



FROM ONE TO MANY

Best Practices for
Team and Group Coaching

Jennifer J. Britton

Author of *Effective Group Coaching*

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Contents

[Cover](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Dedication](#)

[List of Figures and Tables](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Part I: Team and Group Coaching Defined](#)

[Chapter 1: Team and Group Coaching:
Related Sisters](#)

[Team Coaching Defined](#)

[Group Coaching Defined](#)

[The Context of Team and Group Coaching](#)

[Differences Between Team and Group Coaching](#)

[Focus Areas for Team and Group Coaches](#)

[Foundational Issue: Adult Learning Principles](#)

[Best Practices When Coaching Many \(Team and Group Coaching\)](#)

[Chapter 2: The Fusion of Approaches, Benefits and Tricky Issues in Coaching Many](#)

[The Group Program Continuum](#)

[Team Building versus Team Coaching](#)

[The Business Case for Coaching Many](#)

[Tricky Issues in Team and Group Coaching](#)

[Three Tips for Mitigating Tricky Issues](#)

[Chapter 3: Core Skills for Team and Group Coaching](#)

[The ICF Core Competencies](#)

[Part II: Team and Group Coaching Foundations and in Action](#)

[Chapter 4: Design Principles and Practices for Coaching Many](#)

[Best Practices for Program Design](#)

[The Design Process from One to Many](#)

[Chapter 5: Group Coaching Foundations](#)

[The Context](#)

[What Group Coaching Can Look Like](#)

[Components of a Group Coaching Process](#)

Positioning Group Coaching as a Support in Organizations

Chapter 6: Team Coaching Foundations

Who Is Involved with Team Coaching?

Foci of Team Coaching

What Types of Issues Are Important in Team Coaching?

The Value of a Team Coach

Skills for Masterful Team Coaches

The Team Coaching Process

Why Team Coaching Can Fail

Additional Tricky Issues in Team Coaching

Chapter 7: Virtual Design and Delivery

When You Have Decided to Go Virtual

What Is Really Important in the Virtual Environment?

Key Best Practices for Successful Virtual Programs

Making Virtual Group and Team Coaching More Effective

Using Technology in Virtual Programs

Chapter 8: Creating Connection and Fostering Engagement in Team and Group Coaching

The Context: Recognizing Needs at Different Stages of the Team and Group Development Process

Creating Connection throughout the Coaching Process

The Impact of Styles on the Team and Group Coaching Process

Approaches for Engagement and Connection at the End of the Coaching Process

Part III: Expanding Our View of Coaching Many

Chapter 9: Capacity Development: Mentoring, Coaching, Supervision, Leader as Coach and Peer Coaching

My Own Story

The Context of Business Today

The Players in Capacity Development

The Role in Capacity Building of Other Coaches: Peer Coaches and Managers as Coaches

Coaching Skills Training for Leaders

Leader as Coach Coaching Models

Coaching Many and the Impact on Culture

Chapter 10: Developing a New Cohort of Leaders

The Context of Leadership Development

Leadership Development and Team and Group Coaching

[Making It Stick: Positioning Group Coaching as a Follow-on to Leadership Development Training](#)
[Focus Areas in Leadership Development](#)
[Emotional Intelligence](#)

[Chapter 11: Co-facilitation, Partnering and Collaboration: Who Has Your Back?](#)

[The Art of Co-facilitation](#)
[Roles within the Co-facilitation Team: Checklist](#)
[Building a Collaborative Culture: Partnering and Collaboration](#)
[Knowing When and When Not to Collaborate](#)
[Working with Teams to Explore Collaboration](#)
[Supporting the Development of a Collaborative Leadership Style](#)

[Chapter 12: Trends in Team and Group Coaching](#)

[What's Next?](#)

[Appendix: Exercises, Tools and Resources for Team and Group Coaching](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Advertisements](#)

[Index](#)

FROM ONE TO MANY

Best Practices for Team and Group Coaching

Jennifer J. Britton

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This book is dedicated to coaches, leaders and other professionals looking to enhance their own coaching conversations with groups and teams.

