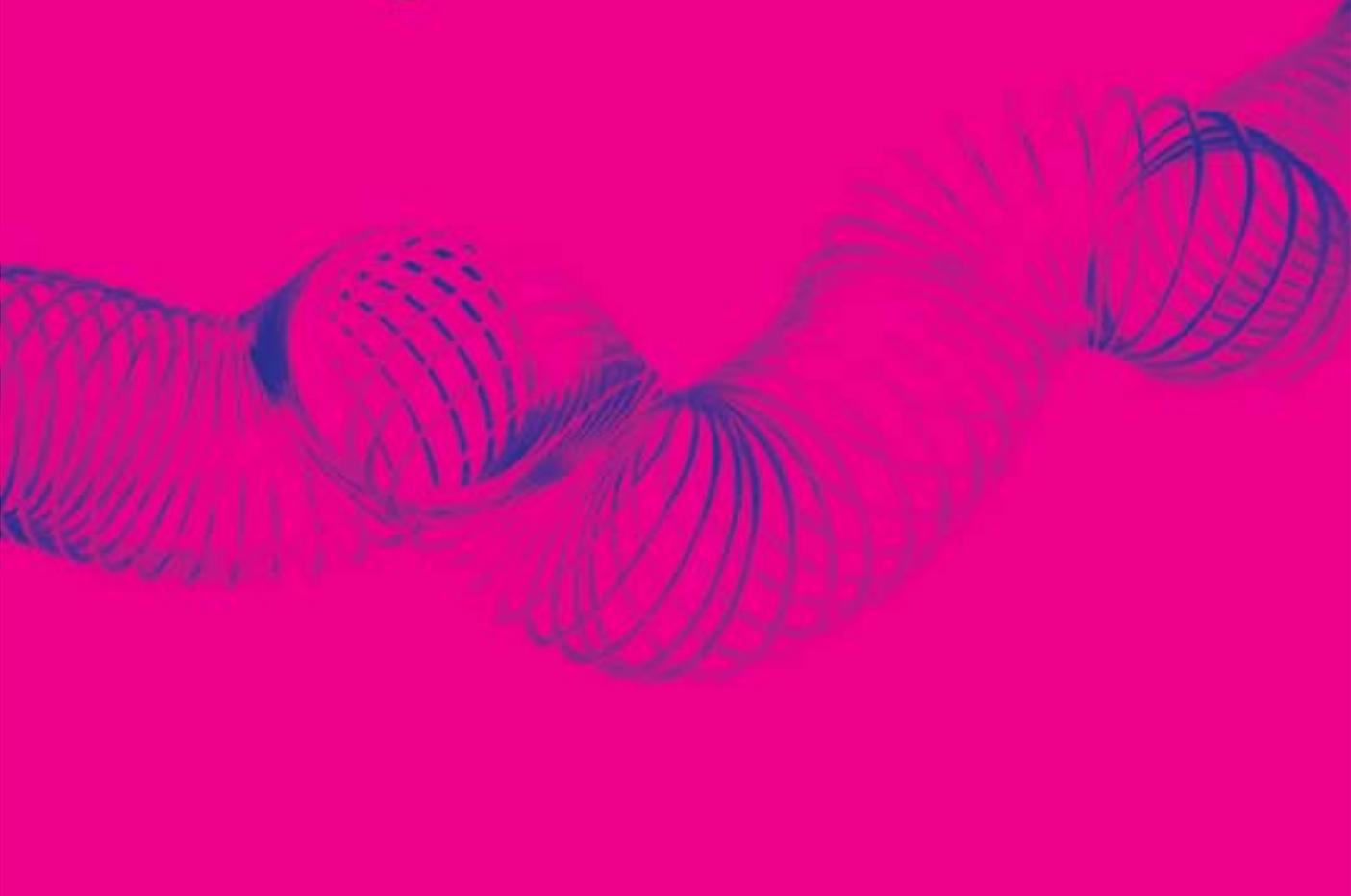


insight series



Team Coaching versus Team Facilitation: How to Choose

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Published Insights
(downloads available from lifetimeswork.com)
2006: Key Success Factors for Internal Coaching
2006: My Value Coaching model – a means of how
to consider and extend a leader's contribution
2007: Team Coaching versus Team Facilitation

