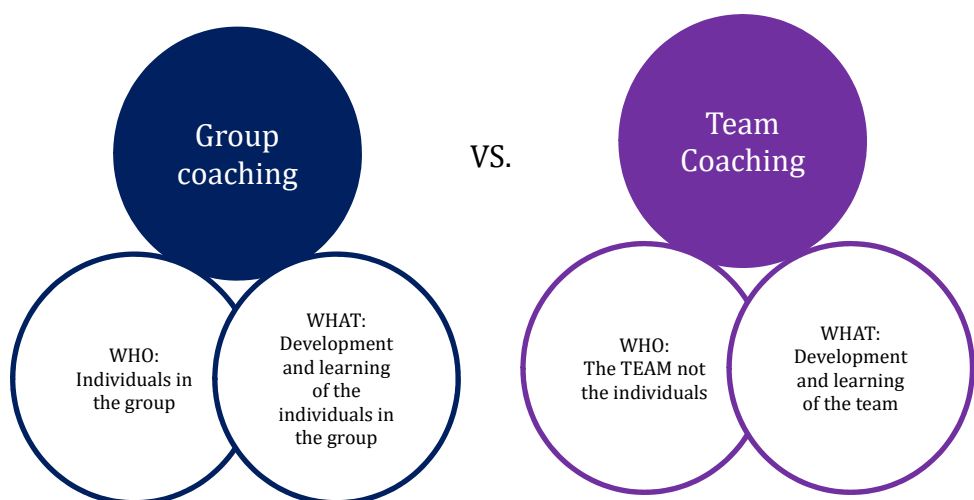

Figure 5. Differences between Group Coaching and Team Coaching

Does a group need to be a team?

Differences between groups and teams

The discussion about group and team coaching naturally flows into the topic about what is a group and what is a team.

Katzenbach and Smith, 1993:45 define *a team* as *"a small number of people with complimentary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable".* (Peters and Carr 2013 p. 9). Thompson et al. (2000, p. 9) *built interdependency* into their definition: *"a group of people, who are interdependent with respect to information, resources and skills, and who seek to combine their efforts to achieve a common goal".* (Thompson, L. T., Aranda, E. K., Robbins, S. P., & Swenson, C. (2000). *Tools for teams: Building effective teams in the workplace.* Pearson.)

The Association for Coaching (AC), defines *a team* as a *"collaboration between a recognised group of people drawing upon individual capabilities and strengths who are committed to working together interdependently to achieve a common purpose and collective performance and learning goals."* (AC, 2022)

A group is a collection of people who report to the same person, work within the same kind of function or department, require little interdependence to achieve objectives, have minimal mutual accountability, are not rewarded for achieving common goals. (Peters and Carr, 2013)

What stands out from the definitions of a group and a team is the purpose (common goals) and interdependency amongst the members which is bound to collective accountability.

Group	*Team*
Collection of people who: • report to the same person • work within the same kind of function or department • require little interdependence to achieve objectives • have minimal mutual accountability • are not rewarded for achieving common goals	A relatively small number of people (3 to 12) who: • share common goals and the responsibility for achieving them • share rewards for achieving the goals

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
GROUP   TEAM

Source: Peters and Carr, 2013, p. 9.

Figure 6. Differences between groups and teams

With respect to real team coaching, the question is to clarify before any intervention 'is this a team' or 'a group that needs and wants to become a team'. Clarification of these critically important aspects will define the 'right' environment for team coaching to take place.

Some groups may not have the need to become a team. Some teams who are effectively work groups label themselves as teams and in reality, they act like independent people who happen to be in the same function, group or location.