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List of Figures and Tables

[Figure 1.1](#): From One to Many

[Table 1.1](#): Group versus Team Coaching

[Table 1.2](#): Focus Areas for Group and Team Coaching

[Figure 2.1](#): The Group Program Continuum

[Figure 2.2](#): The Group Program Continuum

[Table 2.1](#): Benefits of Group Coaching

[Table 2.2](#): Benefits of Team Coaching

[Table 2.3](#): Tricky Issues in the Virtual Domain

[Table 3.1](#): ICF Core Coaching Competencies and Team and Group Coaching

[Table 3.2](#): Key Skills for Group and Team Coaching

[Table 3.3](#): Self-Assessment—Core Coaching Competencies

[Figure 4.1](#): A Typical Design Process

[Figure 4.2](#): MindMap

[Table 4.1](#): Knowing Your Client Profile

[Table 4.2](#): Creating Your Business Roadmap

[Figure 5.1](#): Components of a Group Coaching Process

[Figure 5.2](#): Group and Team Coaching Session Process Overview

[Figure 6.1](#): The Coaching Approach with the Team as a System or a Collective of Individuals

[Table 6.1](#): Six Conditions for Leadership Team Effectiveness

[Figure 6.2](#): The Team Coaching Process

[Table 6.2](#): What Team Coaching Is and Is Not

[Table 7.1](#): The Different Virtual Approaches

[Table 7.2](#): Virtual Call Evaluation

[Table 7.3](#): Web and Video Options

[Figure 8.1](#): The Triangle of Coaching Relationships

[Table 8.1](#): Group and Team Dynamics

[Table 8.2](#): Pre-program One-on-One Worksheet for Group and Team Coaching

[Figure 8.2](#): Virtual Team and Group Coaching Session Notes Page

[Table 8.3](#): Coaching Approaches for Different Learning Styles

[Table 8.4](#): Coaching and Learning Support Needs for Different Generations

[Figure 9.1](#): Coaching, Mentoring and Supervision

[Table 9.1](#): Distinctions between Coaching and Mentoring

[Figure 9.2](#): Program Development Stages and Considerations

[Table 9.2](#): Comparative Relational Outputs as Identified by Maitland

[Table 9.3](#): Phases and Focus Areas of the Coaching Conversation

[Figure 9.3](#): The Arc of the Coaching Conversation

[Table 9.4](#): Questions and the GROW Model

[Figure 10.1](#): Making It Stick—Leadership Development Module Follow-On

[Figure 11.1](#): The Co-facilitation Arc

[Table 11.1](#): Co-facilitation Checklist

[Table 11.2](#): Collaboration in Your Team/Organization

[Table A.1](#): A Selection of Activities for Team and Group Coaches

Acknowledgments

From One to Many has grown out of the many questions I have been asked and the conversations I have had with coaches since the publication of *Effective Group Coaching* in 2010. Whether it has been in the coaching training programs I run through Potentials Realized, or during presentations I have made at ICF conferences and chapter meetings, one of the most common questions I have been asked is, “What's the difference between team and group coaching?” Increasingly coaches, leaders and other professionals are straddling the realms of coaching teams and groups, and are eager for more resources to undertake their work. I am pleased to take a deeper look at the related realms of team and group coaching—the processes and practices behind our work.

This book has been infused by the experiences of the groups and teams I have worked with over the last two-plus decades. My work has now taken me to work with teams and groups in five continents, and in recent years has connected me virtually with more countries than I will physically ever visit.

Incorporating the voices of many is critical in our work with groups and teams. I would like to thank the following coaches who generously shared their examples and insights around group and team coaching for this book: Renee Brotman, Catherine Carr, Michael Cullen, Ursula Lesic, Sharon Miller, Lynda Monk, Shana Montesol, Jacqueline Peters, Ray Rigoglioso, Phil Sandahl and Kevin Stebbings. It should be noted that all quotations from these coaches are taken from my interviews with them, unless otherwise documented.

