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Dear Reader,

I am pretty sure you have had a coaching experience by now. Executive coaching has become so popular, over the last twenty years or so, that it no longer needs to be described. However a new branch of coaching has been developing that is gaining traction in organizations. I am referring to TEAM COACHING. In this issue, we interview Ernie Turner, one of the creators and developers of Team Coaching using Action Reflection Learning.

Enjoy the reading!

Isabel Rimanoczy
Editor

Quote of the Month

*"If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go with others."*

Author unknown

Announcement

LIM Academy Launched

LIM is pleased to announce the establishment of the LIM Academy which offers for the first time a series of developmental workshops all designed to enhance the skills of Learning Coaches in the Action Reflection Learning methodology. To read more about the Academy and its course offerings, please click the link:

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Issue 128

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April 2011

Team Coaching

An Interview with Ernie Turner

LIM News: *Executive coaching is a practice that has been around now for almost two and half decades. However, Team Coaching is a new concept, at least outside of the sports domain. As one of the creators of Team Coaching, can you give us a definition what Team coaching is?*

Ernie Turner: Business Team Coaching, like with sports team coaching, is intent on helping a business team become a higher performing team — taking them from where they are to where they aspire to be or need to be. When I'm working with a team, I keep five dimensions in mind — their business, how they're currently doing; their organization, to what degree the organization supports the business; the team itself, how they work together; their professional skills, if they have the right capabilities to lead their functions as well as the larger organization; and personally, how they connect and respect one another as human beings. Each of these dimensions contributes directly to team performance.

LIM News: *So you say that the team can set goals on each of those five dimensions?*

ET: Yes, when I contract my role I offer the possibility of setting outcomes for each of these five dimensions. Depending upon the history of the team these outcomes will differ.

LIM News: *How is coaching a team different from coaching an individual?*

ET: Let me begin with the similarities. Whether I coach an individual or a team I believe we can address outcomes on the same five dimensions. And with both I engage the individual and the team to co-design the outcomes and the process together with me. The difference is that with a team there are a lot more people involved with different perceptions of what are needed, different levels of engagement, different histories with the team, different learning styles, different types, different relationships with one another, etc. These differences make teamwork much more complex, complicated and challenging. It's like going from checkers to chess. And I love this challenge.

LIM News: *How do you create team ownership and engagement, assuming that you're always called in by a leader?*

ET: I don't always get called in by the team leader. Sometimes I've been called in by a team member. However, no matter how I get invited, ownership and engagement of the entire team are the top two success factors. Over the years I've discovered a number of ways to engage the entire team — 1) ask the team leader to suggest two members from different functions and of differing perspectives, to co-design the workshop with me; 2) invite everyone on the team to suggest a question that the team should think about prior to the workshop; 3) convert these questions into a survey or interview guide and get everyone's input prior to the meeting; 4) introduce some simple and practical techniques that ensure introverts are heard while limiting the 'air time' extraverts tend to take; 5) ask engaging questions.

LIM News: *Can you give me a few examples of engaging questions?*

ET: Sure. Here are a few. "What will it take to keep you engaged during this meeting?" "What norms (rules of engagement) would you like to see your team adopt?" "How can I be most effective as a coach to your team?" "What turns you off?" And in the pre-workshop interview or survey I usually include a few of these questions.

LIM News: *And then during the meeting how do you ensure that team members are engaged?*

ET: There are lots of ways. Some examples: 1) give everyone time to think before speaking; this sounds pretty simple and like a common sense thing to do but it is seldom practiced. Often someone will ask a question and the extraverts begin rambling — thinking out loud. The introverts find it hard to listen and think at the same time so are often silent while the extraverts take over. By allowing just a minute or two for reflection up front will help the extraverts edit their thoughts and give the introverts the time they need to get their thoughts ready for public hearing. As a result there are more and better ideas as well as better listening and full engagement. 2) give everyone an opportunity to suggest rules of engagement and buy in to those rules; 3) remove tables so people can't use their smart phones and iPods under the table while pretending to listen; 4) design meetings that address different learning styles.