Hackman and Wageman (2008), argue that effective team leadership ensures functions that are most critical for a team purpose to be fulfilled and they outline four sub principles supporting this main one. The first of these subprinciples is: decide *whether or not a team is appropriate for the work to be accomplished (1)*, followed by deciding what type of team to create (2), create structural and contextual conditions that facilitate teamwork (3) and finally coach the team to help members take full advantage of their favorable performance situation (4). Team coaching being the 4th principle is an enabling factor. It is there to help the team minimize its exposure to the dysfunctions that often are observed in task-performing teams (known as process losses), and to maximize its chances of capturing the potential synergies that teamwork can bring (process gains). (Hackman and Wageman, 2008)

Leaders need to decide if they need a team for what they aspire to achieve. Hence before talking about team coaching at all the main question is 'Do you need to be a team?'. Hawkins (2018) argues that although the world needs many higher performing teams, they are not the panacea for all the problems of the world and therefore do not need time and emotional investment. He (Hawkins 2018) also outlines the different types of group formations like consultative advisory groups, a reporting and information sharing group, a decision-making body where the work is carried out by others, a task-focused work group.

Virtual teams

It is important to look into team coaching of virtual Hadzhiev (2021) teams. In his monograph *'Virtual Team Management: theory and methodology'*, Hadzhiev (2021) outlines the context in which virtual teams emerge and evolve. He claims that virtual teams are the adequate organisational model in a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous) environment and with constant pressure for change. Virtual teams as a new paradigm naturally emerges because of the advancement of information and communications technologies, which are transforming the economy, business and

institutions in society. Other economic factors such as unprecedented number of company bankruptcies and corporate mergers showcase the inability of a number of organisations in various sectors of the world economy to adapt to the dynamic changes in the external environment.

Linpack and Stamps (1996) give a useful definition of virtual teams: "*A virtual team, like every team, is a group of people who interact through interdependent tasks guided by a common purpose.*" (Hawkins, 2017).

Hadzhiev (2021) argues that virtual teams are the natural evolution of self-managed teams, which have a competitive edge as in these types of teams, there is high level of cooperation and members' interchangeability. The uniqueness of self-managed teams in comparison with groups and teams is that their members have the power to take decisions, to manage internal processes and at the same time assume managerial and technical responsibilities.

The main barriers to work in a virtual team are cultural differences, and underestimating the value / importance of the information technologies for their effective functioning.

Based on his extensive research on virtual teams Hadzhiev (2021, p.401) sums up the unique characteristics of virtual teams which make them strong and able to reach synergistic effects.

These characteristics are:

- Virtual teams include individuals with additional skills (technological, functional, interpersonal, cognitive and social), develop unique cultural attitudes and empathy for specific common goals, approaches and methods; therefore, have more resources, ideas and energy;

- Virtual teams maximize the potential and minimize the individual weaknesses

- Virtual teams generate alternative solutions as they offer more perspectives for the realization of the defined goals;

- Virtual teams share the triumph of success and the burden of loss. Jointly shared responsibility encourages sincere empathy and reinforces the sense of empathy;

- Virtual teams are individually and mutually responsible for achieving the goal;

- Virtual teams multiply the effects of the realization of strategic company goals and objectives.

As Hadzhiev (2021) points out, a very important prerequisite for the efficient functioning of virtual teams is the supportive environment, which finds specific expression in the framework of the organizational infrastructure adapted for the purpose (process, structure and systems).

From a team coaching perspective, there has been little research on virtual team coaching (Hawkins, 2017). Pam Van Dyke (2016), has done useful work researching virtual group coaching. Godman and Stewart (2011) have provided a useful approach to facilitating virtual action learning groups, which are a widely used variant of group coaching. Pam Van Dyke concludes that there is both art and science to creating a virtual presence both during the session as well as in between meetings. (Hawkins, 2017). She points out that very few coaching trainings currently provide training in working with virtual coaching. Hawkins (2017) points out that team coaches need to develop new skills and methods to coach on video and audio meetings of the team, ensuring that relationships are built and misunderstandings checked out.

