

Introduction

01

Why the world needs top-performing teams and the argument for team coaching

The importance of teams

Working with others is at the very heart of our human experience. Human history can be considered a story of how people have worked together in groups to explore, achieve and conquer (Kozlowski and Ilgen, 2006). It would be a pessimistic view of humankind not to marvel at what we have accomplished and continue to accomplish when working together. It has been suggested that being in and learning to cooperate in groups is at the root of not only our business success but 'of all our achievements as a species' (Thornton, 2016: 4). While we need to work in groups to survive and achieve, being in a group is also considered essential to our mental fulfilment (Bion, 1961). As humans, we need groups to be mentally fulfilled, physically survive and to achieve things together that we could never achieve apart.

Despite the human need to be in and work in groups, it has been suggested that western philosophical tradition has celebrated the individual as the key to change (O'Connor and Cavanagh, 2016). This focus on the individual has been evident in how work was historically designed. It has been suggested by Kozlowski and Ilgen (2006) that the modern idea of work in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is largely a story of work as a collection of individual jobs; however, this story has changed as global forces have forced organizations to 'restructure work around teams, to enable more rapid, flexible, and adaptive responses to the unexpected' (p. 77). Despite the restructuring of work around teams, individual leadership development still dominates, including the growth of executive coaching. The focus on team development is often resigned to organizational values that eulogize

the virtue of the teamwork in name only, corporate conferences where well-intentioned motivational speakers share insights from team conquests, and enforced attendance at the often-dreaded team building event. More sustainable attempts to develop teams is evidenced through the growing popularity of 'high-performance team' programmes and the focus of this book, team coaching.

It has been suggested that there has been a move away from the idea of a 'heroic leader', towards an increased focus on teams and the wider system (Lanz, 2016; Whittington, 2016). Agreeing with this view, Hawkins (2014) has suggested teams have greater potential than individuals to rise to the growing challenges facing organizations. To meet these challenges, he has recommended a shift in focus towards 'highly effective leadership teams' (p. 22). While we agree with each of these sentiments, we would argue that the enormity of the task facing humankind, given the growing global population, the ecological crisis, the risk of global pandemics, the demand for continued economic growth, political instability, the global battle between liberal and conservative values, and the continued impact of technological advancement, all mean that heroic leaders will still be important and top-performing teams will be even more essential. It is our intention that this book will contribute to the important work of teams, at all levels in organizations.

What is a team and how do teams differ from groups?

The word team is widely and often loosely used, with many teams being a team in name only. So what constitutes a team and how do they differ from groups? Katzenback and Smith (1993a: 45) suggest a team is 'a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.' This commitment to a common purpose and performance goals, they argue, is the specific way that a team differs from a group. Nevertheless, as highlighted by Forsyth (2014), while some definitions of a group highlight the need for a shared purpose or goal, most agree that a group is 'two or more individuals who are connected by and within social relationships' (p. 4).

For the purposes of writing this book, we are a team of two. However, this book would never have been written without the support of our families, the publisher and many other stakeholders. No team operates in a vacuum, a point

captured by Thornton (2016) who has stated that ‘a team has an explicit shared purpose and/or task, usually in a broader organizational context’ (p. 11). A comprehensive definition, that can serve as a checklist to ascertain if a team is indeed a team, has been proposed by Kozlowski and Ilgen (2006), who have suggested that a team should, among other aspects: include two or more individuals who possess one or more common goals; exhibit interdependencies with respect to workflow, goals, and outcomes; and be embedded together in an encompassing organizational system, with boundaries and linkages to the broader system context and task environment.

The challenge with teams

While teams are vital to organizational performance, research shows that many teams are not high performing. For example, Wageman *et al* (2008: 12) in their study of 120 senior leadership teams, discovered that only 21 per cent of the teams could be described as performing to an outstanding level, with 37 per cent mediocre and 42 per cent considered poor performers. More recently, Price and Toye (2017: 49–51) in their analysis of 3,000 teams, reported that only 13 per cent were operating at the highest-performing level, in what they refer to as accelerating, with 28.5 per cent advancing, 31 per cent steady, 19.5 per cent lagging and 8 per cent derailing. Interestingly, they also found that teams at director level and above performed worse, with only 9 per cent considered accelerating, compared to 15 per cent accelerating at below director level. Also of interest was their finding that the closer a team is to the customer, the more likely it is to be accelerating. Importantly, they also recorded that teams at the highest level of performance had, on average, an economic impact 22.8 per cent higher than that of derailing teams.

