

Why group coaching has a key role to play

By [Sue Welman](#)

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Business coaching, as a profession, has historically been singularly focused on individuals. At its core, coaching seeks to shift individual behaviours and patterns, so it naturally follows that this can best be achieved in a one-on-one environment.



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While this still stands true, it is becoming increasingly evident that group coaching is a critical element in certain scenarios - and is often necessary in order to move organisations and teams forward in a constructive and communal way. So while coaching is still very much about encouraging shifts in personal behaviours and outlooks, very often, facilitators need to identify and address the elements that are holding both individuals and groups back from achieving their full potential. These elements may only become evident within group scenarios.

A Unique Window

One of the key benefits that group coaching provides is the unique opportunity for the facilitator to identify and work with the various personalities, which often only emerge more clearly when group dynamics are at play.

For example, in any group context there will be mental models, perceptions and unspoken baggage present - both for individuals and as a group. These elements may hijack the focus and productivity of the team as a whole - which is often problematic and the source of conflict.

In a group scenario, the facilitator can see this dynamic at play, and create a safe 'container' in which various voices can be encouraged and heard. The facilitator will enable the conversation to take place in such a way that it is not overrun by stronger personalities, and everyone has an opportunity to contribute equally. Mental models are unpacked and the elephant in the room is encouraged to take centre stage and be faced head-on.

It is important to note that a great deal of value lies in what is not being said during group sessions. Indeed, a coach who has an ear for what is being omitted starts to pick up on certain recurring themes. For example, through a word or phrase that keeps being repeated or mentioned. Once these more subtle themes and topics have been identified, the facilitator can find ways to bring them into the conversation in a direct, yet unthreatening way.

The group approach, as opposed to working solely with individuals, can be valuable for any type or size of group facing a challenge - such as groups that are underperforming, or groups facing internal conflicts.

New Directions

When working with groups, coaches can not only resolve issues that have been previously identified, but they can also enable teams or groups to move forward in a new and more innovative direction. For instance, when teams or departments have undergone a restructure, group coaching can enable them to rediscover their sense of unity and create a cohesive and communal way of forging ahead. Or when teams seek to redefine their organisational brand or culture, group coaching is a powerful way in which teams and departments can explore a new and more relevant way of identifying with themselves, and crafting how others should identify them. It also has the ability to align individual perspectives and expectations with those of the overall group or organisation.

As a result, by working with groups and enabling groups to work more cohesively as a unit, the renewed energy has the potential to directly impact on productivity and bottom line results. Furthermore, group coaching is not always about 'fixing' something within a team. When applied within highly effective teams has the ability to create something new, innovative and dynamic - leading the organisation as a whole into an unexpected and exciting new direction.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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