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What Are the Key Qualities and Skills of Effective Team Coaches?

William Jacox

Antioch University - PhD Program in Leadership and Change

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WHAT ARE THE KEY QUALITIES AND SKILLS OF EFFECTIVE TEAM COACHES?

WILLIAM JACOX

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Ph.D. in Leadership and Change Program

of Antioch University

in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

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This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled:
WHAT ARE THE KEY QUALITIES AND SKILLS OF EFFECTIVE TEAM COACHES?
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William Jacox

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Leadership and Change.

Approved by:

Jon Wergin, Ph.D., Chair date

Tony Lingham, Ph.D., Committee Member date

Anita Polite-Wilson, Ph.D., Committee Member date

Bernard Curtis, Ed.D., External Reader date

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my children, Alex and Serena. What kind of an example do I want to be for my children? That was the question that helped me get through the more difficult parts of this journey. Although it was the time away from them that made this work particularly difficult at times, there is something compelling about completing something big in the face of obstacles. I hope what they inspired in me will one day inspire them.

Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation was to identify and understand the key qualities and skills of effective team coaches. The results serve to educate and inform those aspiring to be organizational team coaches, those presently serving as team coaches, those developing curriculum to train team coaches, and those responsible for choosing and hiring team coaches for their organizations. Study participants were all experienced professional team coaches representing several states and a few different countries. The Delphi method was used, resulting in the emergence of consensus judgments of 15 qualities and 15 skills based on anonymous responses during multiple iterations. While the study does not claim to identify a set of characteristics that will ensure that a team coach will be effective in their professional practice, emphasis on those characteristics should enhance the professional development of aspiring and experienced team coaches alike. This dissertation is available in open-access at OhioLink ETD Center, www.ohiolink.edu/etd and AURA: Antioch University Repository and Archive, <http://aura.antioch.edu/>

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Chapter I: Introduction

Self-managing teams are fast becoming the management practice of choice for organizations that wish to become more flexible, push decision making to the front lines, and fully use employees' intellectual and creative capacities. (Wageman, 1997, p. 49)

According to teams expert J. Richard Hackman (2002), teams can accomplish more than an individual because they have more talent and experience, more diverse resources, and greater operating flexibility than individual performers. Issues around role clarity (“Who is responsible for what here?”) and communication (“I thought you were taking care of that!”) can get in the way of higher team performance. At the individual level, executive coaching has been effective in helping executives learn and develop and, extrapolating this to the team level, it seems likely that a well-trained and competent team coach can help a team navigate through some of its inherent obstacles and greatly enhance its ability to produce outcomes that far exceed expectations. As dominant leadership paradigms continue to shift from traditional command and control models to more collaborative team models both in the United States and internationally, the power of the team continues to grow in importance. I believe team coaching does and will play an increasingly critical part in the success of this paradigm shift.

Complexity Leadership Theory and the Need for Teams

The modern global phenomenon of highly complex systems has created problems that demand more than what an individual is capable of, thus creating the greater need to access the talents and skills of teams. “Teams have so much more potential than individuals to rise to the growing, current and future challenges that face all organizations, countries and our species” (Hawkins, 2011, p. 14). Furthermore, Hagan and Aguilar (2012) states that teams are an increasingly common way for today’s organizations to structure work in order to achieve

competitive advantage. Despite the clear indication of the need for teams, that does not make for an easy transition and acceptance because “humans are predisposed to want to suppress this swarm dynamic in their midst, to try to centralize and control the behaviors of the collective” despite the fact that “emergent outcomes (e.g., adaptability, innovation, learning), are crucial for success in the highly complex world of the twenty-first century” (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2008, p. xiii). Historically, the concept of leadership has always been about top-down control and knowing with certainty, “indeed the root structure of the word, leadership, refers to one who is in front of, showing others the way” (Marion, 2008, p. 3).

Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT), discussed in greater depth later in this paper, was developed in response to today’s rapidly changing environment, known by many names: “knowledge era, the information revolution, the information age and the new competitive landscape” (Schrieber & Carley, 2008, p. 292). This new era is “a high-velocity environment ripe with change . . . [where] . . . competitive advantage is gained by establishing organizational capabilities geared toward learning and adaptation” (Schrieber & Carley, 2008, pp. 292–293). Teams are well suited to work through complexity, which means that people often have membership in multiple teams resulting in outcomes that are frequently suboptimal and fraught with frustration and inefficiencies (Lingham & Richley, 2015).

No longer does the success of the organization rely solely on one person. “This moves the paradigm away from the single ‘heroic’ leader who has all the answers to one where the responsibility for learning and reasoning about change falls onto the collective organization” (Schrieber & Carley, 2008, p. 293). In this new paradigm, “leaders enable rather than control, where power derives from the leaders' ability ‘to allow’ rather than to direct, and where people in the organization remain engaged and connected” (Plowman, Solansky, Beck, Baker, Kulkarni, &

Travis, 2007, pp. 344–345). This “giving up control” can have a much more powerful impact on the organization’s bottom line because “the process can produce outcomes far beyond the ideas of any one agent” (Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009, p. 626). Interdependence is the key. “By focusing on emergent leadership dynamics, CLT implies that leadership only exists in, and is a function of, interaction” (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007, p. 314). Interaction “recognizes that in collaborative efforts, partners often do not share the exact same goals but instead have personal needs that can best be satisfied by working together” (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, p. 642).

Based on this organizational shift, Complexity Leadership Theory was developed to meet the leadership demands of the 21st century and beyond. Teams are its perfect complement and are best able to meet these constantly developing and changing organizational demands.

The Need for Team Coaching

Many authors, practitioners, and theorists believe that team coaching is a powerful tool to help teams become higher performing (Britton, 2013; Clutterbuck, 2007; Goldberg, 2003; Hackman, 2002; Hawkins, 2011; Riddle, 2008; Thornton, 2010; Wageman & Hackman, 2010). Scant research supports this assertion. The main body of research about coaching is found in the training literature and it focuses almost entirely on individual skill acquisition (Fournies, 1978). Relatively little has been published that specifically addresses the coaching of task-performing teams (Hackman & Wageman, 2005). Most of that research focuses on how the coaching intervention impacts the team. In other words, does coaching cause an increase in team performance? The literature overwhelmingly suggests that it does, with variations about which aspects of team performance are enhanced (Britton, 2013; Clutterbuck, 2007; Goldberg, 2003; Hackman, 2002; Hawkins, 2011; Riddle, 2008; Thornton, 2010; Wageman & Hackman, 2010).

Less is known about the individual coach. Professional trainers and developers have opinions about what good team coaching looks like, but little published research exists that identifies specific coaching behaviors or what differentiates an effective coach from an ineffective one (Hamlin, Ellinger, & Beattie, 2006). These studies highlight that there exists a consensus that teams are much better equipped than individuals to navigate through the dynamic uncertainty of contemporary organizational society, coupled with a belief that those teams can perform at a higher level with skilled people coaching them. The gap that I intend to address with my research is an understanding of what makes those people effective at team coaching.

Where did the concept of team coaching as a leadership phenomenon come from? Why is it beginning to be recognized now? Reflecting a rapidly changing organizational landscape, a new management culture based on inclusion, involvement and participation, rather than on the traditional command, control and compliance paradigm calls for facilitative behaviors that focus on employee empowerment, learning and development. Unlike traditional training, which can be an effective way to acquire new skills or knowledge, facilitative behaviors are best achieved through coaching (Hamlin et al., 2006). First identified by Manz and Sims (1987), and later analyzed by other scholars (Hackman & Wageman, 2005), this team coaching form of leadership focuses on coaching the team and empowering its self-management. This is particularly important given that team leaders are sometimes external to a team and not involved in its daily task activities. Manz and Sims (1987) found that team leaders who encourage and coach team self-management via self-observation, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement were 20% more effective than leaders who did not. Others have found that supportive coaching by a team leader can lead to more effective group processes, such as learning and adaptation, and ultimately to higher levels of team performance (Edmondson, 1999; Wageman, 2001). These leaders engage

in coaching behaviors to develop a team's capacity to perform key functions. They do this by encouraging team members to take responsibility for, and work together to fulfill, such functions. Coaching leaders, or internal team coaches, help team members to make coordinated and task-appropriate use of their collective resources, and they help team members through any performance problems that arise (Hackman & Wageman, 2005). They refrain from actively intervening in and assuming responsibility for the day-to-day tasks assigned to team members.

Who Are the Most Effective Team Coaches?

A consensus exists that coaching is an essential core activity of everyday management and leadership, and that managers and leaders need to become fully competent as proactive coaches if they are to be truly effective and successful in today's competitive, changing world (Britton, 2013; Clutterbuck, 2007; Goldberg, 2003; Hackman, 2002; Hawkins, 2011; Riddle, 2008; Thornton, 2010; Wageman & Hackman, 2010). Much of this opinion, however, is based more on personal belief and prescriptive logic than empirical evidence, derived more from practice than from data. Little is known from research about the specific managerial or leadership behaviors, including managerial coaching behaviors, that managers and managerial leaders need to exhibit to be perceived and judged as effective (Hamlin et al., 2006).

With my interest in leadership development training, I was surprised and disappointed to discover there was very little research about team coach training. There are several books and articles about thoughts and recommendations (Britton, 2013; Clutterbuck, 2007; Hackman, 2002; Riddle, 2008), theories and models (Hackman & Wageman, 2005; Hawkins, 2011; Peters & Carr, 2013; Thornton, 2010) about the competencies of a team coach. However, based on a comprehensive review of the literature, no articles or studies exist about how to train somebody to be an effective team coach, despite a few companies (e.g., Team Coaching International)

offering team coaching training and even certifications in team coaching. Perhaps the results of my study will be used in the curriculum development of future team coach training programs.

Situating the Researcher

As I look back on my own professional practice of working with teams in a variety of contexts, I realize that I have been dancing around this concept of team coaching for quite some time. As a youth, I was always part of a team and most of those teams were sports-related. I was not as aware at the time, but I now know that what drew me to those team experiences was something about being able to contribute to the success of something greater than my individual accomplishment. In other words, I liked sharing in the successes of others. Eventually, I began positively influencing those teams in subtle ways, like a coach, even when I was selected for leadership positions. My early formal leadership seemed to be less about my own accomplishments and more about the team's accomplishments. As I grew, I began to use those more subtle leadership skills, such as facilitating and asking powerful questions, to guide, not just sports teams, but other groups and organizations. I really think those early experiences helped lay the groundwork for what I would eventually come to know as team coaching.

The ability to influence and inspire others is certainly a worthy trait. I believe everybody has the capacity to do so within the teams they participate in or lead. The organizational team coach has the distinct privilege and responsibility to influence task-performing teams, which they are likely to not be a member of themselves, toward the accomplishments of their goals.

When I entered this PhD program, I had been leading and influencing teams as part of my professional practice for nearly two decades. In my early 20s, I led multi-week expeditions for a non-profit organization called Outward Bound, founded on expeditionary behavior, self-reliance and social justice. In many ways, those experiences mirrored project teams in that individuals

began with little, if any, experience with the project itself, and certainly very little, if any, experience with the team that had assembled for the purpose of completing the project. Like organizational project teams, Outward Bound students were divided into small groups of about ten and given the task of completing an Outward Bound course that for many seemed initially impossible. In other words, these newly formed teams had no idea how they were going to accomplish the overall task, figuring out how to combine the strengths and talents of individuals toward that shared goal. The role of the instructor, who was not part of the group, was to lead the group. However, like a team coach, the instructor's leadership method needed to be nuanced and adaptable because, by the end, the participants needed to believe that they had accomplished the challenge themselves. In other words, to be successful, the team needed to feel empowered. Thus, the best Outward Bound instructors needed to excel at team coaching.

While in graduate school toward the end of my 20s, I was challenged to create my own "leadership fundamentals" and decided on professional integrity, relational communication, vision, inspiration, and empowerment. I still consider these fundamentals to be very important in my current thoughts about leadership and they all are consistent with team coaching. In my Reflective Leadership Essay, written five years ago, I mentioned that I was particularly drawn to two new concepts of leadership: team leadership and adaptive leadership, where relational communication and empowerment align closely with concepts of team leadership and a strong sense of professional integrity and vision more easily allow for a greater ability to adapt.

Northouse (2012) discusses team leadership this way:

Team leaders must learn to be open and objective in understanding and diagnosing team problems and skillful in selecting the most appropriate actions (or inactions) to help achieve the team's goals... The key assertion of the functional perspective is that the leader is to do whatever is necessary to take care of unmet needs of the group. If the group members are taking care of most of the needs, then the leader has to do very little. (p. 217)

Like team leadership, adaptive leadership is “the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive” (Heifetz, 1994, p. 14). Both are consistent with the effective characteristics of team coaching. Amanda Sinclair (2007) also describes leadership characteristics that are consistent with coaching behaviors when she said, “Leadership is often distinguished as a force that opens up and illuminates a new path or possibility, compared with managerial activity, which controls the resources that are already there” (p. 123). Thus, all roads in my leadership development seemed to have been moving in the direction of the idea of team coaching.

As I look ahead to what my professional life will consist of once I have completed my PhD, I see myself expanding my leadership and team development practice to include leading and consulting in the area of team coaching. Thus, my interest in the topic is professionally practical as well as academic. I have always loved training others in leadership, facilitation, and other skills. I look forward to the opportunity to train others in team coaching. Look for additional thoughts in this in Chapter V.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study will be to explore the key qualities and skills of an effective team coach. I intend to tap into the collective wisdom of practicing and recently retired team coaches to create a consensus that active and future team coaches, and those who hire and/or train them, would find useful for professional development.

A Gap in the Literature. Through my research, I have noticed many thought pieces conceptualizing and theorizing about team coaching in the form of books, book chapters, and articles, but comparatively few empirical research articles about team coaching in general and, as stated earlier, none about how to train somebody to be a more effective team coach.

Little evidence exists to describe what that effective team coach looks like. Besides one article specific to South Africa (Maritz, Poggenpoel, & Myburgh, 2009) about core competencies, we do not really know what makes for a great team coach. I am sure there are great team coaches out there, just as I am sure there are those out there who claim to be team coaches but are not very good ones. How do we know? Certainly not from an abundance of empirical research on the topic.

Research Question. From the gaps I found in the literature, I am specifically interested in discovering the core qualities and skills that make an effective team coach. Specifically, “What are the qualities and skills of effective team coaches?” The focus of this question is to describe the “effective” team coach based on these two criteria: *Quality*—A distinguishing characteristic, attribute, or feature that one possesses; and *Skill*—The ability to do something that comes from training, experience, or practice.

The rationale for researching this question is to offer current and aspiring team coaches some specific guidance to help them become as effective as they can be. The result could serve as a benchmark of sorts or standard, to help team coaches and those seeking the services of team coaches to make more educated and informed decisions.

Some secondary questions that are explored more deeply throughout this paper are: Are there any leadership characteristics that distinguish effective team coaches from ineffective ones?

Scope and Limitations of the Study. I intend to use the Delphi technique to tap into the collective wisdom of team coach practitioners to develop a consensus about what it takes to be an effective team coach. The Delphi method is an effective way to maximize the knowledge and experiences of a collection of experts while minimizing some of the process problems inherent in

trying to achieve consensus (Dalkey, 1969). My intention is to engage about 15 active or recently active team coaches with significant experience working as a team coach.

The limitations to this study center on the relatively small sample size. Although 15 participants is an adequate size for a Delphi study, one could argue that 15 is not enough to yield a deep enough pool of experts to develop a comprehensive summary of collective wisdom. Also, since all of the participants will be current or recent professional team coaches, one could argue that they all think alike, despite a wide range in education, background, age, geographic location, and other demographic information. However, based on the results of hundreds of studies over the course of several decades, the Delphi method has proven time and again to be a reliable way to access a diversity of thought and opinions of particular subject matter experts (Skulmoski, Hartman, & Krahn, 2007). In repeatedly producing consensus results different and more robust than the opinion of one or two experts, Delphi is able to access a diversity of thought that is less likely in focus groups or some other way to access group wisdom (Skulmoski et al., 2007).

Organization of Chapters II and III

Chapter II will provide a critique of literature related to team coaching. This will create a foundation for determining what thoughts and concepts, along with possible gaps, have been published related to team coaching. The chapter will start with a general overview of the various leadership theories that were foundational in the development of team coaching and then move more deeply into the literature about team coaching. These foundational pieces will be trait theories of leadership, adaptive and complexity leadership, emotional and social intelligence, team effectiveness, coaching, and team coaching. Ultimately, I will integrate these theories and show how they are all important when discussing the leadership implications of team coaching. As mentioned earlier, there is a significant gap in the literature about team coaching

competencies and not much about team coaching in general, given that it is a relatively new field of practice and research.