The widespread preoccupation in society with individualism would appear to be a key issue as to why teams don’t perform better. Supporting this view, Kozlowski and Ilgen (2006) have powerfully stated that ‘given the centrality of work teams, it is more than a bit remarkable that we have a strong individual-centric perspective in the western world. We school our children as individuals. We hire, train, and reward employees as individuals. And yet we have great faith that individuals thrown together into a team with little thought devoted to team composition, training and development, and leadership will be effective and successful’ (p. 115).

We believe that team coaching can help ease the tension between individualism and the team. With this in mind, this book has been written to benefit not only team coaches, but anyone who leads, is part of or works with a team.

Team coaching in relation to other forms of team development and intervention

Given the growth of team coaching, it is not surprising that there is a debate about how team coaching differs from other team interventions. While the debate is important, the subsequent confusion is not helpful to purchasers of team coaching. An example of this was apparent during a workshop we hosted at Henley Business School in the autumn of 2019, where a delegate shared that having been both a vendor and a supplier, she and many others remained ‘muddled’ as to the question ‘what is team coaching?’

Before discussing and proposing our definition of team coaching, we believe it is helpful to understand it in relation to other forms of team development and intervention. It’s important to note, though, that there remains little agreement on *how* team coaching is different from other team interventions (Lawrence and Whyte, 2017). Highlighting the confusion, Megginson (2013), when writing the foreword for the 2013 Ridler Report, stated that ‘a challenging finding (for me) is the clear evidence for the growth of what people call ‘team coaching’. For sceptics like me, who are not even convinced that such a process differs significantly from action learning, team building and other established interventions, the sharp question raised by the report is, ‘Do you want to get on board, or will you risk missing the bus?’ (p. 2). With demand for team coaching continuing to grow, we agree with Jones *et al* (2019) on the need for differentiating and defining team coaching.

The following sections will discuss three areas of intervention, which in our experience are often confused with team coaching: group coaching, including action learning sets/learning groups; team building; and facilitation, including process consultancy.

Group coaching (including action learning sets/ learning groups)

It has been suggested that group coaching attends to the coaching of individuals within a group, whereas in team coaching, the client is considered to be the whole team (Hawkins, 2017). Helpfully, the same author has highlighted that action learning differs from group coaching, due to its focus on the challenge presented. Similarly, when discussing the difference between learning groups and teams, Thornton (2016) has noted that in learning groups, the group goal is individual learning, compared to team coaching,

where common learning goals are important. She further observes that while individual learning still takes place during team coaching, it takes place in ‘the service of the team achieving its shared purpose’ (p.11).

While these statements help differentiate group coaching (including action learning sets/learning groups) from team coaching, what may complicate the reality of practice is the discovery by Lawrence and Whyte (2017) that some team coaches adapt the action learning process for use in their team coaching work.

Team building

Team building has been described as interventions designed to improve ‘effectiveness in working together by confronting and resolving problems’ (Boss, 1983: 66). Kriek and Venter (2009) have similarly suggested that team building tends to focus on interpersonal relationships and improved productivity or improved alignment with an organization’s goals. In addition, they highlight that team-building interventions typically consist of a one-day (or potentially more) intervention, with examples including: interventions based on fun and enjoyment (eg paintballing); interventions that simulate workplace dynamics (eg an obstacle course); assessment-based interventions (eg personality assessments); and problem-solving activities (eg experiential games).

In a challenge to the benefits of team building, Clutterbuck (2007) suggested that the ‘efficacy of team building is mixed at best’ (p. 108), and that while it does appear to improve relationships between team members, this does not necessarily translate into longer-term performance improvement. Several reasons are suggested for the lack of long-term impact, two of which include: the potential long intervals between team-building activities, punctuated by normal working patterns; and the potential for deeper behavioural or interpersonal issues only being temporarily addressed.

Personally, we both have positive recollections of organizing and being part of team-building events but despite this, the events were normally ‘one-off’ interventions that took place at infrequent intervals and our experience was that improvements in performance were short-lived and not sustained. In contrast to the ideal of ‘one-off’ interventions, we agree with the view expressed by Jones *et al* (2019) that team coaching is considered to typically take place over a series of sessions. It has been proposed that team building should be viewed as ‘any process used to help a team in the early stages of team development’ (Hawkins, 2017: 72). It is therefore clear that while a

team-building event may be useful as part of an overall team coaching intervention, it is not team coaching.