2008 planned: How to Build Resilience

It is a pretty well known style of intervention, getting an external consultant in to help with team bonding or facilitation. The former does what it says on the tin – it's about building the team's understanding of one another, often in a fun and active way. Facilitation on the other hand can encompass a whole variety of objectives, and is used to forward propel the team's effectiveness around certain organisational issues.

Team Coaching on the other hand is not the same. Many coaches who offer executive one-to-one coaching also offer team facilitation; the latter is done using a coaching style but is not the same as Team Coaching. Why?

This paper explores the differences. It is based on the [lifetimeswork](http://lifetimeswork.com) collective experience of facilitation within commercial organisations, versus our experience now as coaches. The ideas are based on our understanding of the general aspects of facilitation and are not meant to be fully comprehensive.

Team Facilitation

In the pure and simple sense, facilitation is a process, a means of leading a group to decisions and/or actions. It comes from the French, *'faciliter'* and means to make easy or easier. The facilitator's job is to lead the team process towards agreed-upon objectives in a manner that balances getting things done and feeling good about the way they were achieved. It's about encouraging participation, ownership and creativity by those involved. Strong steering may be necessary to achieve this.

Facilitation – The *What Is Defined*

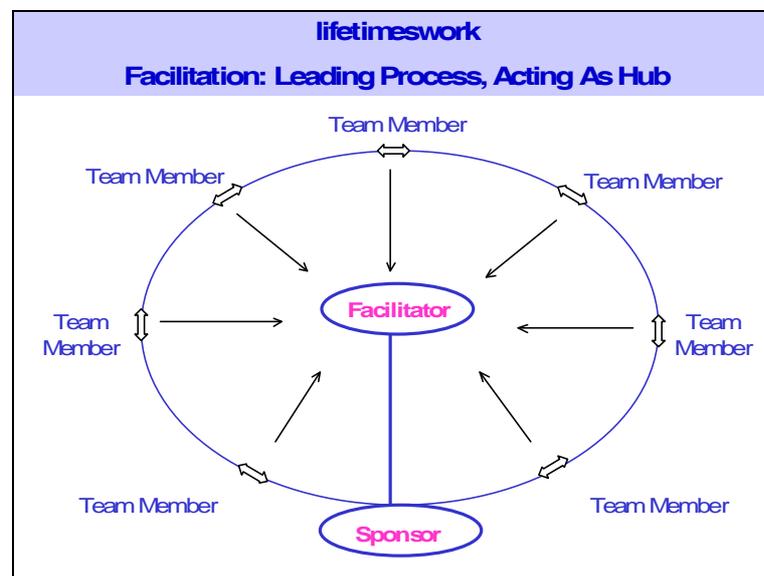
The overall objective is set by the sponsor, most often the boss of the group. So the facilitator knows the sponsor before the group meeting. This anchors their relationship throughout the course of the team discussion, and special attention is paid by both to communicate subtly with one another whether the sponsor is satisfied with the meeting's progress.

Team members are participatory in the meeting. They may also set some of the objectives for the meeting; often in our experience these are on the how something should be managed; they are often not responsible for defining the overarching organisational objective for the group meeting.

Facilitation – The *How Is Defined*

How much control the facilitator deliberately extends into the meeting is dependent on the overall group dynamics and whether they are judged to be aligned with the overarching objective of the meeting. If they are not, the facilitator will act strongly to drive the discussion and action; if they are aligned, a softer approach will be used.