Chapter III will present the methodology of the Delphi technique that will be used for data gathering and interpretation/analysis. Included also will be the rationale for using Delphi as the research methodology for this study and the relevant risks and ethical concerns that may arise. I will also discuss the Delphi pilot study I conducted.

The Delphi technique will allow me to tap into the collective wisdom of team coach practitioners to develop a consensus about what it takes to be an effective team coach. The Delphi method is proven to be an effective way to maximize the knowledge and experiences of a group of experts while minimizing the negative process problems (Skulmoski et al., 2007). In fact, J. Richard Hackman, seen by many, including myself, as the leading thinker and theorist about teams in general and team coaching specifically, praised the Delphi method:

One strategy for heading off group process problems is to structure members' interaction in ways that minimize the chances that things will go awry. The Nominal Group Technique (NGT), for example, provides a multistep procedure that both guides and constrains group interaction. Intended for tasks that involve eliciting and prioritizing policy alternatives, the technique has been shown to significantly reduce a group's vulnerability to the kinds of process problems that often develop for such tasks. The Delphi method goes even further – group interaction cannot compromise performance when Delphi procedures are used because members do not interact at all. Instead, they submit their personal views to a coordinator, the coordinator summarizes them and sends the results back to all participants, and that iterative process continues until convergence is achieved. (Hackman, 2011, pp. 70–71)

Norman Dalkey, who created Delphi, described it this way: “The Delphi technique is a method of eliciting and refining group judgments. The rationale for the procedures is primarily the age-old adage ‘Two heads are better than one,’ when the issue is one where exact knowledge is not available” (Dalkey, 1969, p. V). He goes on to specify the three features that make a Delphi a Delphi: 1. anonymous response; 2. iteration and controlled feedback; 3. statistical

group response. “These features are designed to minimize the biasing effects of dominant individuals, of irrelevant communications, and of group pressure toward conformity” (Dalkey, 1969, p. V).

Similar to the recent pilot study I conducted, I used Delphi to access the expert judgment of about 15 team coaches to determine the key qualities and skills necessary to be an effective team coach. These team coaches were geographically dispersed, including coaches from countries outside of the United States, included a roughly even split of men and women, and represented a variety of ages and past work experiences.

Unlike my pilot study, where I did not insert into the process any qualities and skills apparent from the literature, I did so during this study. In other words, if there were some specific qualities or skills (e.g., emotional intelligence) that did not show up in the results of the first questionnaire, I added them into the mix for participant consideration during the second questionnaire round, having informed the participants that I did so. This was a way to ensure that the literature has at least an equal voice in the process and served to potentially broaden the list of possible qualities and skills before the participants were asked to begin narrowing and prioritizing.

Chapter II: Review of the Literature

The purpose of this literature review is to examine and understand the scholarly discourse on topics related to the dissertation research question stated in chapter one. This chapter reviews the relevant literature within the following six sub-categories:

1. Trait Theory of Leadership;
2. Emotional and Social Intelligence;
3. Adaptive and Complexity Leadership;
4. Team Effectiveness;
5. Coaching; and
6. Team Coaching.

These six content areas were examined to gain a better understanding of the research question. Knowledge in these areas was viewed as a prerequisite for the research study of team coaches, specifically to identify potential critical success factors of job effectiveness.

By examining relevant theories of leadership, we are reminded that the act of coaching teams is itself a valuable form of leadership. Hackman and Wageman (2005), integral to the development of team coaching, describe the connection between team coaching and leadership:

Team coaching is an act of leadership, but it is not the only one or necessarily the most consequential one. Team leaders engage in many different kinds of behaviors intended to foster team effectiveness, including structuring the team and establishing its purposes, arranging for the resources a team needs for its work and removing organizational roadblocks that impede the work, helping individual members strengthen their personal contributions to the team, and working with the team as a whole to help members use their collective resources well in pursuing team purposes. (p. 269)

Trait Theory of Leadership

Although the concept of leadership has been in existence since humans experienced conscious thought, Thomas Carlyle's 1841 work, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* is considered the first academic reference to leadership in western literature (Kaplan, 1983). Carlyle's work focused on the capabilities of an individual to influence others and put forth the argument that individuals are born with certain leadership traits. This proposal led to the first known theory on leadership, the Great Man Theory or Trait Theory (Stogdill, 1974), exemplified in 1905 by Max Weber's *charismatic leader*.

Most recently, concepts moving even further away from individuals and the relationship between leaders and environment have emerged. As such, leadership is not viewed as a set of traits belonging to an individual but rather a mix of group interactions (Bass, 1997) where adaptation and reaction is more important than traditional notions of command and control, where the emphasis is on strategic *thinking* rather than strategic planning (Wheatley, 1999).

Instead of the ability to analyze and predict, we need to know how to stay acutely aware of what's happening now, and we need to be better, faster learners from what just happened. Agility and intelligence are required to respond to the incessant barrage of frequent, unplanned changes.
(Wheatley, 1999, p. 38)

Given my desire to understand what are the key qualities and skills of an effective team coach, a review of the trait theory of leadership seems appropriate and relevant from a foundational perspective. The trait theory of leadership examines the relationship between leadership ability and personality (Bass, 1990) where traits are defined as general characteristics that can include capabilities, motives, and behavior patterns (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991).

Are there any leadership characteristics that distinguish effective team coaches from ineffective ones? Trait theory suggests that there are, indeed, inherent leadership capabilities that

distinguish leaders from followers. One of the problems with trait theory is the list of traits seems to be inexhaustible and is only really relevant to the situation (Stogdill, 1948). That is to say, depending on the circumstances that require leadership, a completely different list of the best qualities might be required. In other words, the specific situation largely dictates the most relevant leadership traits. It is one of the most researched leadership theories, with research dating back over one hundred years but as Northouse (2012) emphasizes, all of that research has simply produced “an extended list of traits that individuals might hope to possess or wish to cultivate if they want to be perceived by others as leaders” (p. 18). Of that ever growing list of leadership traits, five, referred to as “the Big Five” (Tupes & Christal, 1961), distinguish themselves as possessing the strongest relationship with effective leadership. Those five traits are neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002).

Because trait theory looks only at the individual person and not the greater context that that person operates within, its reliability is suspect and incomplete as an independent measure of leadership potential (Stogdill, 1948). It posits that work teams or organizations will function more effectively if those leading possess specific leadership traits (Stogdill, 1948). A variety of commonly used personality assessments have been developed from trait theory and provide results that promote self-awareness, itself a valuable leadership characteristic that can be used to establish professional development benchmark and set goals (McCrae & Costa, 1987).

Given that the context that the team coach operates varies as widely as the teams being coached, the trait theory of leadership may prove less valuable as a single source of leadership insight. Taken within a broader consideration of innate qualities and learned skills, it would add value to a conversation about the key qualities and skills of an effective team coach.

Emotional and Social Intelligence

Another way of assessing the impact of traits on leadership is through the concept of emotional intelligence, which is concerned with one's ability to understand emotions in relation to personal competencies such as self-awareness, confidence, self-regulation, conscientiousness, motivation and social competencies such as empathy, communication, and conflict management (Goleman, 1998). A significant difference between the trait theory of leadership and emotional intelligence is that traits are innate (like more traditional concepts of intelligence or IQ) whereas emotional intelligence can be learned and developed. In fact, Daniel Goleman (1995, 1998), the "father" of emotional intelligence found that

while the qualities traditionally associated with leadership – such as intelligence, toughness, determination, and vision – are required for success, they are insufficient. Truly effective leaders are also distinguished by a high degree of emotional intelligence, which includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. (p. 94)

Some experts of emotional intelligence believe that it can contribute to approximately 80% of one's effectiveness on the job (Goleman, 1995). When looking at leaders of higher rank, the distinction was even more apparent:

In other words, the higher the rank of a person considered to be a star performer, the more emotional intelligence capabilities showed up as the reason for his or her effectiveness. When I compared star performers with average ones in senior leadership positions, nearly 90% of the difference in their profiles was attributable to emotional intelligence factors rather than cognitive abilities. (Goleman, 1998, p. 94)

The belief is that those who have more awareness of their own emotions and the impact their emotions have on others will be more effective as leaders. In fact, Goleman (1998) states that

emotional intelligence is the sine qua non of leadership. Without it, a person can have the best training in the world, and incisive, analytical mind, and an endless supply of smart ideas, but he still won't make a great leader" (p. 94).

In combination with innate traits, characteristics of learned emotional intelligence provides a broader perspective of the key qualities and skills of an effective team coach. Just as importantly, because emotional intelligence can be learned (Goleman, 1995), the opportunity for professional development and improvement could provide inspiration for aspiring team coaches wishing to perfect their craft. A more recent offspring of emotional intelligence that Goleman and Boyatzis (2008) discuss is a concept called social intelligence. Their research found that elements of social intelligence (empathy, attunement, organizational awareness, influence, developing others, inspiration, teamwork) predicted leadership success more powerfully than even emotional intelligence (p. 80) and that social intelligence is particularly critical in crisis situations, a likely place a team coach may find themselves in dealing with potentially explosive team conflict.

Adaptive and Complexity Leadership

To effectively lead complex organizations in dynamic environments, a certain amount of competence and confidence is required to navigate the environmental *whitewater* (Vaill, 1996), to guide the organization safely to its desired destination. In other words, to follow the *flow of the river* and use it as a metaphor for one's organization. According to Wheatley (1999), a river

has an impressive ability to adapt, to change the configurations, to let the power shift, to create new structures. But behind this adaptability, making it all happen, I think, is the water's need to flow. Water answers to gravity, to downhill, to the call of ocean. The forms change, but the mission remains clear. Structures emerge, but only as temporary solutions that facilitate rather than interfere. (pp. 17–18)

Successful organizations of the 21st century, like a river, adapt to constantly changing and unpredictable conditions in its unerring forward movement toward its goals. A new obstacle might cause a pause or slow the momentum, but no obstacle can stop its flow. Likewise, a successful organization in today's complex environment requires leadership that adapts to constantly changing conditions. Successful leaders are adaptive leaders.

Heifetz et al (2009) describes adaptive leadership as “the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive” (p. 14). Other characteristics include:

- Successful adaptive changes build on the past rather than jettison it.
- Organizational adaptation occurs through experimentation.
- Adaptation relies on diversity.
- New adaptations significantly displace, reregulate, and rearrange some old DNA.
- Adaptation takes time. (pp. 15–16)

Heifetz (1994) lists five strategic principles of adaptive leadership:

1. *Identify the adaptive challenge.* Diagnose the situation in light of the values at stake, and unbundled the issues that come with it.
2. *Keep the level of distress within a tolerable range for doing adaptive work.* To use the pressure cooker analogy, keep the heat up without blowing up the vessel.
3. *Focus attention on ripening issues and not on stress-reducing distractions.* Identify which issues can currently engage attention; and while directing attention to them, counteract work avoidance mechanisms like denial, scapegoating, externalizing the enemy, pretending the problem is technical, or attacking individuals rather than issues.
4. *Give the work back to people, but at a rate they can stand.* Place and develop responsibility by putting the pressure on the people with the problem.
5. *Protect voices of leadership without authority.* Give cover to those who raise hard questions and generate distress – people who point to the internal contradictions of the society. These individuals often will have latitude to provoke rethinking that authorities do not have. (p. 128)

Successful adaptive leadership requires enough knowledge, experience, and confidence to correctly diagnose the problem; the ability to accurately read people’s stress levels; the courage, strength, and clarity of purpose to keep the collective site set on the objective, and not become distracted by, instead, being compelled to alleviate minor uncomfortable stresses; sharing power and the workload; protecting those who, without any formal authority, continue to ask the difficult questions; and knowing, like a “leader in place” (Wergin, 2007), when to pick one’s battles.

Adaptive leadership theory is an extension of previous ethical leadership paradigms and was birthed from the contributions of a number of other prominent leadership and learning theories such as single and double loop learning (Argyris, 1964), triple loop learning (Torbert, 2004), levels of consciousness (Kegan, 1982), transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991), flow theory (Czikszentmihaly, 1990), experiential learning cycle (Kolb, Irwin, & McIntyre, 1984), and reflective practice (Schon, 1983). Adaptive leadership has also been partly responsible for the recent resurgence of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1991) and authentic leadership (Avolio, 2005).

It is a leadership theory that allows for the leader to bring forth what is needed rather than sticking to the script regardless of the reality presented. In adaptive work “the appropriate style of leadership is contingent on the requirements of the particular situation” (Heifetz, 1994, p. 17). Thus, “a leader stays alive not by ‘playing it safe’ but by taking deliberate risks based on his ongoing assessment of the territory, knowing that corrective action will almost always be necessary” (Heifetz, 1994, p. 243). Unlike the more reactive nature of situational leadership, adaptive leadership also integrates vision. This is where I believe an effective team coach can be most helpful: to observe from a distance and guide the team from a place that is more proactive and less reactive, to take in a wider context and anticipate necessary adjustments. Adaptive leadership theory is closely related to Complexity Leadership Theory, which is discussed below.

Complexity Leadership Theory, where “complex, unscripted behavior is the theme” (Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2007, p. 293) takes the principles of adaptive leadership and integrates them into a system that goes further into providing a more comprehensive framework to more completely understand effective organizational leadership in today’s modern “knowledge” era.

Complexity leadership, however, is not an easy process to integrate within an organization because “humans are predisposed to want to suppress this swarm dynamic in their midst, to try to centralize and control the behaviors of the collective” despite the fact that “emergent outcomes (e.g., adaptability, innovation, learning), are crucial for success in the highly complex world of the twenty-first century” (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2008, p. xiii). Historically, the concept of leadership has always been about top-down control and knowing with certainty: “indeed the root structure of the word, leadership, refers to one who is in front of, showing others the way” (Marion, 2008, p. 3). This change in leadership paradigm is particularly difficult for most to accept because “complexity theory argues that the future is ultimately unknowable” (Marion, 2008, p. 4). It is a disconcerting concept because “interactive behaviors and outcomes feed back on one another in convoluted fashion, with effects becoming causes and with influence often wielded through extended chains of effect” (Marion, 2008, p. 5). The facilitative and adaptive process inherent in team coaching can help organizations better integrate this changing paradigm.

In complexity leadership theory, similar to the dynamics of team coaching, “leaders do not control emergent processes, although they may manage them to a certain extent” (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2008, p. 157). No longer does the success of the organization rely solely on one person. “This moves the paradigm away from the single ‘heroic’ leader who has all the answers to one where the responsibility for learning and reasoning about change falls onto the collective organization” (Schreiber & Carley, 2008, p. 293). In this system, “leaders enable rather than control, where power derives from the leaders' ability ‘to allow’ rather than to direct, and where people in the organization remain engaged and connected” (Plowman et al., 2007, pp. 344–345). This ‘giving up control’ can have a much more powerful impact on the organization’s

bottom line because “the process can produce outcomes far beyond the ideas of any one agent” (Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009, p. 626). Thus, interdependence is the key. “By focusing on emergent leadership dynamics, CLT implies that leadership only exists in, and is a function of, interaction” (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007, p. 314). Interaction “recognizes that in collaborative efforts, partners often do not share the exact same goals but instead have personal needs that can best be satisfied by working together” (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009, p. 642).

Team Effectiveness

Teams are powerful. We know they have great potential for solving hard problems in challenging contexts. Teams bring more knowledge, skill, and experience than any single individual. They have great positive potential, and yet ‘bad’ group experiences are justifiably feared. Teams can be highly time and cost-efficient for the organization but they can also be very inefficient. The challenge is to identify what it takes for teams to exploit their considerable potential while avoiding common dysfunctions, to harness their power to achieve change, while minimizing less constructive elements.

Terms such as ‘team performance’ and ‘team effectiveness’ have been used synonymously in the literature. We will unpack these terms here. Likewise, terms such as ‘team’ and ‘group’ have also been used interchangeably; however, the literature has shown significant differences between the two types. Larson and LaFasto (1989) defined a team as having two or more people with specific performance objectives and that the members had to interact to achieve those objectives. Parker (1994) also stressed that the collaborative nature of teams is a defining characteristic and added that the team members must have the skills necessary to accomplish their tasks. While there is an element of teamwork in both definitions, the primary emphasis is on achieving results, often directly associated with a team’s performance.

