



# Handout:

## Is team coaching right for this team?

MODULE 1 - The role of a team coach

### The tired team

*"If I'm honest", says the team leader Flavian, "I'd say that pretty-much the whole team demonstrates the Peter Principle. They have been promoted to the point of their incompetence. Technically, they are all very competent. But as managers and leaders... I am constantly asking them why they are spending time doing tasks that their direct reports could do, but that's their comfort zone. They don't like strategy work and frankly, they are out of their depth when they try. I did bring in a younger, more visionary member to the team, but she quit after a few months saying she was tired of not getting through to them."*

*"It doesn't help that their job roles don't involve a lot of task interdependence – they and their own teams don't need to reference anyone else but me. I am under a lot of pressure from my Exco colleagues and the CEO to 'fix' them. Firing them all and starting again would be too disruptive and we are not that kind of company. How can you help?"*

*This team may not be ready for team coaching. One of Hackman's pre-requisites is having the right people. The best solution may be one-to-one coaching to support team members in personal change; then determine who stays or goes by virtue of the progress they make.*

## The merged team

Overall, the merger of the two real estate businesses has gone surprisingly well. A year after the merger, however, the IT team is struggling to come together. There is no obvious conflict, but at lunchtimes, the members who came from the smaller merger partner – all of them under 25 – sit separately from the team from the larger partner, who are from a slightly older generation. A manifestation of this divide is the frequency of rework that has to be done as a result of miscommunication and misunderstandings. These in turn cause delays and the team leader is under pressure from above to get work back on track before the next phase of systems integration.

*This is ripe for team coaching because the required unifying factor is collective purpose; and the need is for more effective communication systems. Team building won't work because the issue is not about getting on together. Team facilitation or team coaching – or a combination – will work best.*

## The dispirited team

A tobacco company's subsidiary in South America is trying to reinvent itself. The global company sees great opportunity in moving from an industry that kills people to one that cures them. The emphasis of all research and investment is moving into using vaping technology to deliver metered doses of medicines. But the bulk of income still comes from the core cigarette business, which is under pressure to deliver higher profits to finance the new strategy. The production team for cigarettes is despondent. They no longer feel valued – all the recognition is going to people in the new ventures – and they have missed targets for four successive quarters. *"No-one has any time for us now,"* says the team leader. The sponsor – a regional director – asks you what you could do to re-motivate the team and emphasises that they will not have any extra resources. He explains: *"It must be hard having been the kingpin in the organization, and now to be just a cash cow.; but that's the reality and they have to learn to live with it."*

*This team's issues relate to finding a new role that gives them purpose. Team coaching can help them establish new links between what they do and the values they hold (or the values they now need to let go of).*

## The too busy team

*Doh!* is a quirky, fast-growing artisan bakery, supplying upmarket restaurants and eateries. From a garage start-up, it now has more than 200 staff baking and delivering bread. It is negotiating with a national supermarket chain to supply 100 stores in a pilot that could lead to massive expansion. Just four years old as a business, it lacks a lot of processes that would be expected in a more mature company. Its HR team has expanded in the past 12 months from one HR manager and an assistant to a team of eight. All of them are 'run off their feet' trying both to make up for the lack of process before and to prepare the company for future expansion. At team meetings, there is usually at least one person absent because they are dealing with a crisis. Says the team leader: *"At our last meeting, one of the team said to another: 'I didn't know you had kids!'. When we got to talking, we realised that we hardly know each other at all. As an HR function, we are supposed to promote human values in the business, but we aren't setting a good example."*

*At first sight this is an obvious case for team building and there may well be a role for this in due course; but look at the system. What is getting in the way of deeper collegiality? Spending quality time together reviewing priorities and ways of working will help team members understand and get to know each other. The socialisation aspects of team building will be more effective if designed to follow on from trust built through either facilitation or coaching.*

## The Olympic team

Whenever a country hosts the Olympic Games, it has to create an organization to project manage the event. The headcount swells to hundreds or thousands until the Games are over and everyone goes home – then shrinks to a much smaller rump, whose task is to manage the aftermath. This may include repurposing sports venues, or in some cases demolishing them, finding new uses for accommodation blocks and so on. One of the big challenges is keeping people engaged when they know they have soon to look for a new job. How do we stay as a team, when one by one we are leaving?

*Team building is not relevant here. Nor is process consultancy. The team already works well together and it has strong processes. Team coaching helps the team to map out and find satisfaction in milestone achievements on the journey to dissolution.*