In both situations the facilitator essentially acts as a hub for the information/decision flow throughout the meeting, ensuring it is aligned to achieving the sponsor objectives:



Team members are encouraged to participate and own the outcomes, and questions such as 'If x is to happen, what do you need?' are often used to stimulate debate about the how to achieve the objective. Thus team members share with one another throughout.

Overall then, the facilitator directs and controls as necessary to deliver the desired organisational outcomes, as set by the sponsor. Overall outcomes may include team member specific outcomes, but never at the expense of the overarching objective.

The facilitator's job is to lead towards agreed-upon objectives, encouraging participation and ownership, so that a balance is achieved between getting things done and feeling good about it. Strong steering may be necessary to achieve this.

Team Coaching

Coaching is about being enabled to perform at your best with the assistance of a coach who will challenge, stimulate and guide you. The heart of coaching is all about enablement of self-learning. The *how* of the coaching, the appropriate coaching process, is co-created by the coach and client; it is often a creative and flexible process..

Lifetimeswork Team Coaching – The *What Is Defined*

Following the **lifetimeswork** standard process, the overall objectives are set by every individual in the team. All members are given equal credence, and all members must articulate what they want for the team and themselves as members of the team.

The process followed uses two individual and confidential one-to-one coaching sessions. The first is for understanding and setting personal objectives; the second is a feedback session where the individual's desires for the team are verified *and* they are given direct feedback about how they seem to play in the team against these objectives. Attitudes, behaviours, habits, blocks are mentioned, and the individual's value to the team is explored. This means each member is challenged to step up to their full mark of what they might offer to move the team to excellence.

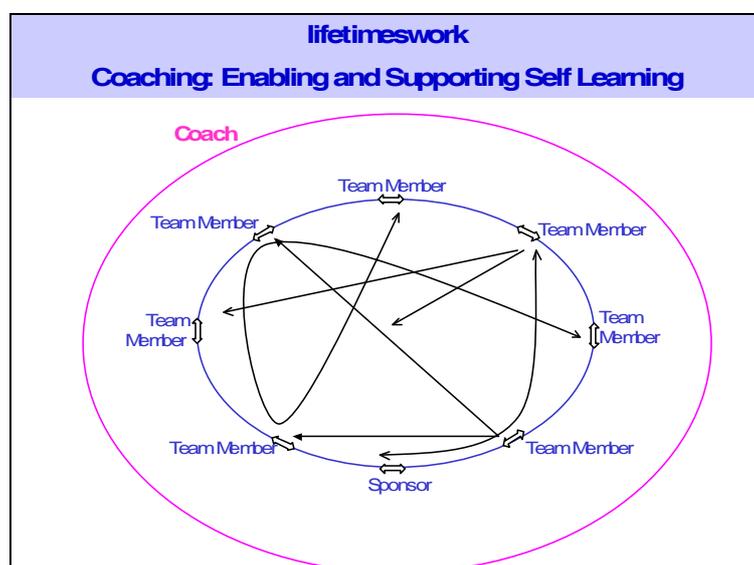
Common themes drop out of these sessions, and with each member's permission, are highlighted to the whole team. These then form the objectives for the Team Coaching session.

Lifetimeswork Team Coaching – The *How Is Defined*

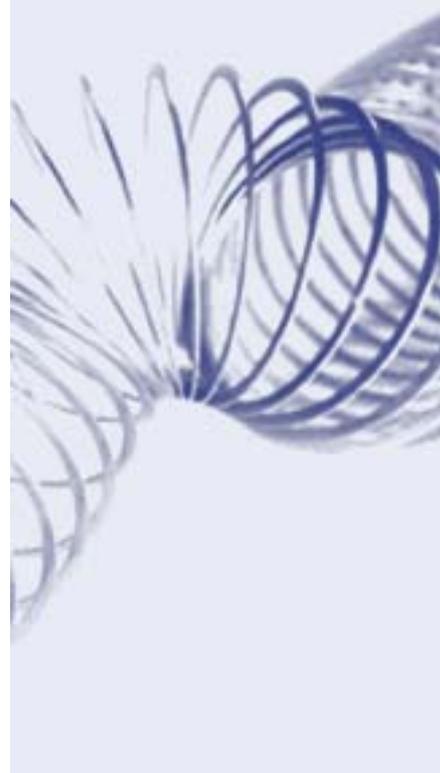
Within the team session the coach's has a dual role. The first is to support each individual in moving towards delivery of their full value, enabling them to step outside their comfort zone through support and challenge. The second is to coach the team overall on understanding and making the most of each member's value collectively, in order to achieve their common objectives.