In the author's experience of virtually coaching leadership teams, there are a few factors that need to be ensured for a successful intervention:

1) A trust built over at least a few face-to-face interactions (although the current environment challenges us when it is necessary to have a start directly online as teams can be dispersed over a few countries)

2) Delegating the digital management of the live team coaching sessions to someone else, as this way a team coach can be fully present to step into their role

3) Frequent feedback in between the virtual team coaching sessions

4) Utilising the technological resources as they evolve, to ensure a more exciting and fun experience in such a digital environment.

Having said that, virtual team coaching does not compromise the results of team coaching. It is about how a coach will create the safe container for a team to do their work. It is about presence. From presence, where the transformational work takes place, we can move teams to make their leap to collaborate for good and sustainably thrive.

Collaboration for Good

What does collaboration really mean? *"Collaboration is the key to resolving the challenges ahead at every level, from the global to the local. It will also be critical to the*

success of tomorrow's organisations, all of which need to be orientated towards helping to clear up the mess we have made" (Woudstra, 2021, p. 6).

As Woudstra (2021, p. 7) points out, collaboration is *"difficult, complex and challenging, as it is vital"*. She suggests that to flourish within the current ecosystem we live in, we need to change the narrative from 'I' to 'WE' and to be motivated by such a compelling purpose, that it will adapt the best talent from the world. Woudsta (2021) believes that we need to increase the number of team coaches, partnering with teams and networks of teams in order to unleash their potential to collaborate more effectively. And this is because team coaches guide and challenge teams to work more effectively together, both within their own team and with other teams across alliances and partnerships.

In their article *Eight Ways to Build Collaborative Teams,* Gratton and Erickson (2007) share that the sum of the following six behaviours equals the verb 'to collaborate': (1) to share knowledge freely, (2) to learn from one another, (3) to shift workloads flexibly, (4) to break up unexpected bottlenecks, (5) to help one another complete jobs and meet deadlines, (6) and to share resources. Gratton and Erickson (2007 p.5) argue about the critical importance of creating a 'gift culture' (*"one in which employees experience interactions with leaders and colleagues as something valuable and generously offered gift"*). Teams do well when executives invest in supporting social relationships, demonstrating collaborative behaviour themselves.

Gratton and Erickson (2007) conducted research, exploring the practices of collaborative work in contemporary organisations. Their objective was to study the levers that executives could pull to improve team performance and innovation in collaborative tasks, for example new solutions to business problems, new product development, etc. This research was conducted jointly by the Concours Institute and the Cooperative Research project of London Business School, with funding from the Advanced Institute for Management and 15 corporate sponsors. A total of 1543 people replied (64% response rate), where separate surveys were administered to group members, to group leaders, to the executives who evaluated teams, and to HR leaders at the companies involved. In total, more than 100 factors were considered and on the basis of statistical analysis, eight correlated with the successful performance of teams handling complex collaborative tasks.

Collaboration is seen as a cluster of skills and inner qualities in the IDG Framework (See Figure 8). This cluster contains: communication skills, co-creation skills, inclusive mindset, intercultural competence and mobilization skills.

Table 3. Eight Factors That Lead to Success

Factor	Explained
1. Investing in signature relationship practices	Executives can encourage collaborative behaviour by making highly visible investments – in facilitates with open floor plans to foster communication, for example that demonstrate their commitment to collaboration
2. Modeling collaborative behaviour	At companies where senior executives demonstrate highly collaborative behaviour themselves, teams collaborate well.
3. Creating a 'gift' culture	**Mentoring and coaching** – especially on an informal basis – help people build networks they need to work across corporate boundaries.
4. Ensuring the requisite skills	Human resources departments that teach employees how to build relationships, communicate well, and resolve conflicts creatively can have a major impact on team collaboration.
5. Supporting a strong sense of community	When people feel a sense of community, they are more comfortable reaching out to others and more likely to share knowledge.
6. Assigning team leaders that are both task- and relationship-oriented	The debate has traditionally focused on whether a task or a relationship orientation creates better leadership, but in fact both are key to successfully leading a team. Typically, leaning more heavily on a task orientation at the outset of a project and shifting toward a relationship orientation once the work is in full swing works best.
7. Building on heritage relationships	When too many team members are strangers, people may be reluctant to share knowledge. The best practice is to put at least a few people who know one another on the team.
8. Understanding role clarity and task ambiguity	Cooperation increases when the roles of individual team members are sharply defined yet the team is given latitude on how to achieve the task.

