



LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS: YOUR TEAM PERFORMANCE

We think a lot about teams.

Traditionally, executive coaching has been considered an activity to help an individual executive develop professionally. There is a lot to be said for that. Individual coaching allows for an intensive, confidential, targeted improvement process in which an executive can be more vulnerable than they might risk being in their workplace and where they can grow in ways that would not happen in the absence of an objective, experienced coach-partner.

No one lives in a vacuum though—hence our focus on teams.

How many teams are you a member of? The one that reports to you, your peer team, project teams, cross-functional teams, boards you serve on, the team of coaches that work with your kids' soccer league, and the work team at your favorite non-profit are a few of the possibilities in the typical executives' lives.

Do you have any idea how you are perceived by your various team mates, what they appreciate that you do, and what they think you could do better? Are your team mates satisfied with the functioning of the team—their process and their output—or do they see improvement opportunity? As coaches, we help permanent work teams ascertain this information somewhat formally and then help them with an improvement plan.

However, this does not have to be formal or complicated. Depending on your role on the team and how permanent the team is, different levels of “intervention” and modes of launching an improvement process would be appropriate. Here are some simple tips for launching an inquiry for upping the game of a team.

1. First, identify a team you are part of where you see an opportunity for improved team performance—either better communication, or more efficient meetings, or better structure, for example.
2. Ask everybody on the team to give a piece of positive feedback and a piece of constructive feedback to every other member of the team about how they contribute to the team. This can be done anonymously. Then give each person the opportunity to speak with others one on one about the feedback they got.
3. Set up a mechanism for everybody to answer the same 3-to-5 questions about how the team is working together. Compile the results and discuss as a team. See if there are areas of consensus which would imply leverage points.

Notice that there are two levels of inquiry here: what you as an individual do to contribute or could do better, and what the team is doing dynamically as a group.

Would investing the time to improve the functioning of your team pay back dividends in terms of higher performance, improved products, happier employees, or more loyal customers? Would you like to ensure you are contributing to your team in an optimal way?