Katzenbach and Smith (1999) included common elements of these definitions when describing high performance teams. They propose that teams be relatively small, have the necessary skills to accomplish their purpose and that team members are mutually accountable. Their definition adds an element related to the internal workings of the team in that not only does the team produce something, team members also agree on the approach and depend upon each other to perform as agreed. Team performance is measured by the contribution to the mission of the organization. Katzenbach and Smith (1999) stated: "Without specific, tangible performance results, little else matters" (p. 107).

Reitmeier (2013) emphasized the interdependent task accomplishment found in the earlier concepts of teams by adding that element to Katzenbach and Smith's definition. As a result, Reitmeier (2013) defined a team as "a group of individuals who have complementary skills, are committed to a common purpose or goal for which they are mutually accountable, and utilize a synergistic approach for interdependent task accomplishment" (p. 12).

Katzenbach and Smith (1999) show working groups as a stage on the team evolutionary process they call the team performance curve. According to them, members of work groups gather to share information, but there is not a common overarching purpose or a joint work product that requires mutual accountability. Reitmeier (2013) also noted the lack of mutual accountability and interdependent tasks when she defined work groups as a "structured unit of individuals who strive to meet some defined purpose and share information to align individual efforts at interfaces, but who have no mutual accountability and do not actively pursue interdependent tasks" (p. 13).

Cohen and Bailey (1997) defined team as "a collection of individuals who are interdependent in their tasks, who share responsibility for outcomes, who see themselves and

who are seen by others as an intact social entity embedded in one or more larger social systems” (p. 241). The noted that the word “team” tends to be more frequently used in popular management literature and “group” more so in the academic literature.

Team effectiveness is often described as the combination of team health and team performance. Goodman, Ravlin, and Argote (1986) defined team effectiveness as the degree to which team output exceeds an organization's standards and team members enjoy the group experience and want to continue to work together over time. Brannick and Prince (1997) concluded that a comprehensive measure of team effectiveness includes both team process (team health) and team outcome measures (team performance). Campion, Paper, and Medsker (1996) expanded the definition of team effectiveness to include both satisfaction and productivity, both from the perspective of the team as well as individual team members. Accordingly, “team effectiveness can be judged by both team level and individual level effectiveness outcomes.” (Campion et al., 1996, p. 433). Hackman and Wageman (2005) defined team effectiveness as a construct with three dimensions: the productive output of the team, the social processes of the team and the degree to which the experience contributes to the team member's learning and well-being and concluded that

team effectiveness is a joint function of three performance processes: (1) the level of effort group members collaboratively expend carrying out task work, (2) the appropriateness . . . of the performance strategies, . . . and (3) the amount of knowledge and skill members bring to bear. (p. 273)

What makes a team perform at a high level? There is no single cause but, instead, a set of conditions that, operating together, will help a team move into ever-increasing competence as a performing unit.

The conditions are (Hackman, 2002):

- *Defining a real team.* Katzenbach and Smith (1999) define a team as “a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable” (p. 23).
- *Creating a compelling direction and purpose.* This energizes team members, orients them toward their collective objective, and fully engages their talents.
- *Having the right people with the right knowledge and skills.* Well-composed teams have the right number and mix of members each of whom has both task expertise and skill in working with others.
- *Creating a solid team structure.* Norms of conduct specify what behaviors are, and are not, acceptable in a team.
- *Ensuring a supportive organizational context.* Even teams that are properly structured and supported sometimes flounder because they cannot obtain the organizational supports they need to perform.

Once these five effectiveness conditions are addressed at a sufficient level, the sixth condition for team effectiveness, competent team coaching, can start on a solid foundation.

The team coach’s job is to get these enabling conditions in place and help members take the greatest possible advantage of their favorable performance circumstances to function at more than the sum of their parts. Preeminent teams expert, J. Richard Hackman (2011), suggests that much of a team’s success depends on the successful set-up of these conditions.

Indeed, my best estimate is that 60 percent of the variation in team effectiveness depends on the degree to which the . . . enabling conditions are in place, 30 percent on the quality of a team’s launch, and just 10 percent on the leaders’ hands-on, real-time coaching. (p. xvii)

Thus, much of a team's ultimate success is in its set-up and launch. Now that is not to say that a team cannot be successful without an excellent set-up and launch, but it does better position the team for success and will make ongoing coaching interventions more effective.

If a team's success, then, is only 10% dependent on team coaching, why bother with team coaching at all? Hackman (2002) explains: "These basic conditions provide the foundation for superb team performance, and no amount of coaching can compensate if they are badly flawed. When conditions *are* favorable, however, coaching can significantly enhance team performance processes" (p. 169).

Coaching

Organizational and personal coaching is a process and a profession that has grown dramatically in recent years. Hamlin, Ellinger, and Beattie (2008) stated that coaching is the second-fastest growing profession, rivaled only by information technology. The profession has some coaches that consider themselves generalists, whereas other coaches have niches or specializations including executive coaching, career coaching, organizational change coaching, strategy coaching, diversity coaching, ethics coaching, and team coaching.

This growing phenomenon is yet to have a universally recognized definition; instead, countless definitions from many different sources attempt to summarize the concept, process, and profession of coaching. One reason for such a range of definitions is that some focus on coaching in organizations, some on one-on-one coaching, and some on group coaching. Moreover, many different coaching specializations shape some of the definitions. Thankfully, some commonalities do exist. Most definitions focus on some type of professional development, change, growth, or thriving. Peterson and Hicks (1996) describe coaching as "the process of equipping people with tools, knowledge, and opportunities they need to develop themselves and

become more effective” (p. 14). King and Eaton (1999) describe it as “a structured two-way process, which develops and harnesses a person’s talents in the pursuit of specific goals” (p. 145). Tobias (1996) says, “The term coaching has the advantage of implying an ongoing process” (p. 87), which, as he points out, distinguishes it from other one-time activities such as workshops and seminars. He adds, “Coaching is individually tailored to the person and the current issue or problem, as opposed to the . . . ‘one-size-fits-all’ menu” (p. 87).

The International Coach Federation (ICF) is a governing body that has significantly influenced the growth and acceptance of coaching as a professional practice over the past twenty years. For individual coaching, they describe four competency categories: setting the foundation, co-creating the relationship, communicating effectively, and learning and results. Setting the foundation includes meeting ethical guidelines and professional standards and establishing the coaching agreement. Co-creating the relationship includes establishing trust and intimacy with the coachee and coaching presence. Communicating effectively includes active listening, powerful questioning, and direct communication. Learning and results include creating awareness, designing actions, planning and goal setting, and managing progress and accountability (International Coach Federation, 2015).

Aside from the standards of the International Coach Federation, coaching continues to be unregulated regarding the qualifications of a coach (Brotman, Liberi, & Wasylyshyn, 1998; Judge & Cowell, 1997). Indeed, as Grant (2007) says, “There are currently no generally accepted identifiable, and distinct skills for coaches” (p. 242). Instead, the practitioner literature has focused on anecdotally emphasizing, from the coach’s perspective, competencies that coaches need in order to be most effective (International Coach Federation, 2015; Whitworth, Kimsey-House, & Sandahl, 1998). Moreover, one finds a healthy debate in the literature among

practicing coaches and researchers as to who is most qualified to be a coach (Tobias, 1996). This debate has not even begun in the even newer and less developed specialization of team coaching, hence the need for this study.

Team Coaching

With very little written about team coaching, I quickly noted the almost exalted status that J. Richard Hackman seems to hold. Himself a prolific writer about team coaching, he is also cited extensively by nearly every other author. Above anybody else, he seems to have wielded the greatest influence in the relatively young area of team coaching. Sadly, he passed away recently and one of the newest books about team coaching, Peters and Carr's *High Performance Team Coaching* (2013), was dedicated to him. The most powerful resources about team coaching came from Britton (2013), Clutterbuck (2007), Hackman (2002, 2011), Hawkins (2011), Peters and Carr (2013), and Thornton (2010).

Three themes emerged out of the team coaching literature: team performance as a result of the team coaching intervention, team coach competencies, and concepts and theories about team coaching. The first two themes emerged from empirical research articles and the third theme from articles and books that are less research and more thoughtful and conceptual.

Team Performance: How Did the Team Do as a Result of the Coaching? The outcomes of the vast majority of these studies indicated that, in general terms, team coaching had a very positive impact in a variety of measurable ways on team effectiveness (Hong & Vai, 2008; Woodhead, 2011) and performance (Haug, 2011; Heimbecker, 2006). Some of those positive impacts were seen in the creation of a stronger and more supportive team environment (Mulec & Roth, 2005), an increased capacity for change (Mulec & Roth, 2005) and learning capability (Mulec & Roth, 2005; Hong & Vai, 2008; Hagan & Aguilar, 2012), better

communication (Archer, 2009), an enhanced ability to address conflict (Kralj, 2001), increased awareness of interactive space (Rezania & Lingham, 2009), increased effort (Liu, Pirola-Merlo, Yang, & Huang, 2009) and skill (Liu et al., 2009), better self-management (Wageman, 2001), a higher quality of group process (Wageman, 2001), more innovative thinking (Buljac-Samardzic, van Woerkom, & Paauwe, 2012; Rousseau, Aube, & Tremblay, 2013), better problem-solving (Buljac-Samardzic et al., 2012), and a heightened level of psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999, 2003).

It is important to note that not all of the results were positive. For example, Liu, Pirola-Merlo, Yang, and Huang (2009), in testing Hackman and Wageman's (2005) team coaching theory, found team coaching failed to have a positive impact on team strategy. Wageman (2001) also found that team coaching had no measurably positive impact on group performance or work satisfaction, but it did on the quality of group process. The vast majority of studies, however, show positive attributes of team coaching on teams. With the exception of Liu, Pirola-Merlo, Yang, and Huang (2009) and Wageman (2001), not one study to my knowledge found anything critical to say about team coaching as a leadership skill. Given the relatively few studies out there, is it possible that some of the researchers have been team coaching evangelists who conducted research to provide some rigor and substance to their own coaching practices? I suspect this to be true. Given the growing consensus that seems to exist that teams are the future of business success (Britton, 2013; Clutterbuck, 2007; Goldberg, 2003; Hackman, 2002; Hawkins, 2011; Riddle, 2008; Thornton, 2010; Wageman & Hackman, 2010) coupled with a growing belief that team coaching is at least one very effective way to lead and influence teams, it stands to reason that any self-proclaimed team coaching expert who can back their claims up with solid empirical research would quickly become a very much sought-after consultant.

Not all of the studies looked only at team coaching and its impact on teams. Some (Hong & Vai, 2008; Burke et al., 2006; Wageman, 1997) saw team coaching as just one, albeit an important one, of many factors positively influencing team performance. Wageman (1997) significantly discovered that team design, similar to Hackman's (2011) enabling conditions, is a foundational imperative to create the most effective team coaching conditions. In other words, spending the time ensuring proper team design will yield better results from the team coaching.

Coach Performance: How or What Did the Coach Do to Impact the Team and What Are the Core Competencies of an Effective Team Coach? In looking at the coaches themselves, DeRue, Barnes, and Morgeson (2010) found that a coaching style of leadership yields effective team results only when said leader is personally charismatic. Leaders without charisma actually yielded better results from their team when they used a more directive style of leadership than a coaching style. This seems to suggest that if a leader switches from a directive style of leadership to a coaching style of leadership, they will see worse team results, unless that leader is also charismatic. That study alone suggests that, although becoming an effective coach is undoubtedly learnable, there might be some who are naturally more inclined than others.

Hamlin, Ellinger, and Beattie (2006) and Gilley, Gilley, McConell, and Veliquette, (2010) both found team coaching to be one of many top necessary managerial skills. Sargent, Allen, Frahm, and Morris (2009) came to a similar conclusion but within the context, not of managers in business, but of teaching assistants in large classrooms. Again, Hackman and Wageman's (2005) team coaching theory stood front and center because they were effectively trying to determine if that theory, which was created to function primarily in a business context, held up in an educational setting. They found that it did. Maritz, Poggenpoel, and Myburgh (2009) went beyond team coaching as an effective managerial tool and created a list of core

competencies of a business team coach. They categorized them into knowledge to be discovered (such as business acumen and diversity management), skills to be mastered (such as having a clear and deep understanding of group dynamics and facilitation expertise), and attitudes to be formed (such as self-awareness and integrity). This one empirical study, along with the anecdotal opinions from the writings of professional team coaches, will form the basis of any additional qualities and skills from the literature I add to the results of my initial Delphi survey.

As mentioned earlier in the paper, there is some evidence to support the idea that team coaching can be an effective management tool to produce better team results. Very little, however, exists to describe what that effective team coach looks like. Besides the one article (Maritz et al., 2009) about core competencies, we do not really know what makes for a great team coach. I am sure there are great team coaches out there just as I am sure there are those out there who claim to be team coaches but are not very good ones.

Team Coaching Concepts and Theories. As mentioned before, J. Richard Hackman in many ways has become somewhat of a ‘godfather’ of team coaching. It should come as no surprise, then, that he and Ruth Wageman’s (Hackman & Wageman, 2005) team coaching theory is the foundation for all team coaching models. They define team coaching as “direct interaction with a team intended to help members make coordinated and task-appropriate use of their collective resources in accomplishing the team’s work” (p. 269). Their model posits that team coaching can increase team effectiveness only when four conditions are present, two having to do with organizational circumstances and two with a coach’s actions:

1. The group performance processes that are key to performance effectiveness (i.e., effort, strategy, and knowledge and skill) are relatively unconstrained by task or organizational requirements.
2. The team is well designed and the organizational context within which it operates supports rather than impedes teamwork.
3. Coaching behaviors focus on salient task performance processes rather than

- on members' interpersonal relationships or on processes that are not under the team's control.
4. Coaching interventions are made at times when the team is ready for them and able to deal with them—that is, at the beginning for effort-related (motivational) interventions, near the midpoint for strategy-related (consultative) interventions, and at the end of a task cycle for (educational) interventions that address knowledge and skill. (Hackman & Wageman, p. 283)

Since the third and fourth conditions of Hackman and Wageman's (2005) team coaching model have to do with the actions of the team coach, and since that is the focus of this research, I will discuss those in more detail below.

The importance of timing.

Pay attention to the natural cycles of a team, which occur at the beginning, midpoint, and ending of a team's natural or defined project, work or task . . . These three key points in a team cycle are the most effective times to intervene or coach a team. (Peters & Carr, 2013, p. 87)

Team beginnings offer an opportunity for the team to start out with a clear, correct and shared understanding. It should be designed to build team safety and cohesion, critical to the group's degree of mutual trust and their ability to learn from each other. Depending upon the level of leadership that participants hold, and the expectations of the determined leadership level, a great tool to use during a team launch would be to help the team clarify roles and goals and create working agreements in the form of a team charter.

Midpoints (Gersick, 1988) are when teams should 'come up for air' and refocus to ensure they are on track for success. This is the best time to review and revise plans, strategies, working agreements, and goals. This is best approached face-to-face but if the team is geographically dispersed, video-conferencing, which offers participants more information and relational possibilities than telephone or written communications, is the next best thing. During this

coaching session, it is important to use an appreciative inquiry approach to identify the team's 'signature strengths' by asking questions such as:

- What does the team already seem to do very well? How can you leverage more of that? What does not seem to be serving the team's objective that you want to identify and do less of?
- What values seem to come through more than others in your team's work and how do these values show up as strengths? (i.e., result oriented, detail focused, easy to work with, etc.)
- When does your teamwork easily together and discussions flow readily? Does this flow state give clues about a natural strength for your team?

The primary goal of all of this is to refocus the team toward task completion.

The end is a time for reflection and learning. According to Hackman (2002), review of learning and successes is not something teams tend to build in nor effectively do on their own without external guidance. Team coaches can invite teams to pause, consider, and integrate meta-level insights. The main purpose of the final session is to celebrate a job well done and also for everyone to sum up their learning, clarify what they have gained and how they will take those gains forward, what they still need to learn, and to say goodbye. Endings are important because it makes a difference in how members handle other work endings and influences how they remember this team experience.

Integration of Theories

Because I am seeking to understand the key qualities and skills of effective team coaches, it made the most sense to explore both trait theory, which most closely describes inherent leadership qualities, and emotional and social intelligence, which explore skills that can be learned. Both leadership philosophies (inherent qualities and learned skills) posit their own most significant characteristics. This is important to know, as I will need to add them to the data collected from the first round survey, if the participants leave out any characteristics that, according to the literature, should be included for consideration.

Adaptive and complexity leadership theories speak more to the dynamic team environment and organizational context where team coaching takes place. I know from my pilot study, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter III, and from the literature about team coaching, that one's ability to adapt quickly and function within constant change is necessary for success and should be considered by study participants.