Source: Adapted from author – Gratton and Erickson, 2007, p. 7.

From intrapersonal to interpersonal transformation and organisational thriving

In her doctoral thesis, the author's main hypothesis is that sustainable organizational thriving can be achieved through a leader's wholehearted commitment to their intrapersonal transformation, and a team's wholehearted commitment to their interpersonal transformation, and this process can be accelerated through coaching (one on one and team). It is the author's belief, which has been researched in a longitudinal case study, that it is the executive leader who first needs a high level of consciousness obtained through deep inner work (intrapersonal transformation) to inspire and lead their teams to do the collective work to interpersonal transformation. A collective higher level of consciousness which shifts at the core – how a team shows up from within, in interactions and work with other teams and beyond the organization. What is a team's capability is to connect and collaborate to achieve a meaningful purpose and inspirational vision. This sequential work expanding inside-out to become sustainable, is presented in the work of the initiative Inner Development Goals (IDGs), which we are going to explore further in this article.

The author's observation is that very often teams and working groups within an organization exist in isolation from one another and there is hostility, competition and conflict between them (e.g. Sales vs Operations department). Being ready, mature (Hinova-McNamee, 2022) and actually doing the collective work, inspired by top executives and senior leadership teams, where this work is assisted and accelerated from team coaching, helps individuals and teams to understand the whole, the dynamics, the interconnectedness and the interdependence of the organisational system and how they are influenced and can influence through their collective behaviour the system beyond the organisational body, as illustrated in fig. 6. And this work happens in the here and now, it is messy (Hinova-McNamee, 2023). Behaviours can be shifted in the here and now, only when attitudes are addressed, which in essence is getting to the core of the inner work. Collective experiences are a complex mixture of individuals' fears, assumptions and beliefs. Behaviours can shift when honesty and healthy challenge takes place in a safe container and there is unity around a compelling purpose and vision co-created from the members of the system (teams and inter-teams). And for this behavioural shift to be sustainable, it means the work has been done consistently over a long period of time with wholehearted commitment.

In his recent article *A Capability Framework for the New Ball Game*, Deiser (2023) confirms the author's view on developing an organizational capability for *'the new ball game'.* One of the critical strategic competencies as he points out is *Decentration Competence,* which means that in order to shape an ecosystem, companies need to step out of an ego-centered frame of reference and see the world as a complex network of interrelations of capability.

Deiser (2023) sees that strong self-identity (CORE in the authors' model fig. 8) is a basis for sustainable existence in an ecosystem, where purpose is an *"anchor of identity"*. Deiser (2023) points out that the Decentration Competence consists of two critical capabilities: perceive yourself not as center of the universe but as part of an overarching system (1); understand the interdependencies and dynamics between the system's stakeholders (2).

With a strong CORE (Figure 8) where purpose is an integral part, positive impact on the interdependent ecosystems (internally and externally) naturally becomes part of the organisational strategy. It is concluded from the first study of Impact Business Models (IBMs) led by UTOPIES' think-tank in partnership with B LAB and a selection of companies, during the year 2022/23.

"The B Corp movement and, in particular, the B Impact Assessment (BIA)[1]*, provide a valuable and time-tested framework to guide and support companies striving to make Impact Business Models (IBMs) a reality. Indeed, B Corp sets a high standard in terms of intentionality, scope, originality and impact management. In doing so, it confronts companies with the inherent complexity of IBMs, leading them to identify sticking points, to explore and push boundaries within the company's existing business model, to examine the adjacent possibilities in search of a solution, or rather, THE right solution: a new source code combining profit and collective interest"* (IBMseries VOL 1 I IMPACT BUSINESS MODELS: THE ADJACENT REVOLUTION, p. 24).