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Jennifer J. Britton

East Gwillimbury, February 2013

Introduction

From One to Many: Best Practices for Team and Group Coaching explores the continued evolution of two sub-disciplines of the coaching profession: team coaching and group coaching. Whether you are an internal or external coach working with teams, corporate groups or public groups, or you are a leader working with your own team, this book is geared to provide you with practical tools, insights and best practices around team and group coaching. *From One to Many* is geared to professionals who want to explore the skills and best practices behind exceptional team and group coaching. It is also for professionals who are looking for practical tools and approaches they can adapt and implement in their own programs right away, without having to reinvent the wheel. *From One to Many* has been shaped by my own work with teams and groups over more than two decades. The book has also been shaped by the questions and learning of hundreds of practitioner coaches from around the world with whom I have had the opportunity to work in the Group Coaching Essentials program, the Advanced Group Coaching Practicum and the Group Coaching Intensive programs since 2006.

Just as current business challenges require new ways of thinking and working across boundaries, the work of a coach is also spanning these boundaries and silos. In fact, group coaching is playing an important role in facilitating communication across the silos. Likewise, team coaching has the potential to break down the silos that exist within a team, as well as the silos that exist within a wider organizational context. At the same time, coaches are increasingly collaborating with more partners in

organizations, often working with them to develop a cadre of peer coaches and to train leaders as coaches.

Since the publication of my first book, *Effective Group Coaching*, in January 2010, the global reach of coaches who are active in group and team coaching has continued to grow. Economic realities have continued to turn individuals and organizations onto these as modalities of choice. The collaborative nature of the coaching conversation and the connectivity it creates have been underpinnings of group and team coaching approaches. In contrast to 2009, when I wrote the last book, I regularly hear of organizations incorporating group coaching into their work, as a standalone program or as a follow-on to training. Team coaching is increasingly becoming a popular choice as more organizations turn to the team as the engine of business and also as the luster of one-off team-building initiatives continues to wane quickly after the offsite or retreat.

Based on the requests of practitioner coaches, leaders and HR professionals, this book expands the focus of coaching to groups and teams—that is, into the realm of “coaching many.” The shift from one-on-one coaching to working with many, whether in a team or group, is often perceived as a large step. As we will explore, there are many foundational similarities in team and group coaching, and several chapters will look at these commonalities. Several other chapters will address the differences between these two related “sibling” modalities.

As with coaching itself, my hope is that *From One to Many* will stimulate dialogue and debate among coaches, leaders and other professionals undertaking this work, as well as add to the growing foundation of literature on the topics of team and group coaching. Thankfully, there is a growing number of books that provide more of a theoretical and conceptual look at team and group coaching. Just as *Effective Group Coaching* has been embraced by

practitioner coaches and as the learning text by many coach training schools, my hope is that this book will also become a trusted go-to resource for new and experienced coaches, HR professionals, leaders and others undertaking work with teams and groups. My aim for the book was to make it practical, impactful and relevant.

As a graduate student 20 years ago, I was motivated by the concept of “praxis”—or the interplay of theory and action. Praxis continues to shape my work. Throughout this book I open a window to my own work with teams and groups and include Field Journal notes. My approaches and insights have been shaped by real-time experience with groups and teams over the last 25 years—virtual teams, intact teams, global teams, public groups and corporate groups—designing and delivering programs in person as well as through virtual programs.

This book takes a multidisciplinary approach, cutting across boundaries. It reflects practically how coaches are coming to this work and shaping it in partnership with their clients. Several undertaking this work today bring a background in learning and development, some as former leaders and managers, while others have entered the coaching domain through intensive coaching skills training. Readers are encouraged to explore areas that may be new terrain—for example, capacity development and leadership. Others may be revisiting topics they are very familiar with, such as group process and coaching skills. *From One to Many* also reflects this expansion of seeing how coaching fits into the broader business context today.