Coaching and team effectiveness were also obvious contributors to team coaching, with much overlap. In many ways, team coaching is built upon a foundation created with the coaching and team effectiveness literature.

It was obviously important to explore, in depth, the literature on team coaching to see where the gaps exist. Through that exploration, there is a clear need for this study to begin to fill the gap and to answer the question, "What are the key qualities and skills of effective team coaches?"

Chapter III: Methodology

Given that no researched consensus exists to describe the key qualities and skills of an effective team coach, I needed to find a methodology that would allow for such an outcome. A method that allowed for the gathering of learned opinion from industry experts was needed. Given its ability to access the wisdom of team coaching practitioners in a way that allowed for positive influence without the common pitfalls of group interaction, the Delphi method seemed the perfect fit. My question fit the criteria for Delphi described by Adler and Ziglio (1996), who recognized that the Delphi method certainly is not a panacea and would not be an appropriate methodology for most questions. They put forth three considerations to be taken into account when one is considering using the Delphi method to explore a question:

1. The problem does not lend itself to precise analytical techniques but can benefit from subjective judgments on a collective basis.
2. The problem at hand has no monitored history nor adequate information on its present and future development.
3. Addressing the problem requires the exploration and assessment of numerous issues connected with various policy options where the need for pooled judgment can be facilitated by judgmental techniques. (Adler & Ziglio, 1996, pp. 3–4)

Team coaching is a new and rapidly growing professional practice that is being developed largely through the experience of team coaching practitioners. It is complex and dynamic and, in some ways, difficult to define and distinguish from other similar but distinct practices, such as consulting, facilitating, and training.

The Delphi technique allowed me to tap into the collective wisdom of team coach practitioners, resulting in a consensus about what it takes to be an effective team coach. The Delphi method is proven to be a reliable way to maximize the knowledge and experiences of a group of experts while minimizing the negative process problems, such as hierarchical influence,

inherent in most group interactions. It is an effective method of eliciting and refining group judgments.

The Delphi Method

The Delphi method was pioneered by Dalkey, Helmer, and Rescher of the RAND Corporation (Skulmoski, Hartman, & Krahn, 2007), who worked on a U.S. Air Force project in which they solicited expert opinions. It is used to “obtain the most reliable consensus of opinion of a group of experts . . . by a series of intensive questionnaires interspersed with controlled opinion feedback” (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963, p. 458). There are many ways to apply the Delphi method, but the four characteristics that define the process are anonymity, iteration, controlled feedback and the statistical findings of the group (Skulmoski et al., 2007):

1. **Anonymity:** The use of questionnaires allows group members to express opinions and views without pressure from others. Thus, allowing each voice to be heard independent of peer influence.
2. **Iteration:** This questionnaire process happens over several rounds, allowing participants the opportunity to first expand and then narrow their thoughts.
3. **Controlled feedback:** Participant responses are shared, in that they are used to create subsequent questionnaires.
4. **Statistical findings:** Once a round is complete, the results from the group are statistically summarized and given back. The group opinion then becomes the statistical average.

Norman Dalkey in particular is credited with the creation of the Delphi method and is referenced extensively by others. His descriptions of the method are still the best and certainly the most colorful. I particularly appreciated his thoughts about the three types of decision-making, and

how the Delphi method serves to fill an obvious and large space between known knowledge and speculation:

Taking a look at the kinds of information that can play a role in decision-making, there are roughly three types. On the one hand, there are assertions that are highly confirmed—assertions for which there is a great deal of evidence backing them up. This kind of information can be called knowledge. At the other end of the scale is material that has little or no evidential backing. Such material is usually called speculation. In between is a broad area of material for which there is some basis for belief but that is not sufficiently confirmed to warrant being called knowledge. There is no good name for this middling area. I call it opinion. The dividing lines between these three are very fuzzy, and the gross trichotomy smears over the large differences that exist within types. However, the three-way split has many advantages over the more common tendency to dismiss whatever is not knowledge as mere speculation . . . Where in the scale do the products of judgment, wisdom, insight, and similar intellectual processes, lie? Not in speculation, we hope. And, almost by definition, not in knowledge. The most reasonable interpretation would be that these are flattering names for kinds of opinion. (Dalkey, 1969, p. 2)

This study sought to gather some of that judgment, wisdom, insight, and experience to continue to move what we know about effective team coaches further from speculation and closer to knowledge. I also appreciate how he referenced that the gathering of the opinions of others has been perhaps the most important method of decision-making in history. Those historical references make it more challenging for somebody to suggest that the results from a Delphi study are somehow not valuable.

There is a kind of technology for dealing with opinion that has been applied throughout historical times and probably in more ancient times as well. The technology is based on the adage “Two heads are better than one,” or more generally “n heads are better than one.” Committees, councils, panels, commissions, juries, boards, the voting public, legislatures . . . this list is long, and illustrates the extent to which the device of pooling many minds has permeated society. (Dalkey, 1969, p. 6)

Finally, he makes a compelling case about why the participants themselves should enjoy the process. It is a good reminder to remember to frame such benefits to participants as a strategy to

inspire them and keep them motivated to continue to contribute throughout the entire Delphi process.

There are several properties of a Delphi exercise that should be pointed out. The procedure is, above all, a rapid and relatively efficient way to “cream the tops of the heads” of a group of knowledgeable people. In general, it involves much less effort for a participant to respond to a well-designed questionnaire than, for example, to participate in a conference or to write a paper. A Delphi exercise, properly managed, can be a highly motivating environment for respondents. The feedback, if the group of experts involved is mutually self-respecting, can be novel and interesting to all. The use of systematic procedures lends an air of objectivity to the outcomes that may or may not be spurious, but which is at least reassuring. And finally, anonymity and group response allow a sharing of responsibility that is refreshing and that releases from the respondents inhibitions. (Dalkey, 1969, pp. 16–17)

Hsu and Sanford (2007) distinguish Delphi surveys, which attempt to address “what could/should be” with common surveys, which attempt to address “what is.” They note that the multiple iteration process allows participants “to become more problem-solving oriented, to offer their opinions more insightfully, and to minimize the effects of noise” (Hsu & Sanford, 2007, p. 2). Young and Jamieson (2001) conducted a study that compared the use of computer surveys versus paper surveys sent through the mail. Not surprisingly, they discovered that the use of a computer greatly enhanced the power of the Delphi method in a variety of ways, making the process much more efficient for both researchers and participants. The main critiques had more to do with the limitations of networked computers in the year 2000 than to the process itself.

Steurer (2011) provided some insight into how the name of the method came about, much to the chagrin of Dalkey, who was trying to establish the method as a serious and robust research methodology. The name did not help.

The term ‘Delphi method’ goes back to the oracle of Delphi in ancient Greece, which was consulted on matters that ranged from public policy to personal affairs. In the 1950s, the deity Apollo, who was thought to speak through this oracle, was replaced by secular experts after a series of studies that strove to reach the most reliable consensus among a group of experts was conducted by the RAND

corporation. “Project Delphi,” financed by the U.S. Air Force, was the name given to the first project for forecasting technological developments. (Steurer, 2011, p. 959)

Delphi has been shown to be effective in the following areas, as noted by

Linstone and Turoff (1975): “gathering current and historical data not accurately known or available . . . distinguishing and clarifying real and perceived human motivations . . . exposing priorities of personal values [and] social goals” (p. 1). Linstone and Turoff (1975) also noted the applicable circumstances for a Delphi study:

- The problem does not lend itself to precise analytical techniques but can benefit from subjective judgments on a collective basis.
- The individuals needed to contribute to the examination of a broad or complex problem have no history of adequate communication and may represent diverse backgrounds with respect to experience or expertise.
- More individuals are needed than can effectively interact in a face-to-face exchange.
- Time and cost make frequent group meetings infeasible.

Some possible limitations of a Delphi study are as follows:

- Ignoring rather than exploring disagreements or differences
- High attrition rate
- Poorly written questionnaires can limit robust responses
- Time consuming, as iterative rounds are a part of the method
- Success will depend on the quality of the participants
- Number of panelists may not be representative of a wider population, which would eliminate the ability to generalize
- Answering the survey with neutral answers to quicken the process

I intend to utilize highly engaged, professional participants to best overcome most of these limitations. I have designed a simple survey in an effort to avoid rater-fatigue and attrition in the survey process.

A Delphi study involves four major phases. Linstone and Turoff (1975) described the four distinct phases:

The first phase is characterized by exploration of the subject under discussion, wherein each individual contributes additional information he feels is pertinent to the issue. The second phase involves the process of reaching an understanding of how the group views the issue. If there is significant disagreement than the disagreement is explored in the third phase to bring out the underlying reasons for the differences and possibly to evaluate them. The last phase, a final evaluation, occurs when all previously gathered information has been initially analyzed and evaluations have been fed back for consideration. (pp. 5–6)

It begins with an initial questionnaire of open-ended questions given to a panel of knowledgeable experts. The researcher then summarizes the initial responses in the creation of a second questionnaire, thus beginning the iterative process. Normally two rounds or more will be conducted until a consensus is met. Rowe and Wright (1999) noted, “One of the aims of using Delphi is to achieve greater consensus amongst panelists” (p. 363). Participants will continue to have the opportunity to refine their opinions based on the feedback from the other panelists at each new round.

Rowe and Wright (1999) emphasized the importance of having panelists with expertise in the area of review. Brockhoff (1975) showed there was no consensus on the number of panelists to use in the study. Rowe and Wright (1999) noted the lack of a “consistent relationship between panel size and effectiveness criteria” (p. 372). Because there is no agreed upon best number of participants, researchers should consider whether the group is heterogeneous or homogeneous. In a homogeneous group, a smaller group of 10 to 15 experts should yield sufficient results

(Meijering, Kampen, & Tobi, 2013; Skulmoski et al., 2007). Dalkey (1969) found if the group was up to at least 11 members, there was an increase in accuracy. Furthermore, Dalkey, Brown, and Cochran (1970) “concluded that 15-20 panel members might be optimal for Delphi studies” (p. x). A very large number will become cumbersome to manage in the Delphi process and does not yield any better results (Dalkey, Rourke, Lewis, & Snyder, 1972; Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafsen, 1975). The targeted number of panel members for this study will be 15 experts.

Participants chosen to be Delphi panelists should meet four criteria: knowledge, experience, willingness to participate, and ability to commit the necessary time to the Delphi process (Adler & Ziglio, 1996). Helmer (1967) advised, “Select your experts wisely, create the proper conditions under which they can perform most ably” (p. 5).

Pilot Study

In September and October of 2014, I conducted a pilot study with four participants. They were all practicing team coaches willing to participate in my Delphi study about the qualities and skills of effective team coaches. I developed this study with the intention of using it to inform me how best to approach the same question with a larger pool of participants. The first questionnaire was designed to be open-ended for the initial round, thereby allowing the four participants to provide any input they believed to be essential to the study question. The participants were asked to identify in writing a core set of qualities and skills important for an effective team coach. In each of these categories, they were requested to identify at least ten critical success factors in each area and sufficiently describe each. After they identified and described them, they were asked to rank order them with one (1) being the most important and ten (10) being the least important. The participants were also asked to add anything else that they decided not to include in either the quality or skill category. It is important to note that the participants themselves

judged the items in terms of their appropriateness, not the researcher. The iterative building process, central to the Delphi technique, requires no additional intervention by the researcher. Indeed, researcher intervention at this point would likely skew the results because it could be seen as intentionally attempting to influence or steer those initial results.

In the second round, 66 dimensions of team coaching leadership were identified for evaluation by the study participants. The participants were asked to rate each of the identified dimensions (qualities and skills) on a five-point Likert scale, with 1. meaning not important and 5. meaning critically important, according to how the dimension contributes to a team coach's effectiveness in their team coaching practice. For the purpose of this study, I decided that an 85% overall composite rating score would be the minimum required to achieve consensus on a leadership dimension by the participants. Also, the stability of the response through the three rounds was considered an additional indicator of consensus.

Data collected in the first round were analyzed and any duplicates were eliminated, resulting in 66 leadership competencies (33 qualities and 33 skills). Interestingly, there was very little duplication in the first round questionnaire, illustrated by the fact that each of the four participants offered ten qualities and ten skills, for a total of 40 of each. Thus, of the 40 submitted, only seven were eliminated from each category because of duplication. Thus, 83% of the initial responses were unique and not shared by other study participants. This is remarkable when one considers that we, in effect, began with a 7% consensus about the key qualities and skills of an effective team coach and ended with a consensus exceeding 85%. That statistic alone demonstrates the power of the Delphi method.

During the second round, the participants were asked to further articulate, rate, and rank all of the leadership dimensions identified to help ensure that credible interpretations of the

findings were produced. Also, during the second round participants had the opportunity to change their opinions from the first round and also to indicate anything that was unclear. Thirty (15 qualities and 15 skills) leadership dimensions reached a consensus statistic of 85% or more. These were further categorized based on identical scoring to create the third and final questionnaire for further ranking.

The primary purpose of the third round was to finalize the ranking of all of the important leadership dimensions identified and rated by the participants in round two. In the third and final survey round of this Delphi study, the team coaches were asked to prioritize each of the highest rated dimensions based on overall perceived impact on the performance of a team coach. This prioritization was requested based on the outcome of the ratings of team coach leadership dimensions during the second round in that only those dimensions receiving an identical score were included. The participants were asked to rank equally rated dimensions within a tier grouping to establish a rank order for the identified leadership dimensions.

The final round of the Delphi study identified 30 dimensions of effectiveness for a team coach. Of these 30 dimensions, 15 were qualities and 15 were skills that obtained a composite score of 85% or greater. These dimensions are listed here in final ranked order:

1. have effective active listening skills
2. have powerful questioning skills
3. have integrity
4. are competent
5. are honest
6. are respectful
7. are skilled at communicating effectively
8. are trustworthy
9. can work with the team as a system
10. are committed
11. are observant
12. manage the process

13. possess coaching skills
14. establish expectations and agreements
15. can self-manage
16. can effectively manage conflict
17. are skilled at challenging assumptions and interpretations
18. are accountable and expect accountability
19. are effective at building strong relationships
20. are customer focused
21. are collaborative
22. are supportive
23. are self-aware
24. are approachable
25. are patient with self and others
26. are flexible
27. can take charge when needed
28. are agile
29. possess compassion
30. celebrate successes

Participant Selection

I sought participants who actively use team coaching as a significant part of their professional practice. Recently retired team coaches also qualified to participate. To garner participation in this study, all expert panelists were contacted by e-mail using a script (Appendix A). The e-mail outlined the criteria for eligibility and the forecasted time commitment. The method of recruitment was via my professional network, both those I may know directly and those introduced to me. After gaining the commitment from the panelists, they received a letter via e-mail thanking them for agreeing to participate, reminding them that their participation is voluntary and they can elect not to participate or withdraw at any time (Appendix B), and providing them with an Informed Consent form (Appendix C) and the initial survey (Appendix D). If the panelists did not answer the survey within a 5-day window after each survey distribution they received a reminder email. The ideal number of panelists to participate was 15, as suggested for homogenous groups (Skulmoski et al., 2007). If the number had dropped to less than 10, the Delphi would have ended and would have needed to start again. These team coaches

were geographically dispersed, including coaches from countries outside of the United States, included a roughly even split of men and women, and represented a variety of ages and past work experiences.

Data Collection, Analysis, and Interpretation

The first phase of the analysis, the initial evaluation, consisted of open-ended questions asking participants to list the ten most important qualities and skills. The second phase, the iterative process, involved listing out all of those qualities and skills and also included any additional qualities and skills from the literature, and included some data from the pilot study not otherwise mentioned. During this phase, participants were asked to reevaluate the degree of importance of each item. The third phase, consensus, was the process of determining that consensus was achieved. Phase 3 may need to be repeated depending on the amount of disagreement that may arise, but in this case a repeat of phase 3 was not needed. In Phase 4, I ranked the remaining qualities and skills.

The questionnaire for phase 1 was open-ended to allow for the widest possible responses. In addition to asking participants to list at least ten qualities and ten skills, they were also asked to list anything else that they felt fell outside the definition of quality or skill. Participants were also encouraged to write clarifying descriptors to help me best understand what they meant.

During the second phase, all of the characteristics were combined and listed and included fifty or more qualities and skills for the participants to rank, using a 5-point Likert-type scale. The scale used was 1 = least important, 2 = somewhat unimportant, 3 = neither important nor unimportant, 4 = somewhat important, and 5 = most important. The evaluation consisted of calculating a median importance rating for every item. After the median was calculated for each of the items, the Phase 3 instrument was sorted by listing the items rated most important (median

scores of 5) to items rated least important (median scores of 1). Items with median scores of less than 4.50 were eliminated from the instrument. The remaining items were listed with the same Likert-type scale used in Phase 2.