Inner capacity in the organsational ecosystem needs to be created and which happens via intrapersonal and interpersonal transformation. The Inner Development Goals Initiative focuses on building this inner capacity.

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[1] Used by more than 150,000 businesses, the B Impact Assessment is a digital tool that can help measure, manage, and improve positive impact performance for environment, communities, customers, suppliers, employees, and shareholders; receiving a minimum verified score of 80 points on the assessment is also the first step towards B Corp Certification.
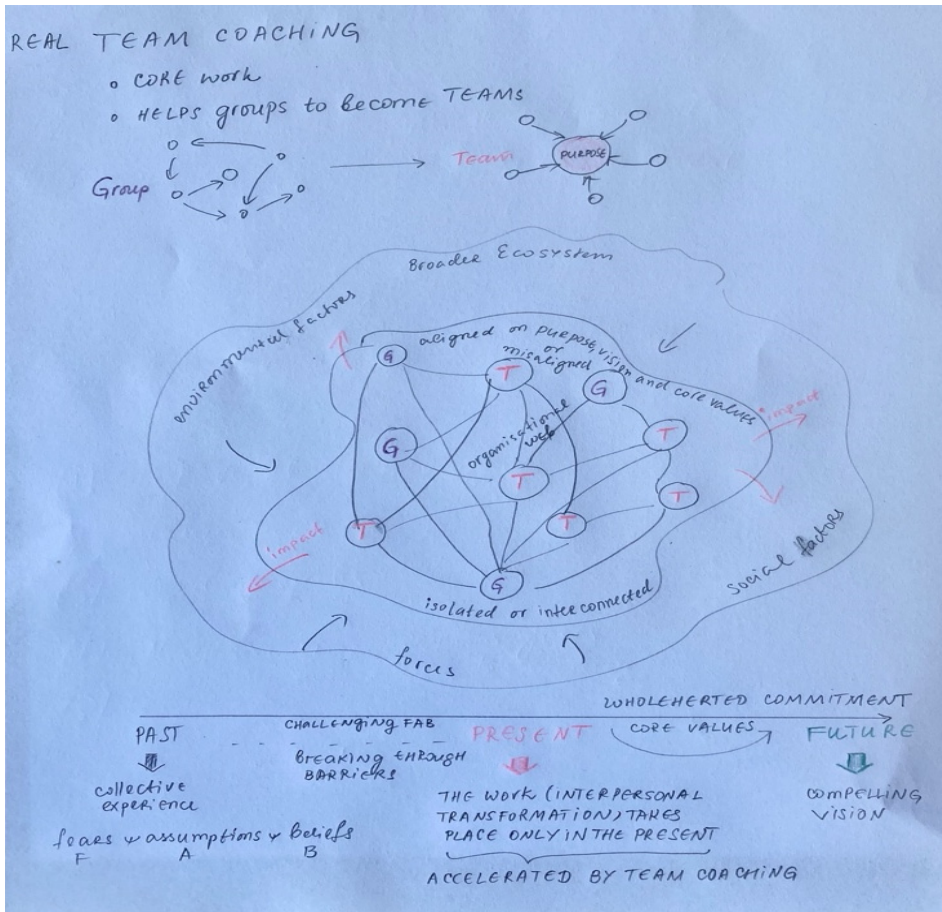
Figure 7. Interdependences and the collective work teams
need to do in the here and now (author's view)

The Inner Development Goals (IDGs) initiative

Inner Development Goals (IDGs) is a non-profit organization for inner development. They research, collect and communicate science-based skills and qualities that help us to live purposeful, sustainable, and productive lives. The starting point for this initiative was a belief that there is a blind spot in our efforts to create a sustainable global society.