LIM News: *What are some factors a team coach needs to consider in coaching a team to higher performance?*

ET: This varies team by team but there are a number of key factors. In my experience, the most important is continuous and effective team leadership. During a transfer of team leadership team performance usually takes a dip. Recovery depends upon how long it takes the new team leader to contract expectations with his/her team. Another key success factor is reinforcement. Practice, feedback and coaching are vital. It's very easy to revert to 'bad' habits without discipline and support. I find that it usually takes three to four engagements to bring a team to mastery with periodic check ups or 'virtual coaching' as team dynamics change with the addition or departure of team members. A third critical factor is the team's curiosity and ability to learn. As a team becomes better at learning they will be better leaders. And a fourth factor is the willingness of a team to share leadership. The hub and spoke style of team leadership is tiring and very limiting in terms of productivity and engagement.

LIM News: *And what can a team coach do to help a team move from a 'hub-and-spoke' leadership model to a shared leadership model?*

ET: The first step is to help the team leader visualize the difference between the two, and to see the value of changing. Once the team leader is convinced that shared leadership is better then it's a matter of engaging the team in visualizing what would be different in a shared leadership model. And this only requires setting some time in one of the team meetings for the team leader to provide some rationale for changing the model and inviting the team to help her/him envision what would be different. Once the vision of shared leadership is defined then it simply requires a few new behaviors — like sharing the chairing of team meetings, rotating other roles (time keeper, note-taker, process coach), adding a few norms that reinforce shared leadership, giving one another feedback, sharpening critical team processes (decision-making, planning, contracting and running effective meetings to name a few) and celebrating success.

LIM News: *You just named four team processes. How many other team processes*

are there that a Team Coach should know?

ET: We've identified 46; there are probably more. Those four are vital but there are many other processes related to each of the five dimensions that an effective Team Coach should know and be able to introduce to a team depending upon their level of performance.

LIM News: How are the skills of a Team Coach different from those of an executive coach?

ET: A team coach has the whole team in the room. It's a much more dynamic and unpredictable environment given all the differences between members. So an effective team coach has to be a good planner and be well prepared before showing up. And I've mentioned some of the prep required in the co-design process. A few other skills that come to mind are: the ability to multi-task while being focused; being calm, centered and self-confident especially in emotionally stressful moments; being articulate, convincing and clear since communication is critical; having a sense of humor and humility; being flexible and able to quickly determine what to do, when to do it and how to do it; and, when in doubt being open to ask for help.

LIM News: How do you explain your role to a team when you begin working with them?

ET: I contract my role first with the team leader and then with the team. I usually say something like this: "Team, during the course of my time with you I will be wearing different coaching hats. Before we met here today I've been co-designing this meeting with your team leader and a few of your colleagues. Some parts of this meeting I will be directly facilitating. During other sessions I will observe how you work as a team. I will look at how you take decisions, plan, participate, share leadership, communicate with one another, problem solve, etc. We have built time into the design to provide feedback to each other and I will provide my feedback as well. I will also introduce a concept or a tool that might help you become more efficient or effective when appropriate and if you're interested. And I will coach you in using whatever tools I might introduce. Plus I'll offer one-on-one coaching during our time together if you want it." Then I check for understanding and 'buy in' so that I have the mandate to do all of the above.

LIM News: How does a team coach get a team to learn?

ET: Good question. I've found that simply asking — "What are you learning?" is not enough. I've found that adding a team debrief at the end of every meeting allows for immediate feedback and provides an opportunity for learning. There are lots of questions a team could reflect upon and share during the team debrief. For example, here are a few: "What worked particularly well during our meeting?" (give specific examples); "What should we do differently at our next meeting?"; "What did our meeting manager do that made a big difference?"; "What did I learn about shared leadership during our meeting?"; "What did I learn about planning and running a meeting?"

LIM News: How can interested individuals become team coaches?

ET: You can Google team coaching and find several program offerings around the world. Through the LIM Academy, we also have a 6-day ARL Team Coach Certification Program that is offered to organizations who want their Learning and Development professionals to become better team coaches using our ARL (Action Reflection Learning) principles. Since so much work is done in teams we've received many requests for this internal program. We also offer to the public an ARL Team Coach Awareness Program. You can visit our website (www.limglobal.net/academy.html)

for more details.

LIM News: Thanks, Ernie. We've run out of space for this article but I understand that you are writing a book on team coaching so we'll look for that to learn more!





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