In this phase 3, the iterative process of the Delphi method began. The results of the phase 2 instrument were returned to the panel of experts for reevaluation. After the participants completed and returned the phase 3 instrument, median scores for each item was calculated. Competencies were rated from most important (median score of 5) to least important (median score of 1). Items with median scores below 4.5 were removed from the list and the remaining items were listed on a new instrument along with a 5-point Likert scale. This process was repeated until consensus was achieved during the 4th phase.

Ethical Considerations

An application was filed with the Institutional Review Board at Antioch University. This study involved an initial email contact to explain the study to each panelist. An informed consent form was used and included the purpose of the study, the methodology of the study, benefits of the study, estimated time commitment for the study, a statement noting the panelist's participation will be voluntary and can stop at any time they choose, and a statement that says their participation will be anonymous and confidential to the other participants. Anonymity was key and maintained throughout the process. The responses from each panelist was not tied to their name, but just organized by overall themes. The information collected via surveys remained confidential and only a summary of the outcome of the survey was shared with the group. All data remains on my personal computer will be destroyed within 3 years after study completion.

Conclusion

The use of teams within the workplace to solve complex problems is and will continue to be of paramount importance to organizations that wish to stay relevant in a rapidly changing world. The challenge is in maximizing those team efforts. Good team coaching has been shown to be a very effective way to yield high team performance. Very little is understood about what separates good team coaching from bad team coaching. This study hopes to provide some clarity.

Using a Delphi method to explore the key qualities and skills needed for effective team coaching will be employed in this research. Dalkey (1969) believed that a Delphi method was an effective way to get “the cream to rise to the top” (p. 16) from a group of experts. It is for this reason along with the ability to come to consensus that a Delphi method will be used. The Delphi method allows each panelist to provide feedback and insights anonymously, which may allow for more transparent feedback since the panelist does not have to worry about what others may think of their responses. In addition, the sample size or number of participants, otherwise known as panelists should have at least 11 and this increases the accuracy (Dalkey, 1969). In this study a total of 15 panelists will be sought out to participate. The researcher of this study will act in accordance with all ethical and legal obligations that are required by the Institutional Review Board at Antioch University.

Chapter IV: Research Findings

This chapter presents the results of the Delphi study, including the expert ranking of the team coaching qualities and skills, along with the data collected in each of the three phases of the study. There is discussion around the recruitment and information about the participants, the research method, information and results from all three surveys and the post-survey facilitated discussion with a handful of study participants.

Recruitment of Participants

The selection process for participants in the study began by considering qualifications needed for a panel of team coaching experts. To my knowledge there is no commonly recognized certification or formal training process for team coaching, therefore the criteria for inclusion in the study largely relied upon participant self-identification. In other words, the participants in this research study all self-identified as experienced and practicing team coaches. I was also aiming for a roughly even mix of men and women, representing a range of geographical areas, and representing a diverse mix of age, professional experience, and industry.

I used my own professional networks, primarily email and LinkedIn, for initial contact and snowball sampling referrals to get to a large enough sample size. Fifty potential participants were initially contacted and after being given a more formal inquiry that included information about participant criteria, the purpose and logistics of the study, time commitments, and expectations, twenty-six indicated a willingness to move forward and the first survey was sent. In anticipation of some likely drop off, the target number of participation was set at fifteen. A minimum of eight experts (Dalkey, 1969) was needed to participate in each round and a failure to achieve that minimum number would have required the study to cease and begin again. Fortunately, that did not happen in this case.

Research Method

The Delphi method was used to collect and synthesize opinions from this dispersed group of subject matter experts, with specialized knowledge and experience with the topic. The process allowed all participants an equal voice in coming to a consensus about the key qualities and skills of an effective team coach, over the course of three separate iterations of data collection.

The research question was, “What are the key qualities and skills of an effective team coach?” The overall goal of the study was to develop a kind of portrait of an effective team coach, to know what inherent qualities and learned skills would most likely contribute to the most successful team coaching outcomes.

Several fundamental questions guided the inquiry and are important to understanding the research results:

- What makes an effective team coach?
- What does somebody need to learn, know, and experience to become and be an effective team coach?
- Are there any innate qualities that predispose somebody to becoming and being an effective team coach?
- What fundamental differences, if any, are there between successfully coaching individuals and successfully coaching teams?

Specific strategies were used to strengthen the reliability of the survey instruments and the Delphi process:

- prior testing and subsequent modifications to the survey instruments used in a pilot study that took place the prior year on the same research question;
- providing simple instructions;

- using unambiguous questions;
- using neutral statements and questions that do not suggest right or wrong answers;
- guaranteeing the anonymity of participants;
- identifying and selecting a research design (Delphi) based on it having the greatest chance of producing new information; and
- designing the data collection to capture the meaning of the phenomena being measured while responding to participant input.

The first survey instrument was distributed to the study participants and returned electronically by email. At the suggestion of some of the participants, for easier access and use, the second and third survey instruments were accessed and completed via Survey Monkey.

Research Participants

The research participants were all practicing team coaches. The research question, study methodology process, and approximate time commitment were explained to the 26 original participants. All of the participants were contacted before each round by email and during each round with an email reminder. Four participants did not return the first survey and, after analyzing the results from the first round, I decided to drop two other participants after determining that their level of experience with team coaching was not adequate to contribute to the study. Specifically, one participant seemed to be coming from a sports coaching perspective and the other admitted to being new to team coaching. Those two participants were notified via email. Of the 20 remaining participants, 17 completed round two and 16 completed all three rounds. The following is a profile summary of the twenty chosen participants. Demographic information on all 20 participants is included because, although only 16 completed all three

rounds, the use of Survey Monkey for the second and third rounds prevented me from knowing who had and had not completed the second and third surveys:

- 20 team coaches, representing 7 different states (including 3 from Northern California and 3 from Southern California, 2 each from Colorado and Florida, 1 each from Massachusetts, Connecticut, Washington DC, and Virginia) and 4 countries (4 from the United Kingdom and 1 each from Canada and Jamaica).
- 12 males and 8 females
- Average age was 51 years
- They averaged 21 years within their current professional industry and 17 years as team coaches
- They represented big and small leadership development coaching and consulting firms, non-profits, public and private universities, government agencies, and major corporations.
- Their titles included Senior Consultant, Private Consultant, Director of Learning and Development, Founding Chair of Organizational Development Programs, President, Principal Owner, Director of Leadership and Organizational Development, Director of Programs, Senior Manager of Talent Development, Executive Director, Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operations Officer, and Global Head of Communication, Research and Development.
- Everybody had some college experience with 17 advanced degrees (one JD, one MSW, 9 other Masters degrees in areas such as Organization Development, Educational Psychology, Organizational Psychology and Change Leadership, Coaching and Consulting, Industrial/Organizational Psychology, and 6 PhDs)

Table 4.1

Participant Biographic Information

P	Age	Sex	Title	Location	Education	Years As TC	Years Pro
1	61	M	Senior Consultant	MA	MS Org Dev	33	33
2	70	F	Senior Consultant	CA	PhD	20	30
3	50	F	Senior Consultant	England	PhD	20	25
4	52	M	Director, Learning & Dev	CA	Masters	10	24
5	61	M	Founding Chair & President	CA	PhD	14	30
6	49	F	Senior Consultant	CT	2 Masters	10	25
7	41	M	President	CO	MA Org Psy	18	18
8	47	M	Senior Consultant	Wash DC	Masters	15	20
9	45	M	Director, Leadership & OD	CA	PhD	20	20
10	48	M	Senior Consultant	FL			23
11	42	F	Senior Manager	CO	PhD	10	20
12	62	M	Owner	FL	Some college	12	28
13	39	F	Director of Programs	CA	Masters	18	18
14	55	F	CEO	Jamaica	PhD	10	10
15	44	F	Founder/CEO	Canada	Masters	13	13
16	56	M	Global Head Research	England	Masters	10	15
17	52	F	Director of Programmes	England	Masters	4	7
18	43	M	Director	CO	Bachelors	20	20
19	39	M	COO	CA	Masters	20	20
20	54	M	Director	VA	JD	20	20

Round One Survey Information and Results

In the first round of this study, the participants were asked to describe any key qualities, skills, or any other critical success factors they believed make an effective team coach. Thus, the Delphi process basically gave the participants a blank sheet of paper and asked them to identify any element of team coaching effectiveness. Along with an Informed Consent form (Appendix A), the first questionnaire (Appendix B) was designed to be open-ended and relatively unstructured, allowing the participants to list anything that came to mind, relevant to the study question. Another section of the initial survey requested some biographical, educational, and work experience data, summarized above. Some background and context about the study question was provided along with a request to be as specific as possible and to specifically consider what qualities and skills for team coaches would be unique to any qualities and skills for individual coaching, where quality was defined as “a distinguishing characteristic, attribute, or feature that one possesses” and skill was defined as “the ability to do something that comes from training, experience, or practice.”

The first round of the Delphi survey yielded 25 qualities and 25 skills:

Table 4.2

First Round Results

QUALITIES
Effective team coaches...
1) align action with words
2) are committed to continuous personal development
3) are interested in the well being of others
4) see things from others' points of view
5) have an optimistic, cheerful attitude
6) treat each team member fairly and respectfully
7) comfortably navigate challenging situations
8) tolerate emotional tension well
9) are lighthearted and fun when appropriate
10) read people and contexts well

11) are attuned to environment and self
12) possess a “beginner’s mind”
13) do not jump to conclusions
14) maintain an objective focus
15) are approachable
16) help people become “better versions of themselves”
17) are aware of themselves and their impact on others
18) can check their ego
19) are not afraid to ask the difficult questions
20) see things in an integrated, holistic way
21) possess high energy and drive
22) work from an inner compass
23) find patterns and process complexity effectively
24) appreciate differences and engage all members of the team
25) are politically savvy
SKILLS
Effective team coaches...
1) connect and establish trust with a variety of personalities
2) do what they say they will do
3) know when to slow down or speed up
4) question judiciously yet boldly
5) do not let plans get in the way of progress
6) drive a process
7) set strong guidelines and structure
8) articulate concisely
9) engage in clear and unambiguous contracting
10) draw people in and engage them with the process
11) use a robust toolkit of frameworks, concepts, approaches, and techniques
12) facilitate groups well
13) have a clear and deep understanding of group dynamics
14) hear both explicit and implicit messages
15) show how their work impacts business results
16) use a variety of personality assessments
17) use de-escalation and conflict resolution skills
18) first do no harm
19) have established credibility through previous coaching experiences
20) speak the client’s organizational language
21) seek and give feedback
22) anticipate and stay ahead of the team
23) know when to hold back
24) balance the team’s performance with its well-being
25) celebrate successes

I sent out the survey and received eleven responses within a week. I then sent out a friendly reminder to those I had not yet heard back from and received the remaining nine within two days.

The open-ended thoughts from 20 independent team coaches, when taken as a whole, were not as clean as the above list would suggest. It took quite some time putting responses into themes and, using participants' own words and phrases as much as possible, deciding on the best descriptors for each quality and skill. Effort was made to use language that was less conceptually abstract and more closely related to a specific practice. For example, when the more abstract concept of "being authentic" was also described by participants as "aligning actions with words," it was the second, more descriptive practice of "aligning actions with words" that was chosen to represent that quality in the second survey. As the first survey results came in, I created a system that organized and classified the responses, allowing similar qualities and skills to be integrated together and completely new characteristics to be added to the list. This framework outline simply allowed for specific language representing repeat characteristics to be added to already-established 'buckets' and for new buckets to be created for completely new characteristics. Considerable time was spent reviewing these developing lists to ensure all input from the participants was represented and worded in such a way that best captured the concepts.

Once all data were in and the list was refined and finalized, I compared the data to results from the pilot study as well as another review of the literature, to fill in any obvious gaps. Only one gap was identified and I added one team coaching characteristic to the participant-generated list, the skill of celebrating successes from the pilot study. All other important qualities and skills from the team coaching literature and the pilot study were brought out in the first survey, indicating a high degree of stability.

Round Two Survey Information and Results

The second round of the survey (Appendix C) identified and described those 25 qualities and 25 skills for effective team coaching. Each of these 50 characteristics were rated on a five-point Likert scale, with (1) meaning not important, (2) meaning minor importance, (3) meaning moderate importance, (4) meaning very important, and (5) meaning critically important, according to how each characteristic contributes to a team coaches effectiveness in their coaching practice. These characteristics were also listed in no particular order in an effort to create a survey with as little inherent bias as possible. For example, even though “not afraid to ask the difficult questions” was mentioned by eleven different participants in the first round data, it was given an equal voice as “possess a beginner’s mind,” which was unique to one participant. This is one example of how the inclusive nature of the Delphi process allows individual participants to consider the importance of characteristics they initially had not thought of.

In the second round of the survey, consensus was reached with an 80% composite score, identifying which characteristics were very important or critical to team coaching success. Here are the 25 qualities and 25 skills of the second survey with the percentage for each (80% and above in **bold**):

Table 4.3

Second Round Results With Percentages

CHARACTERISTICS	%
QUALITIES	
Effective team coaches...	
1) align action with words	82.35
2) are committed to continuous personal development	76.47
3) are interested in the well being of others	72.94
4) see things from others’ points of view	85.88
5) have an optimistic, cheerful attitude	62.35
6) treat each team member fairly and respectfully	84.70
7) comfortably navigate challenging situations	81.17

8) tolerate emotional tension well	88.23
9) are lighthearted and fun when appropriate	65.88
10) read people and contexts well	87.05
11) are attuned to environment and self	89.41
12) possess a “beginner’s mind”	68.25
13) do not jump to conclusions	89.41
14) maintain an objective focus	81.25
15) are approachable	84.70
16) help people become “better versions of themselves”	78.82
17) are aware of themselves and their impact on others	90.58
18) can check their ego	75.25
19) are not afraid to ask the difficult questions	87.05
20) see things in an integrated, holistic way	78.82
21) possess high energy and drive	62.35
22) work from an inner compass	66.25
23) find patterns and process complexity effectively	80
24) appreciate differences and engage all members of the team	89.41
25) are politically savvy	62.35
SKILLS	
Effective team coaches...	
1) connect and establish trust with a variety of personalities	88.23
2) do what they say they will do	78.82
3) know when to slow down or speed up	72.94
4) question judiciously yet boldly	76.47
5) do not let plans get in the way of progress	72.94
6) drive a process	62.35
7) set strong guidelines and structure	65.88
8) articulate concisely	70.58
9) engage in clear and unambiguous contracting	83.52
10) draw people in and engage them with the process	85.88
11) use a robust toolkit of frameworks, concepts, approaches, and techniques	84.70
12) facilitate groups well	95.29
13) have a clear and deep understanding of group dynamics	94.11
14) hear both explicit and implicit messages	91.76
15) show how their work impacts business results	67.05
16) use a variety of personality assessments	55.29
17) use de-escalation and conflict resolution skills	75.29
18) first do no harm	80
19) have established credibility through previous coaching experiences	57.64
20) speak the client’s organizational language	67.05
21) seek and give feedback	84.70
22) anticipate and stay ahead of the team	64.70
23) know when to hold back	84.70
24) balance the team’s performance with its well-being	75.29
25) celebrate successes	83.52

As seen above, fourteen qualities and eleven skills earned a score of 80% or higher as a result of the second survey. Those qualities and skills are listed below in ranked order. Note that there are several with a tied rank order. Also note that, although more qualities than skills were scored 80% and above, the average score was higher (85.79 versus 86.94) for the skills:

Table 4.4

Second Round Results With Consensus Percentages in Ranked Order

QUALITIES	%	Rank
Effective team coaches...		
are aware of themselves and their impact on others	90.58	1
appreciate differences and engage all members of the team	89.41	2
are attuned to environment and self	89.41	2
do not jump to conclusions	89.41	2
tolerate emotional tension well	88.23	3
are not afraid to ask the difficult questions	87.05	4
read people and contexts well	87.05	4
see things from others' points of view	85.88	5
are approachable	84.70	6
treat each team member fairly and respectfully	84.70	6
align action with words	82.35	7
maintain an objective focus	81.25	8
comfortably navigate challenging situations	81.17	9
find patterns and process complexity effectively	80	10
SKILLS		
Effective team coaches...		
facilitate groups well	95.29	1
have a clear and deep understanding of group dynamics	94.11	2
hear both explicit and implicit messages	91.76	3
connect and establish trust with a variety of personalities	88.23	4
draw people in and engage them with the process	85.88	5
use a robust toolkit of frameworks, concepts, approaches, and techniques	84.70	6
seek and give feedback	84.70	6
know when to hold back	84.70	6
celebrate successes	83.52	7
engage in clear and unambiguous contracting	83.52	7
first do no harm	80	8

Round Three Survey Information and Results

The results from the second survey resulted in 14 qualities and 11 skills receiving a consensus rating of 80% or higher. Of those 25 characteristics, 12 had at least one other characteristic with an identical score. The main purpose of the third survey was to break the ties and complete the ranked list.