Part III of the book—Expanding Our View of Coaching Many—particularly addresses this. While there are still many “pure” coaching rollouts, as more professionals are trained in coaching skills, it is likely that the boundaries between related disciplines will continue to be spanned. Likewise, leaders and other internal resources are entering into the

domains of team and group coaching. It is not uncommon for me to see experienced group facilitators embrace this work in team and group coaching very quickly. A key focus of this book is on the subtle but important different focus and orientation a group and team coach brings, with a strong emphasis on goal setting, accountability and focus on supporting action and awareness.

As with *Effective Group Coaching*, I found that it was important to also have other voices represented in the book. Throughout the book you will meet 10 coaches who undertake work in the realm of team and group coaching around the world. Each has each offered his or her own case study, as well as thoughts on team and group coaching processes: best practices, key skills, recommendations and thoughts on trends. Their voices provide a sampling of the variety of experiences that are common with the groups and teams we work with. At the same time, as you read through their varied voices, note the synergies that exist among them.

It has been truly an honor to have the active participation of senior coaches such as *Co-Active Coaching* co-author Phil Sandahl, MCC, chief coaching officer of Team Coaching International. You will also meet coach Kim Ades, founder of JournalEngine, an innovative online journaling platform with great potential for team and group coaching. We also reconnect with two coaches who were first spotlighted in *Effective Group Coaching*: Lynda Monk, CPCC, who talks about using a coaching approach in workshops as well as her virtual retreat group coaching; and Sharon Miller, CPCC, PCC, who shares her insights around team coaching. You can also find a case study from the financial services industry that illustrates how Sharon Miller's coaching engagements over time integrate for significant impact and culture change in the digital chapter Team Coaching in Action, located at www.groupcoachingessentials.com. Dr.

Jacqueline Peters, PCC, and Dr. Catherine Carr, PCC, share their insights around team coaching and team effectiveness. Jacqueline offers a case study from the oil and gas industry entitled “Coaching as a Lever for Cultural Change.”

Many coaches are engaged with team and group coaching in the context of leadership development. In Chapter 10, Ursula Lesic, ACC, offers a group coaching case study based on her work. Renee Brotman, PCC, shares insights around using tools with leadership groups. Coach Michael Cullen, PPCC, shares his insights based on working with public groups, and Ray Rigoglioso, ACC, offers insights based on his work with nonprofit professionals and public programs for gay men. A case study has also been provided by performance coaches with the British Columbia Public Service Agency, which provides a detailed look at an actual team coaching engagement.

The 30,000-foot View: A Snapshot of the Terrain We Will Cover in *From One to Many*

The book has three parts. Part I explores the foundation of coaching many, and provides a framework for expanding individual coaching work into coaching many. Chapter 1 looks at team and group coaching as “related sisters.” The first chapter looks at some of the differences and similarities between team and group coaching. Chapter 2 explores the program continuum and how coaches may find themselves using a “pure” coaching approach or may incorporate more training and/or facilitation. In today's era of complex challenges and rapid change, hybridization is a welcomed approach. Chapter 3 takes a deep dive, looking at the core coaching competencies of the International Coach

Federation (ICF) and how these play out in the group and team coaching contexts.

Part II of the book takes a look at group and team coaching: common process pieces, different approaches for working with groups and teams, and what this work looks like, along with case studies or “Voices from the Field.” Four examples are presented from practitioner coaches in the area of group coaching, and four in the area of team coaching. You are encouraged to consider how the spotlighted coaches' experience and learning can infuse your own work with clients. Chapter 4 looks at design practices and principles for creating team and group coaching programs. Chapter 5 looks at group coaching processes. A digital accompaniment at www.groupcoachingessentials.com includes team coaching approaches. It also looks at different approaches for working with groups and a selection of case studies of group coaching in action. Chapter 6 explores team coaching processes. A digital accompaniment at www.groupcoachingessentials.com includes team coaching activities and case studies. Discussion about team and group coaching would not be complete without a focus on virtual programming options (Chapter 7), and also on techniques for engaging your groups (Chapter 8). A digital chapter on marketing also accompanies the book.