Facilitation (including process consultancy)

Clutterbuck (2007) is clear that whilst a coach may at times use facilitation skills, the difference between team coaching and team facilitation is important. A team facilitator provides external dialogue management to help a team reach decisions, whereas a team coach is concerned with empowering the team to manage their own dialogue. He also reflected on how similarities with aspects of facilitation can result in team coaching being depicted as ‘a sub-genre of a coaching style of facilitation, or alternatively, a facilitative style of coaching’ (Clutterbuck, 2014, p. 281).

Hawkins (2014) has attempted to bring clarity by considering team facilitation as part of a continuum of team coaching. Alongside team facilitation, where the coach is mainly focused on helping the team manage their team processes, the other parts of the continuum include: team performance coaching, where the focus is on both team processes and performance; leadership team coaching, where the focus is on the collective leadership; and finally transformational leadership team coaching, where the coach is working with the team to help them transform the business. Another perspective has been proposed by Hastings and Pennington (2019) who, from their study of experienced external team coaches, noted that the pragmatic approach described by team coaches included, at times, taking on more of a facilitator role, especially when creating a coaching space.

Another area worth exploring is process consultancy. Schein (1988) has defined process consultancy as ‘a set of activities on the part of the consultant that help the client to perceive, understand, and act upon the process events that occur in the client’s environment’ (p. 34). To best do this type of work, Schein (1990) suggests a ‘facilitative’ style of consulting. In addition, he calls for consulting to learn from psychotherapy, social work, teaching and coaching, in prioritizing the relationship with the client as central to the work. Hawkins (2017) considers process consulting as a form of facilitation in which the consultant helps the team to review and reflect upon the task process. He suggests that team coaching is likely to use less of a diagnostic type language and better balance a problem and appreciative focus, by exploring what is and isn’t working well. Nevertheless, he suggests that team coaching has much to learn from process consultancy where the consultant is described as walking ‘alongside the client, in a spirit of partnership, facilitation and co-inquiry’ (Hawkins, 2017: 73).

In summary, while it is important to differentiate and define team coaching, we would caution against team coaching undermining one of its key strengths: its ability while using a coaching approach to draw upon multiple disciplines and approaches.

Defining team coaching

There is almost universal agreement that team coaching is a relatively new concept that lacks consistency of definition, practice and empirical evidence (Clutterbuck, 2014; Jones *et al*, 2019; O'Connor and Cavanagh, 2016). Before defining team coaching, it is useful to consider how practising team coaches work. To this end, Lawrence and Whyte (2017) interviewed 36 team coaches, to explore what practitioners do. They concluded that team coaching is essentially about the process. Five approaches to the process were discovered, none of them mutually exclusive and each relied upon to differing degrees: task, relational, developmental, dialogic and broad systemic. In addition, they discovered four main methodologies used by team coaches, again each to differing degrees: educational, behavioural, action learning and planned vs emergent approaches. Similarly, Hastings and Pennington (2019), from their study of team coaches, reported a focus by team coaches on 'the interpersonal relationships, relational dynamics and systemic context of the team, rather than an explicit focus on task performance' (p. 184).

Different team coaching definitions have highlighted the importance of:

- a common goal, group collaboration and performance, and individual performance (Thornton, 2016);
- team learning to increase collective capability and the application of coaching principles (Clutterbuck, 2014);
- thinking 'systemically' and not just within the confines of the team (Hawkins, 2017);
- partnering with a team in a relationship over time (Clutterbuck, 2020).

Jones *et al* (2019) described team coaching as 'practice-led' and 'pre-theory' and have suggested that without an agreed definition of team coaching, it will be difficult for the literature to develop. In what they described as the 'first systematic exploration of a definition of team coaching in relation to alternative team interventions' (Jones *et al*, 2019: 62) they reviewed 15 team coaching definitions published since 2000, and analysed the responses from 410 web-based interviews. They have defined team coaching as:

a team-based learning and development intervention that considers the team to be a system and is applied collectively to the team as a whole. The focus of team coaching is on team performance and the achievement of a common or shared team goal. Team learning is empowered via specific team coaching activities for self and team reflection, which is facilitated by the team coach(es) through the application of coaching techniques such as impactful, reflective questioning which raises awareness, builds trusting relationships and improves communication. A team coach does not provide advice or solutions to the team. Rather, team coaching requires advanced coaching skills from the coach such as considering multiple perspectives simultaneously and observing and interpreting dynamic interactions and is typically provided over a series of sessions rather than as a one-off intervention (p. 73).