For those tied characteristics, participants were asked to prioritize one over the other when considering the overall performance of an effective team coach. The third survey (Appendix D) produced a final ranked list of the qualities and skills of an effective team coach.

Qualities:

1. Are aware of themselves and their impact on others
2. Are attuned to environment and self
3. Appreciate differences and engage all members of the team
4. Do not jump to conclusions
5. Tolerate emotional tension well
6. Are not afraid to ask the difficult questions
7. Read people and contexts well
8. See things from others' points of view
9. Treat each team member fairly and respectfully
10. Are approachable
11. Align action with words
12. Maintain and objective focus
13. Comfortably navigate challenging situations
14. Find patterns and process complexity effectively

Skills:

1. Facilitate groups well
2. Have a clear and deep understanding of group dynamics
3. Hear both explicit and implicit messages
4. Connect and establish trust with a variety of personalities
5. Draw people in and engage them with the process
6. Use a robust toolkit of frameworks, concepts, approaches, and techniques
7. Know when to hold back
8. Seek and give feedback
9. Engage in clear and unambiguous contracting
10. Celebrate successes
11. First do no harm

Facilitated Team Coaching Discussion

After the final results were tallied and shared with the participants, I invited any interested study participants to take part in a one-hour facilitated conversation about the results. Because the Delphi method tends to narrow the discussion, I chose to facilitate a dialogue to open up the conversation. Participants were asked to reflect on the study outcomes and consider practical applications to their own team coaching practice. Specifically, how can these qualities and skills improve one's team coaching practice? How can this knowledge be helpful in the development of new team coaches? How is this list different from a list of characteristics for effective individual coaches? Although many expressed an interest in taking part in such a conversation, scheduling conflicts allowed for only four able to participate.

A date and time was chosen based on the availability of the several participants who had expressed an interest in participating in the discussion. Once the date and time were set, I invited all other participants one more time but no others were available to participate. I was aiming for a minimum of four and maximum of eight participants, with an ideal number of six. I used the conference call service of freeconferencecall.com to allow for easy access and high quality audio. I was also able to use the conference call service to record the conversation and later downloaded the audio file for review and analysis.

The participants consisted of three women and one man, calling in from California, Colorado, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. Their average age was 48 and their average number of years as a team coach was 24. All four had advanced degrees.

Two days before the call, I emailed the confirmed participants reminding them about the call and again providing them with access the information, the final list of qualities and skills, and the list of specific prompting questions outlined above.

At the beginning of the call, I introduced myself and welcomed them, indicating that I wanted to honor the anonymity of the Delphi method and would not ask them to introduce themselves to one another. They asked if they could at least know one another's first names to allow for easier dialogue, a request that I granted. To start things off, I asked them to think about the value that the list of team coaching qualities and skills might have on their team coaching practice. One participant noted that they found the process fascinating and, throughout the course of the study, looked forward to seeing what was emerging from each round of the iterative process.

I then steered the conversation toward any distinctions they made between coaching individuals and coaching teams. The discussion at first, however, shifted to a different distinction, one of qualities versus skills. Because of the complex dynamics inherent in team coaching, they found it difficult to rank order the qualities and skills and talked about the importance of first having the right mindset, or strategy, before getting into one's toolkit of skills, or tactics. Others felt affirmed that, in general, there were other team coaches who felt similarly about what they thought to be of primary importance for effective team coaching.

I then asked them specifically whether one could take somebody "off the street" and train them in the skills to be an effective team coach or was there something more, like an inherent quality, needed to be successful? The consensus became that, given the inherent dynamics of different teams and the variety of team coach personalities, the most important quality was, in fact, the first ranked quality of the study: "are aware of themselves and their impact on others." Several personal examples of other team coaches from their professional practice were then given to illustrate this point.

Emerging from that discussion and the examples given was the phenomenon of a coach with extraordinary skills in a one-on-one setting but ineffective outcomes as a team coach. This point highlighted what was the number one ranked skill of this study: “facilitates groups well.” The discussion shifted to the specific skill of tracking, which could be considered a critical skill, among others, to enable somebody to facilitate groups well. This led to an illustrative description highlighting the difference between one-on-one and team coaching, where one-on-one coaching was like a close dance and team coaching felt more like standing on the sidelines while the team was on the field playing the game. This distinction was also described as the “leaning in” of individual coaching versus the “leaning back” of team coaching.

I then asked if a coach goes into the two different situations of one-on-one coaching versus team coaching with different expectations of those they are coaching. This led to a discussion about contracting, the ninth ranked skill, and how a coach approaches that process differently for individual versus team coaching engagements. I then posed another version of the previous question, this time asking whether a coach prepares differently, not just for how one approaches contracting, but for one-on-one versus team coaching. All agreed that, indeed, they did prepare differently by approaching the team coaching assignment with that “leaning back” wide-angle perspective instead of a “leaning in” narrowed focus.

In the discussion that followed, a car metaphor was developed and furthered by everybody. Going with the metaphor, with a one-on-one coaching scenario, the coach and the coachee both have their hands on the steering wheel and both have equal control of the destination and route. With team coaching, by contrast, the coach tends to be in the back seat with the ability to reach forward and grab the steering wheel if needed but otherwise lets the team work out the route and destination amongst themselves. As mentioned before, team

coaching takes a “leaning back” versus “leaning in” approach. Of course, it is not as simple as that and a discussion ensued about the necessary importance of flexibility and responsiveness, seemingly absent from the final list of skills. Somebody then pointed out that skill number two, “have a clear and deep understanding of group dynamics,” requires flexibility and responsiveness.

I asked if individual coaches have more of a need for external recognition than team coaches. Specifically, could an individual coach who thrives on the direct feedback that they are making a big difference with their coachee, function as effectively in a team coaching environment, where a coach is much less likely to receive accolades for a job well done? The subsequent discussion consensus was that such accolades may exist in individual coaching but certainly do not in team coaching. In fact, a frequent misstep that new coaches make, whether individual or team, is in owning too much of the process and making it more about themselves than about their individual coachee or the team. This led into a discussion about cultural differences, identified as another subset of “have a clear and deep understanding of group dynamics.”

Because the distinction between individual and team coaching is such an important one to make in determining the key qualities and skills of an effective team coach, I urged participants in every round of the Delphi study to make those distinctions. I wanted this group to offer some further distinctions to expand upon those results.

In the end, they all expressed value in the conversation and one participant suggested that the most important question to always be asking is, “What does the group need?” If I know what the group needs, my response will be natural, that it is less something I do or study and more about discovering what is needed and being the one who is in the place to provide it.

The summary of these implications for practice and training of the key qualities and skills of an effective team coach will be further discussed within the context of the Delphi process and my own coaching experience in Chapter V.

Chapter V: Research Conclusions, Interpretations, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to gain a consensus about the key qualities and skills of an effective team coach. This chapter includes a discussion of the results, observations, interpretations, and recommendations for future research. The motivation for this study topic was based on a combination of my passion for working with teams and the discovery of a gap in the literature about what it takes to be an effective team coach. Thus, the rationale for researching this question was to offer current and aspiring team coaches some specific guidance to help them become as effective as they can be. The results could serve as a benchmark of sorts or standard to help team coaches and those seeking the services of team coaches make more educated and informed decisions about whom they choose to work with their teams. The results could also be used in the curriculum development of any current and future team coach training programs.

As previously stated, the research question was, “What are the key qualities and skills of effective team coaches?” This was a study of practicing team coaches. The rationale for this empirical study was to develop evidence of a set of core qualities and skills that contribute to the effectiveness of a team coach, to better understand some of the critical success factors that may help current and aspiring team coaches be more effective in their professional practice.

The research design used in the data collection was a three-round Delphi method study administered electronically through a combination of email and a web-based survey tool. There was also a post-survey conference call with some of the participants to discuss implications for one’s team coaching practice. The Delphi method was effective for collecting and synthesizing informed opinions from a dispersed group of experts with specialized knowledge and experience in the research question.

The participants for this study were a group of 20 (eight women and twelve men) team coaches representing seven states and three other countries outside of the United States, with an average of 17 years experience as a team coach. The study asked participants to identify and describe the key qualities and skills of an effective team coach. The second round asked them to rate all of the characteristics identified and described. In the third round, participants ranked the remaining characteristics that achieved a certain benchmark of consensus. Participants were asked to make comments generally throughout the process and more specifically to consider and identify which qualities and skills were unique to team coaching versus individual coaching.

The study results produced a consensus about 14 qualities and 11 skills for an effective team coach, based on each receiving a composite score of 80% or higher. Some questions are important to understanding and interpreting the research results of this study:

- What makes a team coach effective?
- What characteristics are different for team coaches versus individual coaches?
- How should coaches prepare for a team coaching assignment?
- Are there innate qualities that predispose somebody to be a successful team coach?
- What is yet to be learned following this study?
- What results were surprising and why?

The conclusions of the study will be interpreted to address each of these questions. The response to each of these study questions will be based on the results of the study and related to the research literature.

What Makes a Team Coach Effective?

The purpose of the study was to identify the key qualities and skills of an effective team coach. Multiple characteristics in each of these areas will be described to help interpret the study

findings. These characteristics will be articulated based on their composite score (consensus achieved by study participants), multiple comments on the characteristics by the participants, and alignment with the research literature. These interpretations of the study findings provide a summary of these key characteristics as emphasized by the study participants. These characteristics also serve as a guideline for what professional development opportunities and challenges might be anticipated for aspiring and current team coaches.

Qualities. The study participants identified by consensus 14 qualities they believed contributed to the effectiveness of a team coach, where quality was defined as a distinguishing characteristic, attribute, or feature that one possesses. The top five of these qualities will be highlighted here, and all will be listed.

Are aware of themselves and their impact on others. Given what a team coach is primarily tasked to do, that is to serve the complex task of interpreting, influencing, guiding, suggesting, facilitating, waiting, reacting to, and otherwise engaging with a group of individuals, their self-awareness and impact is of paramount importance. Somebody lacking this awareness would likely either be paralyzed in their ineffectiveness to influence the team or, on the other end of the spectrum, could act as a bulldozer, making the team subservient to their own personal agenda. This quality received a 90.58% composite score and was mentioned often, both in survey comments and in the post-survey conference call. Amongst the relevant survey comments, one participant said,

Coaches must know when to "bite their tongue" and not just blurt out what they're thinking in the moment. They must be patient and thoughtful. When they make a decision to provide constructive feedback to a team member or the team as a whole, they should think through CAREFULLY (1) WHAT they intend to say and (2) HOW to say it, taking into account what they know about the team or team member . . . Of course, coaches need to be self-aware enough to KNOW when their personal agendas may be getting in the way, and work to reduce or eliminate such biases.

Others introduced the term “self-as-instrument” and said there was an importance in, “knowing own self and how to best serve others when self-as-instrument is appropriate and knowing when to temper or even suspend self-as-instrument.” Others mentioned blind spots being aware of what might be unconscious when,

the coach continuously and rigorously examines her/his own blind spots and biases, so as not to imbed her/his agenda on the team process . . . as well as having the SELF AWARENESS of the impact one has on [others] - often things on the unconscious level like, power, gender, culture.

The Trait Theory of Leadership, one of the six sub-categories that was the basis of the literature review for this study, has led to the development of a variety of commonly used personality assessments, often used in team coaching situations. The most common result from these assessments is the promotion of self-awareness, itself a valuable leadership characteristic (McCrae & Costa, 1987).

During the post-survey conference call, this quality surfaced early and often and was initially discussed within the context of describing two different style preferences, based on one popular personality assessment (the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator), which, as described above, came out of trait theory.

I could see a very ineffective J or P who fundamentally lacked that self-awareness. So a J who comes in as hyper-structured but . . . not being responsive to the group potentially pushing back on that structure...is going to be an unsuccessful J team coach as opposed to the very self-aware J who is responsive and similarly with a strong P . . . if they are aware of the ways in which their own abilities may challenge or trigger...the group process.

Thus, the data suggest that no one particular personality style predisposes one to be an effective team coach over another. Of utmost importance, however, is the individual awareness of one’s own style and of the impact one can have on others.

Are attuned to environment and self. In some ways, this quality is closely related to the previous quality in that being “attuned” to one’s self is similar to having an awareness of oneself,

and much of what was written above applies here and adds additional weight to the importance of that quality. Having an attunement to one's environment, however and as I will discuss below, does seem different from an awareness of one's impact on others.

Team coaches are often external to the team and organization within which the team operates and must quickly learn as much as possible about the culture that they are, to a certain extent, "parachuting" into. Some of this knowledge can minimally be gained from surveying the written information often found on organizational websites and also from interviewing managers and others prior to meeting the team for the first time. Although that information is helpful, it does not replace the need to read the environment on-site, what is actually going on with the team specifically (an important part of this is also having a clear and deep understanding of group dynamics, which is the second highest ranked team coaching skill, and will be discussed in more detail later) and within the larger organizational context in general. Thus, there is good reason this quality earned an 89.41% composite score. Participants described this as an "ability to spot things quickly," "read a situation and flex the approach to reach an outcome" and to "be able to dynamically engage with the spoken and unspoken energies each individual on a team (and the team collectively) brings to the process." Another participant described it as a "multidimensional appreciation of situations" in "seeing the team as embedded in a complex network of relationships and using this to inform your insights [about] what are the larger forces and processes that are moving the group?" Another stated, "knowledge of the environment within which the team operates is very important for the coach, because individual and team behavior can change depending upon the environment."

From the literature, adaptive and complexity leadership theories are themselves largely grounded in the need to read and adapt to one's environment. At its very core, effective team

coaching requires the coach to adapt and attune to the environment created by the team, itself a product of the larger organizational environment. The data suggest that this external environmental awareness in combination with the internal self-awareness is critically important to successful team coaching outcomes.

Appreciate differences and engage all members of the team. This quality also earned an 89.41% composite score. One of the reasons that teams can be so powerful in creating solutions to complex problems is in the leveraging of diverse perspectives, experiences, talents, knowledge and skills. When teams are unable to leverage the strengths of their individuals and become something more than the sum of their parts, a team coach is often brought in to figure out how to unlock that potential. Thus, the ability to appreciate differences and engage all members of the team is critically important to an effective team coach.

One participant describes this as being “educated on the diversity of factors that impact individual team members’ identities and the ways in which the interplay of identities can be a tremendously emergent, generative force for a team, if the diversity is honored and affirmed, rather than oppressed or alienated.” Another described it as the “ability not only to hear and hold space for diverse perspectives, but also to actively request and facilitate those diverse perspectives being shared.” Yet another described the importance of “being grateful for different points of view and perspectives. Even though it may result in conflict, it invariably contributes to tighter bonds (if effectively and successfully dealt with) and to higher performance (more well-rounded solutions).”

Do not jump to conclusions. Part of the challenge of team coaching is to resist the tendency to jump in too quick, offering advice and suggestions, instead of organizing an effective process that allows the team to get to their own results. This is particularly challenging

for those new to team coaching. In the post-survey conference call, one participant stated that “almost always, when I see people tripping up in their coaching practice [it] is [because] they own too much of it.”

I think the key to success in team coaching is having a relationship with oneself and others, as well as the skills to engage a group of individuals in a process where **THEY OWN IT**. It is a process of guiding, questioning, exploring, exposing and such a process that the group is driving. I've seen many well-intentioned facilitators and team coaches falter on the question of who is really owning the work—the facilitator or the team?

Other survey respondents described it as “being able to **OBSERVE** and hold back” and “consistent recognition that the coach is a catalyst toward, not the cause of, any solutions, outcomes, or goals achieved by the team; the focus is always on *their* process and success, not the coach’s ego.”

Another participant said it is “not necessarily believing the first stories you hear about the team and waiting until a different insight emerges.”

Tolerate emotional tension well. Given the complexity and uncertainty of group dynamics, particularly with the all-too-common scenario of a team coach coming into a dysfunctional team process with the mandate of “fixing” the team, the ability to tolerate emotional tension well is of paramount importance. This quality earned a composite score of 88.23% and was the final quality to post above 88%.