In Part III, the book widens the scope and connects us with the larger context of coaching many in organizations today, namely the topics of capacity development and developing a new cohort of leaders. In shifting your coaching from *one to many* it is also likely that you will be involved at some level with discussions around systems and performance at a larger level. Chapter 9 addresses the topic of capacity building, that is, developing internal skills and capacity through peer coaching, supervisor as coach, and linking support with mentoring. Chapter 10 addresses the topic of

developing a new cohort of leaders, as many coaches today are involved in supporting and feeding into related talent management initiatives such as leadership development training.

Co-facilitation is increasingly called upon and is an art form for coaches working in the team and group coaching domain. This topic, along with collaboration, is covered in Chapter 11. Trends and where our work is evolving are the subjects of Chapter 12.

Finally, questions, exercises and resources continue to be the backbone of our work as coaches. Everyone is eager for more tools and ideas in their toolbox. The appendix focuses on activities and resources you may wish to incorporate into your own work.

It is my intent that this book will stimulate conversation and action in the coaching community and with leaders. It is focused on providing practical insights. It is also geared to providing a look at the skills below the surface of our work. *How is our work different with team and group coaching? What are the things we want to ensure we are always doing? What best practices can we incorporate into our work with teams and groups?* The final section of the book explores trends, collaboration, leadership and capacity development, which I believe point to future arcs of where our work is headed, if it's not there already.

I hope that you will engage with this book and in the conversation. I look forward to connecting with you to continue the conversation in person, virtually (through Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, email) or by good old fashioned telephone.

The Context of Coaching Today

"Individually, we are one drop. Together, we are an ocean."

—Ryunosuke Satoro¹

Teams, collaboration, globalization, working across differences, and doing more with less are all key themes in today's business world. Coaching as a modality of support to personal and professional development has also grown and changed in response to this evolving context in which we operate. Team and group coaching are now well rooted as possible approaches for coaches, and leaders, to draw on, in support of better business results, better relationships and enhanced personal and collective goals.

Coaching continues to expand in size and reach. The 2012 Global Coaching Survey from the International Coach Federation estimates 47,500 professional coaches worldwide, of which 41,300 are active coaches. Coaches participating in this global survey came from 131 countries around the world.²

Coaching as a profession continues to become more rooted, and the survey notes that “the coaching profession appears to be showing more rapid growth in emerging regions outside the established high-income regions” of North America, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand. In the past few years I have seen team and group coaching continuing to expand around the world, as I have seen coaches from countries such as Bolivia, Peru and the Czech Republic explore how it can be added to their coaching mix.

The coaching profession has grown out of diverse fields such as social psychology, quantum physics, the humanities and group dynamics. As Vikki Brock writes about the emergence of coaching in her dissertation, “Grounded Theory of the Roots and Emergence of Coaching”:³

Five points summarize my observations about the emergence of coaching:

- 1.** coaching sprang from several independent sources at the same time and spread through relationships;

2. coaching has a broad intellectual framework that draws on the synergy, cross-fertilization, and practices of many disciplines;

3. modern patterns and practices of coaching are dynamic and contextual;

4. coaching came into existence to fill an unmet need in an interactive, fluid world of rapid change and complexity; and

5. coaching came into being in an open integral social network from a perspective of diversity and inclusion.

The first global coaching survey undertaken by the International Coach Federation asked coaching clients how they perceived coaching to be different from other interventions. A focus on goal setting, awareness building and accountability all were identified as distinguishers for coaching versus other modalities.

Research from the ICF has identified increased productivity, increased positivity and return on investment (ROI) from coaching.^{[4](#)}

Increased productivity measures include:

- Improved work performance (70 percent)
- Improved business management (61 percent)
- Improved time management (57 percent)
- Improved team effectiveness (51 percent)

Improved positivity measures include:

- Increased self-confidence (80 percent)
- Increased relationships (73 percent)
- Improved communication skills (72 percent)
- Improved work/life balance (67 percent)

It is with these roots that coaching continues to expand in form and reach.