The IDG project was initiated in 2019 by a number of organisations that identified an urgent need for the development of relevant skills and qualities for inner growth of leaders who work with complex societal issues. Their aim is to educate, inspire and empower people to be a positive force for change in society, in their own lives and

those around them, and at the same time find purpose and meaning in their lives. The initiators of the IDG project were motivated by a belief that what has been largely missing is a keen insight into what abilities, qualities or skills we need to foster among those individuals, groups and organisations that play crucial roles in working to fulfill their visions. Their argument is that we talk far more about what ought to be done to resolve the problems out in the world, than we talk about how to build skilfulness among the actors who are in a position to make the visions happen.

When facing challenging tasks, there is a need for a range of cognitive and emotional skills and other qualities that go beyond what most people normally learn in schools and higher education. They believe that significant knowledge and insight has accumulated over the years about what these skills and qualities are and how they evolve, in several research fields, such as adult learning and development and in the study of strategic leadership regarding complex issues, such as sustainability studies.

The founders[2] of the IDGs did two surveys, the first one was launched publicly 1 March 2021, the second one on 19 April. This is the starting point of their research to find out and validate what are the inner capacities (ability, transformational skills and inner qualities) we need to develop to contribute to a more sustainable global society. Based on the analysis of the first survey, 30 categories were outlined by the researchers, which according to them were *"too many from a purely pedagogical point of view".* Further discussions to overview, where a steering group was involved, gave birth to the IDG framework where 22 skills and qualities were grouped into 4 main categories: Cognitive skills; Values, attitudes and identifications; Relationship to self; and Social skills. This evolved to what appears in Figure 7 as result of numerous discussions amongst the steering group, the reference group of researchers and at a series of workshops with invited participants from the MindShift network. Official academic partners of the IDG initiative and research included Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm University, Karolinska Institute, and Lund University. Additional reference group of researchers and experts who contributed significantly along the process of developing the IDG framework, among others include Amy C. Edmondson, Ph.D., Harvard Business School; Jennifer Garvey Berger, Ph.D., Harvard University; Otto Scharmer, Senior Lecturer, MIT Sloan School of Management; Peter Senge, Senior Lecturer, MIT Sloan School of Management; Robert Kegan, Ph.D., Harvard University; and many other distinguished experts.

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[2] The Inner Development Goals were officially founded in 2020 by Ekskäret Foundation, The New Division and 29k Foundation together with a group of researchers, experts and practitioners in leadership development and sustainability. The IDGs aim to simplify and make accessible the knowledge already existing in the field. The basis of their work is grounded in a science-based understanding of inner development, and what is needed to support a sustainable future.

Source: IDG Template Book, 2023.

Figure 8. IDG Framework

In the second survey (Growth that Matters AB, 2021), respondents were invited to review the list of 22 skills/qualities and rank the 10 items they deemed most important. The weighted top ten list for all the 813 respondents turned out this way:

1. *Co-creation skills*

2. *Complexity awareness*

3. *Communication skills*

4. *Connectedness*

5. Empathy and Compassion

6. Courage

7. Self-awareness

8. Appreciation

9. Openness and Learning mindset

10. Inner compass

It is evident from the top 4 items, that co-creating skills, being on top of the list, calls for collective work and collaboration being done within teams in a complex environment. The

capacity for this work to be executed in a coherent way requires inner capacitates like self-awareness, courage to speak up and show up (role modeling), openness and a learning mindset, empathy and compassion to others (sprouting from within, starting with self-compassion and a strong inner compass). And, last but not least, appreciation of others.

The IDG Framework clearly unfolds the inner capabilities developed through inner work starting from being to thinking to relating to collaborating. It is through intrapersonal transformation that we can see beyond our small selves and prepare to collaborate, which requires interpersonal transformation.