Emotional and social intelligence are prevalent concepts in the team coaching literature, included as one of six sub-categories in my own review of the literature. One participant believed that “most of the very important rated qualities could be grouped under Emotional Intelligence.” Several participants concurred, many of them even using the same language to describe its importance as “the ability to deal with emotion constructively, engage in difficult discussion and challenge people in a supportive way” and “not getting wrapped up in the issues of the team, but

‘holding the space’ [and being] able to recognize, monitor, and manage your emotions and those of the team.”

List of qualities.

1. Are aware of themselves and their impact on others
2. Are attuned to environment and self
3. Appreciate differences and engage all members of the team
4. Do not jump to conclusions
5. Tolerate emotional tension well
6. Are not afraid to ask the difficult questions
7. Read people and contexts well
8. See things from others’ points of view
9. Treat each team member fairly and respectfully
10. Are approachable
11. Align actions with words
12. Maintain an objective focus
13. Comfortably navigate challenging situations
14. Find patterns and process complexity effectively

Skills. The study participants identified by consensus 11 skills they believe contributed to the effectiveness of a team coach, where skill was defined as the ability to do something that comes from training, experience, or practice. The top four of these skills will be highlighted here (again, all earning a composite score of 88% or higher), and all will be listed.

Facilitate groups well. Earning a composite score of 95.29%, the highest of any quality or skill, this skill along with “have a clear and deep understanding of group dynamics” represents one of the biggest differences between coaching individuals and coaching teams.

Strangely and unlike all of the other qualities or skills toward the top of either list, there were not any specific participant comments about this skill in the surveys. Much of the post-survey conference call conversation, however, centered on this highest-ranked skill.

It makes me think about this number one skill, which is facilitates groups well . . . and the idea of tracking and how critical it is . . . When I am with a group of people, I am tracking all of the dynamics, I am tracking how each person is with how the other people react, how they are with me. I am tracking so many things. I am in a setting where I feel like I have eyes and ears all around me . . . In terms of

facilitating groups well, there could be like five or six skills (or maybe more) underneath that would help you facilitate groups well that would be essential to the coach.

“I would agree. I think facilitating groups is more of a symptom than necessarily a skill. It’s a result. You facilitate groups well because of these 6 or 7 or 9 or 10 things you do, certainly a lot of things that were listed below that.” The ability to facilitate groups well serves as a kind of “meta” skill that contains within it several specific skills, such as tracking, that are collectively critical to successful team coaching. It is a skill that, like team coaching itself, can be difficult to define but is identifiable when done right. One participant described that there is a kind of “magic” to the complex process of facilitating groups well:

I am having to be responsive to the group in the same way I am with an individual in that suddenly they brought this thing up, like the group can go to very unexpected places and I need to be ready to help them and often that will show up as struggle, discord, or some whacko totally crazy idea that nobody likes, and help them make meaning out of something that isn’t always meaningful in terms of their interactions together. Our practice of group coaching at its worst is kind of a place for control freaks to go control conversations and at best it is much more responsive and guiding and there’s like a magic to it where the group gets to places that they didn’t know they could get to that are really unexpected and I have to be prepared for the unknown.

Have a clear and deep understanding of group dynamics. This skill earned the second-highest score at 94.11%. This skill deals with complex systems and is thus most closely linked to complexity leadership theory, described in the literature review. This skill, again along with “facilitates groups well,” is critical for somebody who is already good at coaching individuals to make a successful transition to effectively coaching teams.

Participants described this as an “awareness of the self-reinforcing nature of group mindset and thinking” and the

ability to recognize and name team dynamics to help de-mystify and empower the team, as they experience the dynamics impacting their interactions (i.e., Have

they established team Ground Rules? Are they aware, when they're Storming? Do they know when they're in Flow—individually? Collectively? Etc.).

Another said it was

possessing an understanding of group dynamics, particularly overt and covert group dynamics, team roles (formal and informal) & role clarity, boundaries and what acts as a boundary, and authority, self-authorization, power, initiative and stages of team effectiveness.

Hear both explicit and implicit messages. With a composite score of 91.76%, this skill also related to emotional intelligence in that the ability to actively and empathically listen, not just to each individual, but the group as a whole, requires a high level of emotional intelligence.

One participant described this skill as an “active process of listening with intent to understand what is being said both above and below the surface. The ability to listen actively and deeply, hearing the implicit and explicit messages people are trying to communicate.” Another participant said that it is “suspending all preconceived ideas/thoughts and hear[ing] what is communicated both verbally and non verbally.”

Connect and establish trust with a variety of personalities. At 88.23% composite score, this is the final skill that scored above 88%. This skill is also related to emotional intelligence in that establishing some kind of connection on an emotional level is foundational to building trust.

As one participant put it, a team coach who is able to connect and establish trust with a variety of personalities “resists favoritism toward any particular individuals within the team, and rather, focuses on what will best serve the collective goals, while not alienating any of individuals.”

The ability to establish a good rapport with the group is another way to describe it. One participant thought of it as the

capacity to help foster trust, comfort, safety, and (when/where appropriate) humor/levity within the team. Regardless of whether a coach is introverted or

extroverted, if he/she has a quality of approachability, authentic dynamism, and genuine enjoyment of working with others, he/she will be much more successful in establishing rapport with her/his team.

List of skills.

1. Facilitate groups well
2. Have a clear and deep understanding of group dynamics
3. Hear both explicit and implicit messages
4. Connect and establish trust with a variety of personalities
5. Draw people in and engage them with the process
6. Use a robust toolkit of frameworks, concepts, approaches, and techniques
7. Know when to hold back
8. Seek and give feedback
9. Engage in clear and unambiguous contracting
10. Celebrate successes
11. First do no harm

What Characteristics Are Different for Team Coaches Versus Individual Coaches?

Given the relative newness of team coaching as a professional practice, it is highly likely that an experienced team coach also has a wealth of experience as an individual coach. Thus, throughout the entire process of this study and in recognition of the large overlap that likely exists between the qualities and skills needed for coaching individuals versus coaching teams, participants were asked to articulate some of those distinctions. One participant described it this way: “Team coaching is not the same as individual coaching, even if some of the skills and qualities needed to be a good coach are the same, because of the social system aspect of teams (and group dynamics).”

In the post-survey conference call, one participant described a coaching colleague who was very successful as an individual coach but not so successful as a team coach:

We happen to work in an environment currently where we get scored, there are metrics for every single coaching engagement we have because we work internally for a firm and so whether [we] are doing one-on-one coaching or team coaching, we are evaluated in every single context and there’s a real discrepancy between the scores that she gets in her individual coaching versus the response that she gets in the group setting and so it has me really wonder about that and the

big piece around the presence that we bring, whether we are in an individual or team context. For someone who is highly effective as an individual one-on-one coach, who can really hold the space for someone, and yet the challenges, the demands that are then exponentially created when you have a diverse group, who may all have similar goals in terms of the team coaching, but have very different perspectives on how to get there and interpersonal dynamics between any number of individuals within the group. How does that potentially trigger the coach in that facilitative process where that coach might be really capable in a one-on-one context suddenly expanding that to deal with all these different personalities and needs and where do you give primacy to the group process versus what each individual is needing as part of the group process, or vice versa?

Can a primary difference, then, between individual and team coaching simply be that it is more complex and complicated, with more moving parts to keep track of, than in individual coaching?

Another participant described the difference this way:

I do a lot of group coaching and I do a lot of individual coaching and to me it's a hard thing to describe. There is something about one-on-one coaching that . . . you can really lean in close potentially and the boundary, say, between coach and receiver-of-coaching is a unique thing and to do it well there are so many things we could talk about there, but one of the things is that you are able to really reach in deeply but without them feeling afraid or that it's inappropriate or that you are going too far with them, so to speak, in terms of what they want to disclose or speak about, so there is that balance. And with groups, to me it feels like you still need to have a ton of sensitivity or eyeballs and ears out and stuff, but there is more sort of a pulling back, you are more into a speaker role. I mean when I'm doing one-on-one coaching, the center of attention is totally on that person, like that's all I listen to, like body and mind and all that. But with a group, I have to sort of pull back and it's not like I am speaking to them, like I am giving a speech, but it is a little bit more, it has to be a little bit more me-centered, like you kind of initiate things, like "Hey, here's what we are going to do or here's the plan." and then you kind of let the group chew it over on their own more and then they'll throw something back at you. So I feel like it is really different, where one is more of a close dance, the one-on-one coaching, the group coaching feels more, again it can be really close and you can get close to a group and really feel their synergy, but it's kind of theirs and as the coach I feel a little bit more outside of it, like standing on the sidelines and they are in there playing the game.

Another participant further describes the difference in similar terms, adding "leaning back" for team coaching to "leaning in" previously mentioned for individual coaching.

I am very aware with groups that they are really driving that process, with individual, yes, too, but I think what you said about leaning in, there is probably

more leaning in with the individual coaching and more sort of leaning back in creating more space in the group coaching context and really letting the group take some responsibility in holding the container. I am there, whereas I am a little bit more in there with the individual coaching.

The primary differences between team and individual coaching, then, seem to be around how the coach approaches the increased complexity inherent in the team coaching context. In other words, the coach cannot “lean in” as much in the team setting as they can in a one-on-one coaching context. Instead of having a narrowed, laser-like focus on one individual, the team coach must broaden their focus to be able to take in the bigger picture, with all of its additional complexity, of the entire team.

How Should Coaches Prepare for a Team Coaching Assignment?

Probably more important than a toolkit of specific skills and models or knowledge to deploy on a team, is the ability for a coach approaching a team coaching context to first get into a team coaching mindset. Team coaching is a unique challenge that, as described above, requires consideration of many different elements interacting with each other in a dynamic fashion. After putting oneself in a mindset that anticipates the dynamic interactions inherent in team coaching, the next thing to do is to gather as much information about the team as possible. After all of that, the team coach should then assemble their “toolkit” because without the right mindset and at least some information about the team, a robust toolkit of frameworks, concepts, approaches, and techniques is going to be less effective at best and relatively useless at worst. During the post-survey conference call, one participant described this as preparing for strategy before tactics. “So in my mind there is a whole starting with the big picture of who I am, who they are, kind of strategy, and that moves on to bigger tactical moves . . . down to behavioral stuff that I might do or not do.” When asked how to best prepare for a team coaching context, this same participant further explained his perspective by introducing a car metaphor:

I think it depends on what the group is up to. With an individual, we sort of both have our hands on the steering wheel and it is this sort of dance of having two people with their hands on the steering wheel. When I am coaching a group, the group is really interacting with itself and it is just so complex, you just don't know where potentially it is going and that is where it gets back to it depends on what they're up to.

In taking this car metaphor further with individual coaching, the coach must prepare to share the driver's seat with the coachee, to both have hands on the steering wheel. With team coaching, the coach instead gets in the back seat but is ready to reach forward and grab that steering wheel if the car starts going off the road or the coach might be in the back seat asking if the car is even on the right road. In team coaching, one must be prepared to do less direct steering from the front seat and more indirect steering from the back seat.

Are There Innate Qualities That Predispose Somebody to Be a Successful Team Coach?

It is important that aspiring team coaches understand that effective team coaching is hard work with little recognition. Thus, effective team coaches require a certain amount of humility and function primarily from a place of internal motivation. One participant described it this way:

An early mentor once told me that the best facilitators are the ones that the group does not remember. They do not remember the facilitator. They remember the work that they [the team] did. This can be true for an individual coach, too, but I think it is really specific for team coaches. If they remember me too much, then I was too much into their process. They need to remember the work that they did.

Not only might this lack of recognition be personally difficult for coaches that need some of that to feel good about their work, other stakeholders might question how the work is getting done where “group facilitators are like the wind, where our presence is hard to measure [where] . . . the only downside to that is sometimes it is hard to validate . . . like why are we paying this guy?”

Related to this need for a certain amount of humility is the skillful ability to deflect back when the group is looking to you for the answers:

Part of team coaching is to structure opportunities where they are compelled to look to each other for answers (and not the team coach). To engage and learn from one another and even disrupt their cultural norms and instinctive tendencies to first look at the coach, or facilitator or teacher in the room. I think all of those things are skills that a team coach needs to have or cultivate in order to get the participants to really engage with one another and let it be a group process.

How Did This Study Contribute to the Team Coaching Literature?

As previously mentioned, relatively little, up to this point, has been published that specifically addresses the coaching of task-performing teams (Hackman & Wageman, 2005) and most of that research focuses on how the coaching intervention impacts the team. There is nearly no published research that identifies specific coaching behaviors or what differentiates an effective coach from an ineffective one (Hamlin et al., 2006). Besides one article specific to South Africa (Maritz et al., 2009) about core competencies, we do not really know what makes for a great team coach. This was the gap in the literature that this study intended to fill.

The Maritz, Poggenpoel, and Myburgh (2009) study created a list of core competencies of a business team coach, categorized into knowledge to be discovered (such as business acumen and diversity management), skills to be mastered (such as emotional intelligence and facilitation expertise), and attitudes to be formed (such as self-awareness and integrity). To compare in more detail, here are their results next to the results from this study:

Table 5.1

Results Comparison to Maritz Study

Maritz et al. (2009) study results	Jacox study results
<i>Knowledge to be discovered:</i>	<i>Qualities:</i>
Coaching process	Are aware of themselves and their impact on others
Leadership practice	Are attuned to environment and self
Management development	Appreciate differences and engage all members of the team
Business acumen	Do not jump to conclusions
Training and development	Tolerate emotional tension well
Individual and group behaviour	Are not afraid to ask the difficult questions
Diversity management	Read people and contexts well
<i>Skills to be mastered:</i>	See things from others' points of view
Building relationships	Treat each team member fairly and respectfully
Emotional intelligence	Are approachable
Communication talent	Align action with words
Facilitation expertise	Maintain an objective focus
Political intelligence	Comfortably navigate challenging situations
Contextual intelligence	Find patterns and process complexity effectively
Change management	<i>Skills:</i>
Capacity for flexibility	Facilitate groups well
<i>Attitudes to be formed:</i>	Have a clear and deep understanding of group dynamics
Authenticity	Hear both explicit and implicit messages
Self-awareness	Connect and establish trust with a variety of personalities
Openness	Draw people in and engage them with the process
Honesty	Use a robust toolkit of frameworks, concepts, approaches, and techniques
Ethical ways of being	Know when to hold back
Empathy	Seek and give feedback
Trust	Engage in clear and unambiguous contracting
Enthusiasm and passion	Celebrate successes
Inspiration	First do no harm
Integrity	

In some ways, this study confirmed many of their findings. The qualities and skills produced in this study overlap nicely with the Maritz, Poggenpoel, and Myburgh (2009) study. Thus, one thing this study does is to confirm many of their results, suggesting that their results are not unique to South Africa. For example, the study participants represented four different

countries, and thus a wider representation of team coaches. Also, all of the participants in this study were professional team coaches whereas in the Maritz, Poggenpoel, and Myburgh (2009) study, only a third of the participants were professional team coaches with the others being CEOs and General Managers in business. The team coaches in this study also represented a wider sampling of industry type to include higher education, non-profit, and government, in addition to business.

Most significantly, participants in the Maritz, Poggenpoel, and Myburgh (2009) study were not asked to prioritize importance or make distinctions between individual and team coaching. These are the areas where I believe this study adds the most value to the team coaching literature. If somebody were to develop a training program for team coaches, they could access a nice list of competencies, which may or may not be unique to South Africa, from the Maritz, Poggenpoel, and Myburgh (2009) study. The results from this study would also provide them with a nice list of qualities and skills important to team coaching effectiveness. Additionally, they would feel better informed about what to prioritize and which competencies are unique to team coaching and which are shared with the practice of coaching individuals. The results of the two studies together could serve as a robust basis for a team coach training program.

What Is Yet to Be Learned Following This Study?

This study of team coaches provided evidence of some key qualities and skills of effectiveness. There are, however, several limitations of this study and, therefore, some issues related to this topic were not learned. There are four significant questions that are not answered by this study. Each of these could be a separate study unto itself by building on these study results. Minimally, each of these questions is an area of potential future research.

The study has suggested that certain qualities and skills are distinctive of effective team coaches and there was some discussion about which of those qualities and skills might be unique to the team coaching, as compared to somebody who coaches individuals. Does the study provide enough empirical evidence that makes a clear distinction between individual and team coaching? A further study would serve to validate the distinctions surfaced in this study.