We welcome this definition by Jones *et al* (2019) as an important base from which team coaching theory can be developed. Following much discussion, our own definition of team coaching is as follows:

Team coaching helps teams work together, with others and within their wider environment, to create lasting change by developing safe and trusting relationships, better ways of working and new thinking, so that they maximize their collective potential, purpose and performance goals.

Our definition includes seven key elements, as outlined here:

Team coaching

It may appear obvious to state that team coaching should have coaching activities and a coaching philosophy at its heart. It is our experience that most purchasers of team coaching are already well versed in what coaching activities entail. However, given the difficulty of working with group dynamics, the complexity of the challenges facing teams and the influence of multiple stakeholders, team coaching is both different and more demanding than individual coaching. Team coaching should be carried out by a suitably qualified internal or external coaching practitioner. In Chapter 2 we will propose an adaptation to Renshaw and Alexander's (2005) 'Being, Doing and Relating' coaching model, by proposing that a team coach should focus on: doing, the core coaching capabilities; knowing, specific areas of knowledge important for team coaches; and being, the importance of being able to connect deeply, to display confidence while retaining a sense of vulnerability, to have courage 'in the moment', and to continue to learn. Who exactly should team coach is an important question that we will address in Chapter 2.

Helps teams work together, with others and within their wider environment

At the most basic level, team members need to be able to work with each other. However, simply working with each other is not enough. Organizations are made up of a collection of teams that need to be able to work together. The importance of this principle is presented in the book *Team of Teams: New rules of engagement for a complex world* by McChrystal *et al* (2015). In the foreword of the book, Isaacson commented that, to triumph in this more complex world, organizations need to change and ‘this involves breaking down silos, working across divisions, and mastering the flexible response that comes from true teamwork and collaboration’ (p. vii). In addition, a team will only fully succeed if it is aware of, understands, acknowledges, interacts with, and ultimately serves the stakeholders in its wider environment. Coaching that embraces the wider system (systemic coaching) has been defined as ‘that which acknowledges, illuminates and releases the system dynamics so each element can function with ease. It is coaching that prioritizes the system’ (Whittington, 2016: 37). Chapter 7 will discuss creating self-awareness, team awareness and awareness within the context of teams’ internal and external environment.

To create lasting change

Team coaching should help a team to reach a place where they no longer require the team coach. A place where the team themselves embed a new way of being, doing and knowing. However, to create lasting change takes time. From our experience, individual coaches rarely contract for one, two or even three coaching sessions, with five to six sessions being more representative of the average. Regarding team coaching, irrespective of the number of sessions or the format in which the coaching takes place, team coaches need to partner with their client on a journey. Most journeys worth taking involve multiple destinations and stops.

By developing safe and trusting relationships

As will become evident as you read this book, it is our view that it is only by being in robust, healthy and trusting relationships, that humans can feel safe enough to individually and collectively flourish. Hawkins (2017) points out that while humans may never be able to put absolute trust in each other, it

is about trusting each other enough to disclose their mistrust. It's about there being enough psychological safety that everyone feels safe to contribute and challenge. It's about teams where low-level conflict is generative and creative, not destructive and demoralizing. It's about teams where support comes before the challenge and feedback is given with permission and purity of intent towards another. Chapter 8 will propose a model for developing team relatedness.

Better ways of working

While at times the team coach may step into what Hauser (2014) describes as the advisor role, the role of the team coach is not to be an expert in ways of working, but to be an expert in helping the team develop awareness, as well as create solutions that improve how they do their work. These solutions may involve bringing in a subject matter expert (eg agile expertise, process consultant). Within the context of how the team works together, internally in the organization and the external environment, the solutions might include: creating better ways to make team decisions; a radical rethink about how the team meets; and reviewing the team internal and external processes and rhythm (for example, this could involve adopting agile methodologies to move outside siloed ways of working). Chapter 9 will explore how team coaching can help teams develop their ways of working.