This is where team coaching assists collaboration to become a natural way of team being for the purpose of serving a compelling vision where positive impact in the world is imminent. Because as Woudstra (2021, p. 8) states *"team coaching is about creating spaces where **teams can connect, think and rewire how they work together**. It is not something you do to a team; it is something **you do with a team**. You must develop the approach within yourself, and model it for others, to be effective in applying it to teams."*

The influence that is in control of any organisational system is what impact they consciously choose to have.

Putting it all together

As it was described from the author, an organisation as a living organism consisted of interdependent and interconnected teams, consisted of interdependent and interconnected individuals, which in its ideal state of existence is **thriving** with the ability to deliver outstanding results sprouting from a compelling purpose that serves positively our society and planet.

The author's CORE model© for interpersonal team transformation (Hinova-McNamee, 2021) has emerged as a result of a repeated pattern observed during work with individuals and teams. The author has created the CORE model© for intrapersonal transformation (individuals) and the CORE model© for interpersonal transformation (teams). In this article, the CORE model© for interpersonal transformation is presented.

CORE comes from the Latin word '*heart or inmost part of anything'* (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2022)

Interpersonal transformation in the context of the author's research is defined as a shift of collective team energy and, as a result, strong interconnectedness, interdependence and

synergy in the way they work. Interpersonal transformation is accelerated with team coaching. A team coach strongly believes in the 'systems intelligence', which is as described from Dan Siegel (Siegel, 2022, p. 91) *"the innate capacity of complex systems to self-organise toward harmony as they adapt and learn if they are allowed to differentiate and link, enabling the interdependence of their parts to flourish."*

This is not a prescriptive model as the philosophy of team coaching is emergent in the here and now and is client driven (the team). It is a principled framework, which is to ignite conversation within a team and let them choose where to start their journey. The author's observation is that naturally they start from the CORE. A human system to be self-organised 'knows' intuitively that they need a purpose, and clarity where they want to be. And in order for this complex system to thrive, collectively agreed behaviors are needed to guide harmonious relations between each other. Team core work is focused on clarifying and aligning around their CORE. As presented in fig. 8 below, the CORE of a team is their purpose, vision and values. Visually the CORE is the innermost part, it's invisible and strong (as the core of any fruit in nature). And it is at the heart of team thriving when collectively co-created and nurtured, ensuring sustainability in turbulent times.

Looking at the whole model, we see the different forces that create the conditions for a team's transformational work. These forces are outer and inner. They are presented as 'outside-in' in the top layer of the model and 'inside-out' in the second layer of the model.

<u>Outside-in:</u> the environment organisations operate in is constantly changing. It serves as a trigger and reality check in the organisation. The outside environment comprises of:

- *Nature:* relationship with nature and impact on it (a healthy relationship impacted from business processes and practices that ensure its recovery and preservation)

- *Human (social) factors:* relationships with key stakeholders outside the team/organisation.

- *Human created factors:* political environment, technology, economy – adaptability and organisational influence on it.

Outside environment pushes any organisational system to adapt, evolve and grow. What would help this adaptation? How would team CORE stability ensure smooth navigation in such an environment? How creative a team will be to find new solutions

and thrive in a constantly changing environment? These are guiding questions and a team coach will sense what questions to ask to inspire a dialogue around change, transformation, adaptability, and conscious response to what is out of a team's control. Environment is an epigenetic factor (in some environments one thrives because it provides 'right' conditions, like fertile soil, in other conditions one just survives). And whilst teams and organisations can't choose the outer environment, they do have a choice how to respond consciously. They have a choice of what environment to collectively co-create internally in their organisations. The relationship within and between the internal teams, and the overall organisational environment, is what the author calls 'organisational epigenetics'. The responsibility, to co-create an environment that enables teams and consequently organisation to thrive, lies in leadership teams. They are the engineers of this fruitful environment which enables thriving. They are the organisational epigenetic engineers.