The Shift from One to Many

Against the backdrop of global and economic events, opportunities and pressures, team and group coaching have evolved into their own over the last decade.

This shift in the coaching conversation from a one-on-one conversation between coach and client (also known as the “coachee” in some models), to conversations between coach or coaches and team and group clients is what I call “the many.”

As more and more coaches add group and team coaching to their mixes, it is important for us to have a series of best practices and approaches grounding our work. What you will find as you move through this book is a variety of examples, and practical suggestions of how team and group coaching is playing out around the world. The intention of the book is to be a practitioner's resource guide, while providing a light touch on the theory underpinning the work.

So, what are the key themes we encounter as we expand our work to teams and groups (the many)? What areas should those looking to create exceptional experiences with our clients consider? [Figure I.1](#) looks at the foundations of coaching, as well as five areas of consideration as we expand our work.

[Figure I.1](#): From One to Many

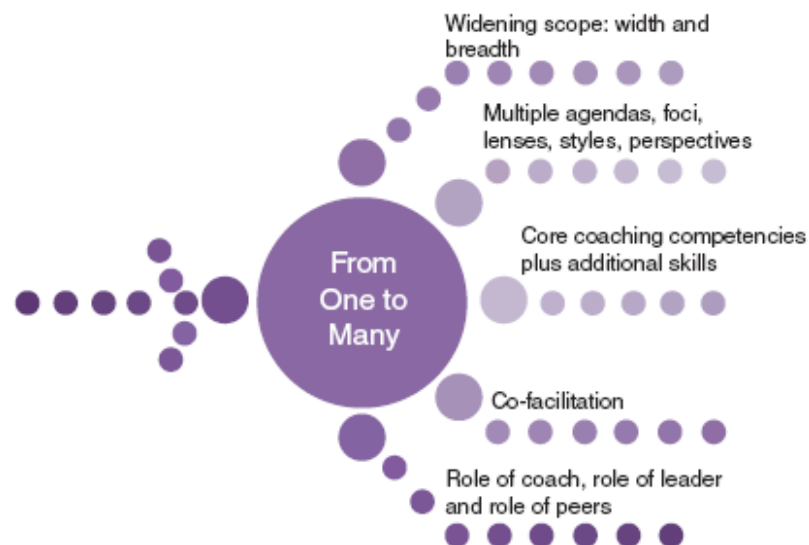
The Foundations of Coaching

Individual Coaching enables clients to dig deep into key focus areas

Grounded in core coaching competencies, including:

- Designing the coaching agreement
- Trust and intimacy
- Direct communication, powerful questions, active listening
- Planning and goal setting
- Focus on action and awareness
- Accountability

Characteristics When Coaching Many



The Foundations of Coaching

Coaching is all about a conversation. It's not just any conversation. It's a focused conversation, one that is geared to expedite the insights and actions around issues of importance for the people we are working with. As one of my favorite subject matter expert (SME) partners, Doug McLaren, says, "Coaching is a conversation with intent." In any type of coaching work—with individuals, teams and groups—we want to remember that coaching is not just any conversation. Coaching is all about a conversation with purpose, to expedite the results for the person or persons being coached.

In moving from coaching one to many, our core coaching competencies and skills continue to provide the foundation for exceptional and impactful coaching conversations. Whether we are external or internal coaches⁵ or leaders integrating these skills into portfolios—and working with teams, groups or individuals—we will want to "lean into" foundational coaching skills. Most, if not all, coaching

models will be founded on, or connected to, the 11 core coaching competencies of the International Coach Federation.

Foundational to any coaching conversation are these skills:

Designing the Coaching Agreement

Every coaching relationship should be grounded in a shared agreement between coach and client(s). This includes partnering with the client to design what the coaching will look like, including agreeing on what the coaching focus will be, and will not be. It will include the “ways of working” or “agreements for the work” we do together. Part of designing the coaching agreement identifies what measures of success and focus areas will ground the work we do. An evolving best practice of the profession of coaching is having formalized written coaching agreements in place.