New thinking

Individual learning and development have been confirmed as key effectiveness outcomes for individuals receiving one-to-one coaching in the workplace (Jones *et al*, 2016). We are of the view that team coaching offers a unique opportunity for learning to take place at an individual and collective level. Thornton (2016: 30) writing in the context of groups and teams, has commented that 'in order to learn, we must encounter something new, something different to our previous experience, that at a profound level, momentarily disorients us'. A team coach can create a safe space where team members can take learning risks, they are unlikely to take elsewhere. A team coach can help a team to develop new thinking about how they: create and innovate together; embrace inclusion and diversity, including diversity of thought; take team well-being seriously, both mental and physical; and learn together and support each other in that learning. Chapter 10 will explore how teams can transform their thinking and learn together.

Maximize their collective potential, purpose and performance goals

The aim of any team coaching intervention should be to help a team perform in alignment with its collective purpose and work in service to its stakeholders. However, a team purpose without collective performance goals is like navigating without a map. The team must be clear on what its collective output should be. The team should be aware of what it can achieve by working together, that it could not achieve as a group of individuals. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 will explore the team purpose, identity, and values and beliefs, required as a base, from which a team can work towards maximizing their collective potential.

What type of teams can team coaching benefit?

It is our view that while team coaching has the potential to benefit any team, not every team will be ready for team coaching. Some initial questions worth considering include:

- Is this, in fact, a real team?
- How could team coaching potentially serve this team and its key stakeholders?
- Is team coaching the right form of intervention or should something else be considered?
- Does the proposed intervention best use the available team coaching resource?
- Is the context right for a team coaching intervention? (eg team and organizational readiness, practical matters – see Chapter 3).
- For team coaching to take place, is the composition of the team correct?

The design of a team coaching intervention will be greatly influenced by the type of team. Hawkins (2017: 125–26) has proposed the typical criteria used to classify teams, which include:

- **Duration** (eg project, stable or temporary teams).
- **Function** (eg sales, marketing, finance).

- **Customer** (eg X account team, Y account team).
- **Geographic spread** (eg dispersed, regional, national, international, virtual).
- **Position in the hierarchy** (eg board, leadership, front line).
- **Model of operating** (eg executive decision making, advisory, consultative, reporting).
- **Leadership style** (eg manager-led, self-managing).

Within the literature, there may be no agreement on an exact list of types of teams; however, there is an agreement that teams are multi-faceted and multi-dimensional. Offering an alternative on the very term team, Edmondson (2012) in her book *Teaming*, distinguishes between a team as a noun, being ‘an established, fixed group of people cooperating in pursuit of a common goal or purpose’ compared to teaming as a verb, a dynamic activity that ‘is largely determined by the mindset and practices of teamwork, not by the design and structures of effective teams’(p. 13). Edmondson gives the example of a hospital emergency department, where a team can quickly form at a moment’s notice, potentially without knowing each other’s names. Another important term in the context of teams is ‘agile’. Agile has been described as a way of organizing teams to work in an iterative, incremental, and highly collaborative manner (Thong, 2018). Hawkins (2017) has combined the terms teaming and agile to propose ‘agile teaming’, which he describes as ‘quickly forming (and ending) teams as needed to achieve project-based commissions’ that are ‘helped by using agile methodology’ (p. 349). Chapter 9 will explore how adopting an agile mindset and methods can benefit how a team goes about its work.

The teams we are most commonly asked to work with include:

- executive teams and boards;
- senior leadership teams (normally led by a member of an executive team);
- functional teams (sometimes includes multiple sub-teams);
- cross-functional teams (sometimes includes multiple sub-teams).

In addition, we are noticing an increased interest from teams that can best be described as:

- networks of teams (team of teams);
- dispersed teams (teams that never or rarely meet in person and operate virtually);

- joint account and client teams (normally consists of personnel from multiple functions in service of an agreed joint purpose and goals);
- temporary teams (applying the principles of team coaching in fast-changing environments);
- project teams (complementing already established project team methodologies).

Irrespective of the type of team, there are forces both expected and unexpected, which will continue to shape how teams work. An example of an unexpected force was the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 when a sudden requirement for employees to work at home resulted in many organizations rethinking their approach to remote working. Remote working will be discussed in Chapter 9. An example of an expected force is the ongoing advancement of technology, for example, 5G, fibre-optic broadband, IoT (internet of things), AI (artificial intelligence) and AR (augmented reality). We believe that team coaching needs to disrupt itself and that those team coaches who are innovative in how they integrate technology into their work will lead the future of how team coaching develops (Chapter 11 will discuss the implications and opportunities of technology for team coaches).