There is no defined way how to do this, the coach must dance in the moment, following, encouraging and challenging the energy of the team session. The value of the coach is when there is an intervention that helps clarify understanding of how to achieve the common objectives. Coaches do not direct or steer the meeting – instead they allow the action to happen, and will intervene only when there is added value to be given. Even when there is misalignment within the team, the coach will allow the discussion to flow freely, and support only when there is need to clarify or unblock. In the **lifetimeswork** experience, the most common Team Coaching intervention is to support individuals so *they themselves* provide the clarification or impetus for the team to move forward.

The fundamental job of the coach then is to enable self-learning - for each individual and for the whole team – on how they can operate more successfully together.



The most common Team Coaching intervention is to support individuals so *they themselves* provide clarity or impetus for the team to move forward. As such the coach does not steer the team but supports team members.



When choosing the style of support you require for a team, organisational sponsors must look to three aspects to define their outcomes:

- **What level of motivation do I need**
- **What level of confidence do I need**
- **How much investment can I give to stretching the team's performance.**

Team Coaching Example

NHS Forth Valley Community Alcohol and Drugs Unit

This situation was highlighted by external intervention from the governing body on addiction that said the NHS Forth Valley wait times were unacceptably long. Internally there had been so much change, including a new management team and internal struggles with staff to follow a new way of treating clients. Confidence and trust were low.

lifetimeswork followed our Team Coaching process, with initial one-to-ones, feedback sessions, two in-depth team sessions and further one-to-one support for each leader. The first team session was revelatory for the leaders – whilst each had been struggling with their own frustrations, they hadn't realised they all felt the same way. Also, when looking at individual value into the team, they realised how complimentary their strengths were, and how they could achieve what seemed the impossible. A completely new model for treating clients was developed and put in place. Wait times came down and the governing body themselves got involved in supporting the new way of working.

For further information please see the NHS Case Study on www.lifetimeswork.com

Conclusion

When choosing the style of support you require for a team, organisational sponsors must look to three overriding aspects to define their outcomes: what level of motivation do I need, what level confidence do I need, and how much investment can I give to stretching the team's performance. The choice of Team Coaching versus Team Facilitation. The following situations will act as a guide:

When to use Team Coaching

When a team wants to go from Good to Great quickly in terms of their own performance

When you want each member to be challenged to give their full contribution to the team's performance

When you are prepared to invest in leveraging the combined potential of the team towards newer, more stretching horizons

When you require the confidence of every member of the team to fulfil your team's potential. Often required in periods of change, ambiguity and for long-term sustainable performance

When there is lack of agreement or even clarity over what the team goals are

When there is energy to invest in improving team performance for the future; NB coaching does not have to take more time, but it does require going deeper

When you require personal commitment from every member of the team

When to use Team Facilitation

When a team is 'stuck' in the urgent and needs fast mobilisation to achieve a very focussed end goal

When it's inappropriate to turn the heat up on individuals within the team

When pressure of short-term workload would mean you as the sponsor or boss can't give the appropriate level of investment for leveraging the team's potential

When there is sufficient confidence and alignment to get the job in hand sorted

When clear end goals have already been agreed upon

When all energy is focussed on a set of specific goals, often short-term problems

When your goal can be fulfilled by some of the team who will already be at least committed