Trust and Intimacy

Coaching is a relationship that is based in trust and “knowing the client.” Without trust, coaching cannot occur. In the team and group coaching context, the trust and knowing is not only with the coach, but also between and among group and team members. The coaching process often explores the different needs, preferences, and what is important with the group members individually, and in the case of teams, individually and collectively.

Communicating Effectively

Communication is the foundation for any coaching conversation. The “triad of communication” includes what the International Coach Federation (ICF) calls “direct communication, powerful questions and active listening.” Practically this involves coaching using language that is appropriate for the client, asking powerful questions, and

listening at multiple levels inviting exploration, new awareness and action on the part of those being coached.

A Focus on Goals

A key component of the coaching process is working with the person being coached to set and work on goals that are important to them, personally or professionally. These goals become the foundation and focus for our work as coaches with our clients, whether they are individuals, teams or groups. Throughout the conversation it is important to explore with the client(s) the 30,000-foot metaview or “big picture” level of their goals and priorities, as well as the “micro” view, which is more tangible or immediate.

Awareness and Action

Throughout the coaching process we want to maintain a focus on deepening awareness around those key areas of interest to the individuals we are working with, as well as supporting them in taking action.

Coaching involves a regular series of coaching touch points, creating an accountability framework. The coaching process takes place over time, and is generally not a “one-off” conversation, but rather a series of touch points. It is this enhanced “sticky factor” that has led to coaching being seen as an excellent add-on to training, boosting the transfer of learning and integration of new insights and behaviors.

Accountability

The hard focus on accountability distinguishes coaching from other related modalities. In the context of coaching, accountability involves clients making commitments (individually or collectively) around key action steps that will move them toward the goals that are important. A critical part of the coaching conversation involves checking in

around these actions and insights at each touch point or meeting.

These skill areas continue to serve as the foundation for all team and group coaching work. Chapter 3 takes a deep dive into looking at what the core coaching competencies look like in both the team and group coaching domain. It starts the conversation around specific techniques and approaches coaches and leaders can integrate into their coaching of teams and groups.

Expanding into the Realm of Many

In “working with many,” in either a team or group context, our focus expands.

While we continue to lead from our core coaching skills, coaches working in this domain will notice:

A Widening Scope

Group and team coaching conversations often feel like they are going broad and wide, and not always deep. In an individual coaching conversation our focus is to have deep conversation with each client around the one or two key areas they are interested in. In coaching many, the scope widens with more voices, with peers playing a key role in the coaching process. We often talk about the “collective wisdom” of a group. It is the breadth and width that have many learning as much from their peers as from themselves and the questions coaches ask.

Multiple Agendas, Foci, Lenses, Styles and Perspectives

Coaches who work in the realm of coaching many will need to be comfortable and confident in working with multiple

focus areas or “agendas” at play. In working with more than one person there will be different styles at play, including different learning styles and generational styles, in addition to varying perspectives that show up in any given conversation. This multiplicity creates both enormous opportunity and challenge for coaches in working with tremendous amounts of diversity. It often calls for a stretch on the part of team and group coaches. The book explores varying approaches in structuring coaching processes to maximize impact at both individual and collective levels.

This work is grounded in relationships. Team and group coaching conversations are rich due to the peer learning and sharing that take place. Conversation is the medium in which coaching takes place.

Core Competencies Plus Additional Skills

In addition to leveraging the core coaching competencies explored in Chapter 3, in coaching many, team and group coaches need to develop skills in the following areas:

- Adult education
- Group process
- Group facilitation skills and experience
- Experiential education
- Instructional design
- Relationship systems awareness

Chapters 2 and 8 explore related topic areas, including the introduction of the Group Program Continuum, a way to look at related skills that may be useful in supporting your groups or teams.

Co-facilitation

Given the variety of personalities, focus areas and numbers of coachees/clients involved in the coaching of many process, it is common for coaching work with teams, and in some instances, larger groups, to be undertaken by co-