Does team coaching work?

The Ridler Report (2016) noted that while team coaching accounted for 9 per cent of total coaching, some 76 per cent of the organizations surveyed expected to increase their use of team coaching over the next two years. Lawrence and Whyte (2017) have estimated that about a third of organizations use team coaching. While not denying the growth of team coaching and its importance in coaching, this in itself is not evidence that team coaching is effective.

Jones *et al* (2019), while highlighting the contribution of Hackman and Wageman's (2005) Theory of Team Coaching, with its focus on coaching provided by either the team leader or group members, have suggested that it was 'not sufficiently inclusive for capturing the range of team coaching scenarios that occur in practice. Further, the model is yet to be empirically tested or validated.' They went on to state that, 'in the absence of any alternative models or frameworks on team coaching per se, the field of team coaching could thus be described as pre-theory' (p. 64). While team coaching effectiveness studies to date may lack the robustness of empirical testing or

validation, there are numerous studies that highlight the benefits of team coaching.

Some of these include:

- Wageman *et al* (2008) conducted research with more than 120 teams. They identified six conditions that impact team effectiveness, with team coaching being one of these conditions. In addition, they discovered that ‘outstanding teams had significantly more coaching, both from leaders and from one another, than did mediocre and struggling teams’ (p. 160).
- Anderson *et al*’s (2008) study with Caterpillar’s North American Commercial Division leadership teams. It reported that senior leadership teams which underwent a team coaching programme, as part of a wider culture transformation programme, reported an improvement in the overall effectiveness of their teams.
- ‘HCI & ICF: Building a Coaching Culture for Change Management Report’ (Filipkowski *et al*, 2018) highlighted a link between team coaching and the effectiveness of change management interventions.
- Peters and Carr’s (2013) case study entitled ‘The experience of team coaching: A dual case study’, based on two Canadian leadership teams, reported on improved collaboration, improved relationships, personal learning benefits, communication and participation improvements, as well as other positive impacts beyond the team.

Inspiration for this book comes from our experience of positive team coaching outcomes in multiple organizations. Additional inspiration is the research by Widdowson (2018), regarding the effectiveness of her ‘Creating the Team Edge’ framework on team effectiveness and performance within a leading UK retailer. The study involved in-depth interviews of five team leaders, whose teams each went through a ‘Creating the Team Edge’ coaching programme. In addition, six team coaches, who had run a number of team coaching programmes across the same organization were interviewed. The findings indicated that the team coaching intervention improved performance and effectiveness both for the team itself and at a wider organizational level (ie for teams reporting into and those working alongside). The study highlighted three main contributing factors to the improved performance (Widdowson, 2018). First, the teams worked on collectively creating a purpose and agreeing on why they existed. This enabled the teams to ensure that their values and beliefs (behaviours), identity and strategic objectives

were aligned to the purpose. Second, by creating a feeling of psychological safety, teams were able to be more open and honest, show vulnerability and give robust feedback. Finally, it was perceived that the team coaching process resulted in improvements in both individual and team learning, as the team shared knowledge and best practice with each other. The ‘Creating the Team Edge’ framework will be used to inform the key areas of discussion in Chapters 4 to 10.

Moving towards an empirically tested and validated theory of team coaching

In what was described as the first systemic examination of the effectiveness of individual coaching in the workplace, Jones *et al* (2016) concluded that individual coaching is effective in delivering individual learning and development and improvements in performance and results for organizations. They suggested that their findings provide ‘an evidence base from which practitioners can draw confidence’ (p. 270). A valid question to ask is, will team coaching effectiveness have to wait as long to be empirically tested or validated?

It has been estimated that team coaching is 20 years behind individual coaching (Hawkins, 2017). While this may be true, we would agree with the view that ‘team coaching is catching up fast’ (Lanz, 2016: 313). In addition, we believe team coaching will not have to wait as long as its successful forebearer to be empirically validated, specifically in the context of organizations. It has been proposed that the next important step for team coaching is the development of a comprehensive theory of team coaching that can provide a series of testable propositions to guide the research into team coaching effectiveness (Jones *et al*, 2019). Hastings and Pennington (2019) have alluded to the same point.