Inside-out: the inside-out work is a constant process of alignment and check-in with a team's CORE. Inner alignment with a team's CORE comes first (if this is the team's choice). A challenging outside environment naturally pushes such a choice.

When the CORE work has been done, it leads to consistent and engaging behaviors from teams and consequently the whole organisation (interconnected teams). It is inside-out, because inside change affects the outside environment, such as the way the organisation consciously responds through innovative solutions and the positive impact they have on nature and society. A team coach's purpose is to help through team coaching this process of alignment to take place initially. This is through empowering them in a safe environment to have conversations that matter for them and to collectively take decisions and committed steps. At a certain point of their journey, which is unique for each team, a team coach must let them be and evolve. This is a self-sustainable approach.

And for a team to become a thriving, they need to do their work, which is the bridge work (see Figure 9). This in essence is the work of harmonizing a team with its CORE (purpose, vision and values). Real team coaching accelerates this process.

When collective team energy is high, which comes with trust, joy, excitement as a 'product' of compelling and meaningful purpose and vision, work happens with ease, engagement and in harmony. Differences are embraced and used to channel the team's energy in their consciously chosen direction.

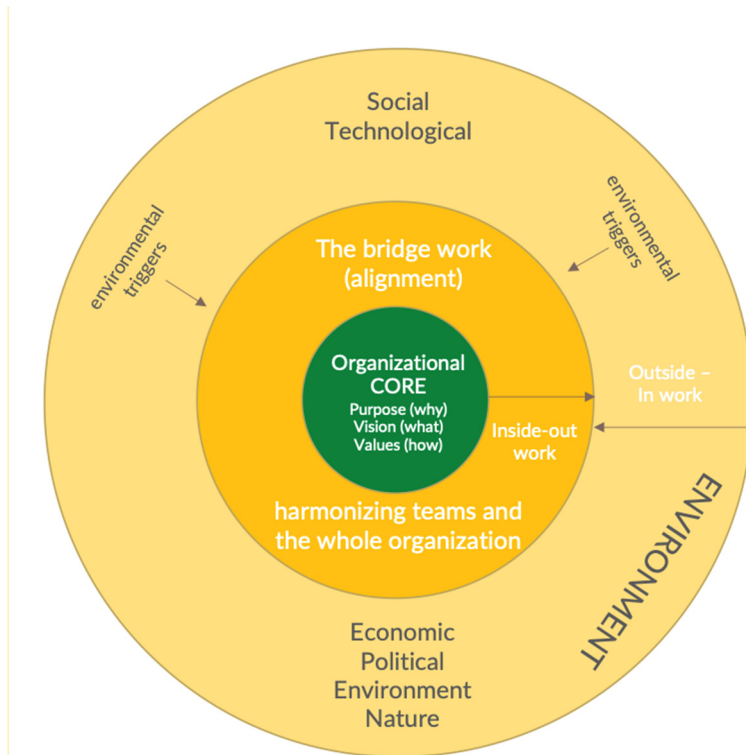Inside-out and outside-in are in dynamic interplay.

Figure 9. CORE model© for interpersonal team transformation

Conclusion

In this article we started to connect the dots between teams and the broader necessity to serve and impact in a positive way the environment within which organisations operate. Team coaching as one of the newest and least researched team development modalities was defined. It was unraveled what team coaching is NOT and what are the conditions for real team coaching to take place, so it can serve a team to become thriving. The differences between teams and groups were explored, as it is essential to the topic who we coach. The role of a team coach was distinguished and put into context of serving a team to transform to become who they aspire to become so that they can fulfill their core purpose and vision in a coherent and values aligned way. The author's CORE model© for interpersonal team transformation was presented, which can serve a frame to guide conversations within a team so that they become a real team. A centre point of becoming a real team is collaboration. Real teams and thriving organisations (comprised of teams) positively impact the world to become a place more deserving to inhabit.

Conflict of interests

The author has no conflict of interests to declare.

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