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## The Business Coach's FAQ for Teams

Our business environment is complex, our budgets constrained, and our workload is relentless. Management skills are more important than ever.

As a team coach, these are the most frequent areas for improvement:

- Decision-making Models – Lessons in the three primary decision-making models (direct, delegated, consensus) and how to determine the right model for your team, your projects, and your meetings to ensure reliable governance.
- Conflict Resolution – Strong leaders have strong opinions, but reaching agreement involves more than opinion and requires a problem-solving framework for reaching decisions in a manner that allows the team to move forward.
- Operational Excellence – More than a catch-phrase in management literature, there are processes, at each level of the organization, that deliver results (clarifying objectives, managing a project successfully, optimizing communications). Some of them are quite simple.
- Trust & Transparency – All successful teams have these elements, so it makes sense to establish and maintain the behaviors that build and maintain them over time.
- Workload Management – Working smarter, doing more with less...everyone believes they're doing the best that they can under the circumstances. For many of us, the "urgent" tasks preclude the strategic tasks, so how do we ensure the right balance?

*Shouldn't experienced managers already know how to do these things?*

Knowing is different than Doing. Parents know how to teach the importance of a budget to their college-bound children, yet forget to apply those same lessons with our colleagues. Homeowners know that last-minute changes can make their kitchen remodeling project too expensive, yet ignore that wisdom with work projects. An outside coach can remind an experienced-but-chaotic management team of those lessons, and identify where they should be applied.

In other situations, new members of the team may have different approaches; existing teams may have habits that are getting in the way of optimal performance; sudden growth (new funding, mid-course corrections, mergers & acquisitions, a new boss) often requires a change in management methodologies that can be difficult to absorb. The right business coach enables that change.

*Where do we start?*

The initial phase of a coaching consultancy involves listening. A lot of listening, followed by more listening. Even the most dysfunctional teams know what needs to be fixed. At the end of a (howsoever brief) phase, the business coach presents a diagnosis and prescription – a program for training or re-training with milestones agreed upon by the

team. Phase 2 involves an implementation of the program in a manner that is quantifiable, demonstrable, and has the potential to last.\*

Phases 1 and 2 can be exciting, and participants are frequently enthusiastic about the improvements. The key challenge is Phase 3, when individuals and teams are given the tools to manage their improvements over time – frequently, old habits re-emerge when new stressors appear (new funding, mid-course corrections, mergers & acquisitions, a new boss). It is critical that the improvements are reinforced over time, with “post-coaching follow-up sessions” scheduled at regular intervals.

*What kind of results can be expected, and how long will it take?*

Of course, the best case scenario is that the team continues to function effectively over the long-term. Each case is different, therefore, individualized objectives and target milestones are agreed upon in advance.

*How much does it cost?*

This is not project management, but neither is it rocket science. Therefore, a sliding scale with clear deliverables is recommended. The fee for services rendered during the first phase of the engagement (four meetings and a draft contract for review) is \$750.00. If all parties agree upon the Coach’s proposed “next steps,” the remaining portion of the engagement is invoiced bi-weekly at an hourly fee negotiated at the outset of the project.

First-line management teams are billed at a lower rate than Senior Vice Presidents, in terms that are proportional to the institution’s investment. For this reason, my Coaching service is not offered for Sales staff or any other type of position based upon commissions.

For a matter of prudent safeguards of all parties, the Coach maintains liability insurance of two million dollars and will provide certification of coverage upon initiation of services.

*Isn’t it easier to find more capable replacements in this economy?*

Yes, and there are seasoned executives who believe this is a legitimate management practice, particularly in economic cycles when experienced applicants are abundant. If you are in this category, you don’t need me. We can agree to disagree on the relative merits of such “talent management” techniques that place economic exigencies above employee success. Ultimately, the team needs to work well together, even when you’ve hired all stars.

*Shouldn’t our Human Resources team be responsible for this?*

Your company’s HR policies remain important, and collaboration with the HR department is critical. Given their workload, however, it often makes sense to “outsource” critical tasks such as coaching. Documentation in compliance with all HR guidelines will be provided throughout the engagement.

For more information about this program, or any other questions, contact:

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