It is our view that team coaching demand will continue to grow, irrespective of the absence of validated effectiveness studies. Nevertheless, such evidence would be a welcome confidence boost and underpin what team coaches are already experiencing. That is, team coaching is on a journey to become one of the most powerful forms of team intervention, which significantly benefits teams, organizations and the wider organizational environment. We are hopeful that this book can contribute to that journey.

Our purpose and approach in writing this book

Our purpose as a team in writing this book is ‘to help teams within and across organizations collaborate better, to create meaningful lasting change’. At every stage, we have worked as a core team of two with an amazing network of support, as mentioned in the acknowledgements. The very writing of this book has been a team coaching journey in itself, as together we have created something we could not have completed apart. Together we have lived out the principles we have written about, through both the good and the more challenging periods.

In our work as authors and team coaches, we adopt an evidence-based approach. The evidence in this book is drawn from the developing literature on team coaching and other disciplines, such as team effectiveness, group therapy and individual coaching. We are also privileged to have worked together in making a joint contribution to the discipline of team coaching (Widdowson *et al.*, 2020; Widdowson and Barbour, 2020) and separately to both team coaching (Widdowson, 2018) and conflict resolution (Barbour and Bourne, 2020). However, what brings us the most joy is the exchange between theory and practice. Together we bring a combined 60 years of experience as leaders and executive and team coaches. As we reflect on our experience throughout this book, both of us are indebted to the individuals we have led and coached, as well as to the teams we have been part of, both through leading and team coaching.

How to use this book

Chapters 1–3

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 – Beyond tools and techniques – discusses our views on what it takes to be a team coach. Chapter 3 – Team coaching frameworks, models and approaches – introduces readers to the ‘Creating the Team Edge’ framework that includes a model of team effectiveness and an approach that can be used by team coaches.

Chapters 4–10

These chapters discuss the seven characteristics of team effectiveness as outlined in the ‘Creating the Team Edge’ framework. The book discusses

team purpose (Chapter 4), team identity (Chapter 5), team values and beliefs (Chapter 6), team awareness (Chapter 7), team relatedness (Chapter 8), team ways of working (Chapter 9) and team transformation (Chapter 10). In chapters 4 to 10, the following structure will be used to explore each characteristic:

- definition of the characteristic;
- the psychology behind the characteristic;
- the importance of the characteristic in organizations;
- developing the characteristic in teams;
- the challenges of the characteristic in teams;
- tools and techniques for developing the characteristic in teams;
- reflective questions regarding the characteristic.

The 42 tools and techniques (six per chapter) presented in chapters 4–10 can each be used in person or virtually. For the tools and techniques, we are grateful to the community of team coaches trained in the ‘Creating the Team Edge’ framework, as well as input from other team coaching colleagues. Where we have presented or adapted a tool or technique from another source, we have endeavoured to reference the originator. Despite our best efforts, in some cases, this has not been possible. These instances have been highlighted.

Importantly, for the spirit of how we would like the tools and techniques to be used, the following guidance appears before the tools and techniques in each chapter.

Using tools and techniques

When applying these tools and techniques, it is essential that the team coach or leader builds connection and psychological safety first. The tools and techniques are offered as a support and guide, that when used should feel natural and in ‘flow’, with the process and steps behind the tools remaining effectively invisible.

Using reflective questions

Reflective questions are used throughout the book to help you to think about what you do currently and to consider how you can apply learnings to your role as a team coach or a leader.

Stories

Throughout this book, we have shared stories that demonstrate the various concepts in action. For these stories, we are grateful to both the individuals and the teams that have inspired them and the team coaching colleagues we worked alongside during some of these memorable experiences. The stories, while each true, have been told in a non-attributable way. If any part of this book should inspire your own team coaching or leadership story, we would be delighted to hear about your experiences.

Chapter 11

In our conclusion, we present our views about the future of team coaching.

Reflective questions on team coaching

- Consider a brilliant team you have worked in:
 - What made it brilliant?
 - How effective was that team?
 - What were the team's main accomplishments?
- Do you have the right people in your team? If you aren't confident that you do, what changes do you need to make?
- What does team coaching mean to you?
- What does team coaching mean to your organization?
- Consider what your team can deliver that individual team members can't achieve on their own.