The study suggested that team coaching is more complex and, thus, a more difficult assignment for those coaches that coach both individuals and teams. The implication was that individual coaching experience should precede team coaching experience (versus the other way around). Is individual coaching one of the best prerequisites, when one thinks about team coaching training, to team coaching? A study that measures the impact that the experience of successfully coaching individuals has on the development of team coaches, could provide some additional clarity there.

Another question raised by the results and conclusions of this study was, are there some common personality differences or style preferences that predispose an aspiring coach to be more effective with individuals versus teams? In other words, is there an archetypical profile for each team coach beyond qualities and skills? For example and to use the same participant examples proposed earlier in this chapter, do Ps (in the Meyers-Briggs assessment) make better team coaches than Js? A future study could take a deeper look at individual team coaches, including certain personality style preferences.

Finally, this study had a 20-member panel of experts, containing eight females and twelve male team coaches from across the United States and three other countries. This study did not identify evidence of any differences in qualities and skills based on sex, geographic location, or any other demographic information. Similar to measuring personality style preferences, a

future study could track other demographic or education information about individual team coaches to look for any significant patterns.

What Results Were Surprising and Why?

In light of the review of the research literature, the previous pilot study on the topic, and my personal experience coaching teams, there was only one study finding that was surprising. The concept of “first do no harm” did not appear in any literature nor in the pilot study. This characteristic was mentioned by only one participant within the open-ended context of the first survey. When presented to everybody else, along with all of the other qualities and skills during the second survey, many participants agreed that, even though they likely had not previously thought of it themselves, it was indeed an important concept and important enough to make the final cut.

I think this is a great example of the power of the Delphi method, where a concept that otherwise would not see the light of day gets surfaced by one individual and given the opportunity to be considered and potentially adopted by all of the other experts. This opportunity to leverage a diversity of thought is really at the core of any effective team process.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research studies could add significant knowledge to the team coaching profession and scholarly literature within the academic discipline by building on or supplementing the results of this study. As already mentioned above, many new questions have been stirred up as a result of this study and I have identified four additional potential studies here.

It would be fascinating to observe some coaches whose practice involves coaching both individuals and teams and to note any key differences in how they approach each coaching session, how they behave, what tools they choose to use, etc. In other words, documenting those

specific coaching behavioral differences that were alluded to in this study would help to further the understanding of what is needed in each circumstance.

Are there different skillsets required of the team coach if they are coaching two different teams with vastly different goals? For example, a team that is just trying to implement a project plan and needs help getting clear about roles and objectives versus another need with the much more ambiguous goal to think differently?

What about the cultural make-up of the team in terms of not only the team members themselves but also the cultural context that the team operates within? There are so many global organizations that bring together team members from across the globe, how do all of those differences impact a team's ability to achieve their objectives and how does the coach's own culture influence their ability to be effective? Many of the coaches in this study, although mostly from North America or Europe, have international experience working in other parts of the world. Does that influence how they approach different teams?

How does a team coach work with virtual teams? Virtual teams experience a unique set of challenges because, even with technology that makes it easier than ever communicate, it is still not the same as face-to-face interactions. Team coaching in general is a new professional practice and coaching virtual teams is an even newer practice whose need, it seems, will only increase with time.

These questions to guide future research along with this Delphi study of team coaches are based on the concept of reverse engineering, where you take something that is working (i.e. an effective team coach) and study it to learn what makes it work. Future research that helps further define team coaching success can provide a roadmap on how to replicate that success, which would greatly benefit the team coaching profession.

Summarizing Statements

In this study, a group of team coaches used the experience of their own professional practice to collectively come to a consensus about the key qualities and skills of an effective team coach. Many study participants suggested that it was the interplay of those qualities and skills within a complex system that includes the coaches themselves that creates the “magic” of team coaching.

It’s all about how all the above qualities and skills come together in how the coach presents him/her self, how they interact and work with members of the group and how they shoulder the responsibility of working hard on the performance of the team. There is a mercurial element to all this, some coaches I have worked with have been outstanding, others less so, but the outstanding ones were, simply, great human beings, warm, decent, honest, straight talking (without being rude/brash) and deeply committed to helping individuals get the best out of working with each other.

Since most team coaches also coach individuals, a theme throughout the whole study was to constantly compare what is required of team coaching as compared to coaching individuals.

An example of that thinking is here:

To summarize, even more so than with individual coaching, because of the nature of team coaching, it is important for the coach to be able to establish trust with many different types of people, to be inclusive, to have a variety of approaches and tools, to demonstrate credibility (by doing what he/she says), to be versatile, commercially applicable and self-aware. The coach becomes, by virtue of being the one constant in the group, a focal point which means that "self-as-instrument" is heightened. Awareness of group dynamics is also key, because it will help the coach to monitor when overt vs. covert actions and insights can be brought to light for the group to understand what/how much is "them doing their thing" or typical group dynamics.

Team coaches are in a unique and important position, one that can yield tremendous influence. A final reminder to aspiring team coaches is to never forget that the process should never be about you, but always about the team.

I was always trying to go upstream and ask what does the group need and then go back downstream and answer from that perspective. That is the core of it. If I

know what the group needs, my response is going to be natural. In other words, it is less something I do or study and its more something like 'oh this is what's needed and I am the one who is in the place to provide it.'

Appendix

Appendix A

Antioch University
PhD in Leadership & Change
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Human Participant Research Review
Informed Consent Statement

Survey participant consent to a study of the effective team coach: key qualities and skills.

You have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Bill Jacox, a doctoral candidate in the Leadership and Organizational Change program at Antioch University, Yellow Springs, Ohio.

Study Purpose and Benefits

This research study involves understanding the key qualities and skills of effective team coaches. The purpose of this study is to learn what the commonalities are among the most effective team coaches. What can be learned about team coaching by studying the team coaches themselves?

Study Methodology and Participant Involvement

The Delphi method will be used and is a method for structuring a group communication process that is effective in allowing a group of individual experts in a particular field of professional practice (particularly those dispersed geographically) to deal with a complex problem such as gaining consensus about professional skills (such as this study question). It engages this panel of experts using anonymous questionnaires to elicit the emergence of judgments or opinions. Iterations of responses by rounds are analyzed and summarized to develop the subsequent questionnaire iterations. At least three rounds of data collection are necessary for consensus to be achieved.

This pilot study will include approximately 15 team coaches. The results of the written responses will be summarized in a thematic analysis. Once the themes are finalized, they will be analyzed and coded by me as the sole researcher. The total time of your involvement in responding to all the questionnaires should be no more than 2 hours. Therefore, each of the three rounds of surveys will take between 30 and 40 minutes.

Participant Confidentiality

Your name will be kept confidential with the written summary of your responses containing a number instead of your name. There will be no individuals identified in this report. Direct quotes may be used, but they will be without attribution. In addition, the records and all related research materials including the Informed Consent Forms will be kept securely stored and eventually destroyed. The results from these interviews will be incorporated into my doctoral dissertation research or for use in other future scholarly publications. I reserve the right to retain the data indefinitely for future scholarly work.

Voluntary Participation May be Withdrawn at Any Time

Your experience as a team coach qualifies you as a participant in this research study. Your participation in this research project is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without any penalty. If you choose to do so, the information you provided for this research project will be destroyed and not used and your confidentiality will be maintained. There are minimal risks to

you as a participant, since you are anonymously providing your input and expertise. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to, or provide any information you are uncomfortable with. There is no financial remuneration for participating in this study.

Questions Regarding the Study and Contact Information

If you have any questions about any aspect of this study or your involvement, please contact me or:

Philomena Essed, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Ph.D. in Leadership & Change
Antioch University
essed@antioch.edu

Bill Jacox
Principal and Sole Researcher
Ph.D. in Leadership & Change
Antioch University
xxxx@xxxx.xxx

Please sign this document and return to me. This indicates that you have read, understood, and agreed to participate in this research project.

Name of participant (please print) _____

Signature of participant _____

Date _____

Appendix B

Team Coaching Delphi Method Dissertation Research Study Survey 1

I believe that a team can accomplish more than an individual, but I also understand the many obstacles, largely around issues of role clarity and communication, that can get in the way of higher team performance. At the individual level, executive coaching has been effective in helping executives learn and develop and, extrapolating this to the team level, it seems likely that a well-trained and competent team coach can help a team navigate through some of its inherent obstacles and greatly enhance its ability to produce outcomes that far exceed expectations. As dominant leadership paradigms continue to shift from traditional command and control models to more collaborative team models both in the United States and internationally, the power of the team continues to grow in importance. I believe team coaching does and will play an increasingly critical part in the success of this paradigm shift.

Many authors, practitioners, and theorists believe that team coaching is a powerful tool to help teams become higher performing. Less is known about the individual coach. Professional trainers and developers have opinions about what good team coaching looks like, but little published research exists that identifies specific coaching behaviors or what differentiates an effective coach from an ineffective one. The gap that I intend to address with my research is an understanding of what makes those people effective at team coaching.

The study question is, **“What are the key qualities and skills of effective team coaches?”** The focus of this question is to describe the “effective” team coach based on these two criteria as defined below.

Definitions

Quality- A distinguishing characteristic, attribute, or feature that one possesses.

Skill- The ability to do something that comes from training, experience, or practice.

Specifics Yield Richer Data

To avoid data that are too general to be useful, I encourage you to be as specific as possible. List specific behaviors whenever possible. Feel free to use illustrative examples to further clarify. For example, if you believe “being competent” is an important quality for a team coach, please elaborate further. Competent in what, exactly? How would that competence present itself in a team coaching situation? Something like “good listening skills” might more specifically be described as “demonstrates understand of others’ points of view.”

Individual Coaching vs. Team Coaching

As part of your thought process, please also consider what qualities and skills are distinct to team coaches versus those who coach individuals. If you list something that you believe is unique to team coaching, please indicate that.

Thank you for your thoughtful responses on the next two pages

Questions

1. Identify all the qualities important for an effective team coach. Try to attempt to identify at least ten qualities. Please sufficiently describe each quality. After you have listed them, number them in their order of priority with one (1) being the most important and the highest number being the least important.

Note: This is the first round of the interview. The following two rounds of interview questions will be based on the responses given during this round by all interview participants. Please submit the demographic information below to complete the process

Team Coach Demographic Information

Determining what are the key qualities and skills of the effective team coach.

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Title: _____

Geographic Location (country, state, city): _____

Phone: _____ Age: _____ Male or Female: _____

Highest level of education? _____

(e.g. GED, High School, Some College, Associate Degree, Bachelor, Masters, PhD/EdD)

Other relevant specialized training: _____

Other relevant experiences: _____

How many years have you served as a team coach? _____ Years

How many years have you been in your profession? _____ Years.

Appendix C

Team Coaching Research Study Survey 2

The study question is, “**What are the key qualities and skills of effective team coaches?**” The focus of this question is to describe the “effective” team coach based on these two criteria as defined below.

Quality- A distinguishing characteristic, attribute, or feature that one possesses.

Skill- The ability to do something that comes from training, experience, or practice.

In your independent professional opinion, how important is each of the listed characteristics to the overall performance of an effective team coach? As you read down the list, you might begin feeling that virtually everybody would agree that most are good qualities and skills for team coaching. What I am trying to understand is what within the list is less obvious but might be more helpful to those wishing to become or develop team coaches.

For those items you rate highest (4s and 5s on the scale), also include at the bottom of the survey some specific examples and please be as descriptive as possible.

The 50 characteristics listed below (25 qualities and 25 skills) were derived primarily from collective responses from the first questionnaire. It is a broad and inclusive list. With your input in this questionnaire, the list of leadership dimensions will be narrowed until, ultimately, a consensus is reached. This will most likely be the second of three questionnaires.

Mark the corresponding number to indicate your rating of each characteristic, according to how it contributes to a team coach’s effectiveness, using the following scale:

- 1- Not Important
- 2- Minor Importance
- 3- Moderate Importance
- 4- Very Important
- 5- Critically Important

Also, indicate whether you believe a particular quality or skill is unique to team coaching (versus coaching individuals).

CHARACTERISTICS	LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE	Unique?
QUALITIES		
Effective team coaches...		
1) align action with words	1 2 3 4 5	
2) are committed to continuous personal development	1 2 3 4 5	
3) are interested in the well being of others	1 2 3 4 5	
4) see things from others’ points of view	1 2 3 4 5	
5) have an optimistic, cheerful attitude	1 2 3 4 5	
6) treat each team member fairly and respectfully	1 2 3 4 5	
7) comfortably navigate challenging situations	1 2 3 4 5	
8) tolerate emotional tension well	1 2 3 4 5	
9) are lighthearted and fun when appropriate	1 2 3 4 5	
10) read people and contexts well	1 2 3 4 5	
11) are attuned to environment and self	1 2 3 4 5	
12) possess a “beginner’s mind”	1 2 3 4 5	
13) do not jump to conclusions	1 2 3 4 5	

14) maintain an objective focus	1	2	3	4	5
15) are approachable	1	2	3	4	5
16) help people become “better versions of themselves”	1	2	3	4	5
17) are aware of themselves and their impact on others	1	2	3	4	5
18) can check their ego	1	2	3	4	5
19) are not afraid to ask the difficult questions	1	2	3	4	5
20) see things in an integrated, holistic way	1	2	3	4	5
21) possess high energy and drive	1	2	3	4	5
22) work from an inner compass	1	2	3	4	5
23) find patterns and process complexity effectively	1	2	3	4	5
24) appreciate differences and engage all members of the team	1	2	3	4	5
25) are politically savvy	1	2	3	4	5
SKILLS					
Effective team coaches...					
1) connect and establish trust with a variety of personalities	1	2	3	4	5
2) do what they say they will do	1	2	3	4	5
3) know when to slow down or speed up	1	2	3	4	5
4) question judiciously yet boldly	1	2	3	4	5
5) do not let plans get in the way of progress	1	2	3	4	5
6) drive a process	1	2	3	4	5
7) set strong guidelines and structure	1	2	3	4	5
8) articulate concisely	1	2	3	4	5
9) engage in clear and unambiguous contracting	1	2	3	4	5
10) draw people in and engage them with the process	1	2	3	4	5
11) use a robust toolkit of frameworks, concepts, approaches, and techniques	1	2	3	4	5
12) facilitate groups well	1	2	3	4	5
13) have a clear and deep understanding of group dynamics	1	2	3	4	5
14) hear both explicit and implicit messages	1	2	3	4	5
15) show how their work impacts business results	1	2	3	4	5
16) use a variety of personality assessments	1	2	3	4	5
17) use de-escalation and conflict resolution skills	1	2	3	4	5
18) first do no harm	1	2	3	4	5
19) have established credibility through previous coaching experiences	1	2	3	4	5
20) speak the client’s organizational language	1	2	3	4	5
21) seek and give feedback	1	2	3	4	5
22) anticipate and stay ahead of the team	1	2	3	4	5
23) know when to hold back	1	2	3	4	5
24) balance the team’s performance with its well-being	1	2	3	4	5
25) celebrate successes	1	2	3	4	5

Please use the space below to provide specific behavioral examples of your highest rated qualities and skills.

Appendix D

Team Coaching Research Study Survey 3

What are the key qualities and skills of effective team coaches?

Dimension Ranking Grid

The results from the second survey resulted in 14 qualities and 11 skills receiving a consensus rating of 80% or higher. Of those 25 characteristics, 12 had at least one other characteristic with an identical score. The main purpose of this third survey is to break the ties and complete our ranked list of team coaching characteristics.

In your independent professional opinion, how would you prioritize each of the previously highly-rated characteristics to the overall performance of a team coach? Please indicate below the priority of each characteristic within each category for a team coach demonstrating effectiveness in their practice.

For example category 1 of qualities below has three characteristics so they will be numbered '1' through '3' based on your perceived level of importance as a subject matter expert. Therefore, the item numbered '1' will have the most importance of the three in that category and the item numbered '3' will have the least importance.

Qualities	Ranking
<i>Category 1 (3 characteristics)</i>	
are attuned to environment and self	
appreciate differences and engage all members of the team	
do not jump to conclusions	
<i>Category 2 (2 characteristics)</i>	
read people and contexts well	
are not afraid to ask the difficult questions	
<i>Category 3 (2 characteristics)</i>	
treat each team member fairly and respectfully	
are approachable	

Skills	Ranking
<i>Category 1 (3 characteristics)</i>	
use a robust toolkit of frameworks, concepts, approaches, and techniques	
know when to hold back	
seek and give feedback	
<i>Category 2 (2 characteristics)</i>	
celebrate successes	
engage in clear and unambiguous contracting	

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