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Team coaching is a process requiring appropriate set of tools so as to enable individuals to freely express their ideas and professional opinion. Coaching is a prerequisite for high-level managerial competence and the synergy necessary for achieving team results. Those would be impossible without established rules and efficient communication between team members. The objective of this paper is to highlight some methodological and managerial features of team coaching.

Key words: team, coaching, management, team environment.

Introduction

Team coaching is a specific process focusing on the performance of highly-efficient teams that add value to customers and stakeholders. This approach aims to encourage leadership within the company, to invest in employees’ talents and competences, on which the success and the results achieved by teams are based. Team coaching is not equivalent to team building as it does not aim to raise the morale of team members or to unite them towards the achievement of a specific goal. Rather, the objective of team coaching is to lead to positive results and sustainability to corporate changes. Team coaching is more about team performance than personal influence on the behavior of the individual (or the coach client).

Thesis

The dynamics of contemporary business requires joint efforts on behalf of employees for solving problems within business entities. Highly efficient teams need competent employees who can raise quality and performance results. Therefore team coaching is necessary for identifying team priorities and coordinating the performance of team members. Coaching is a managerial technique appropriate for both new teams and teams which have been working for a long time; yet, it is suitable in the following situations [1, 3, 4]:

- changes within the organization;
- launching a new project;
- considering leadership style from a different perspective;
- rotation of role functions within the team;
- decline of team efficiency;
- overcoming problems within the team;
- difficulties related to team performance, etc.

Coaching cannot be implemented without established methodology (fig. 1). The latter consists of certain stages and activities related to team development, namely [1, 6]:

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1. Introducing team members to the principles of coaching
   Coaching differs from the traditional managerial approach for influencing the behavior of individuals within a team. In a globalizing competitive business environment, managers need to employ rational strategies, in addition to the leadership competences required within a team. Major strategies refer to team performance since contemporary business dynamics requires an innovative and creative approach to managing performance. In addition to fulfilling the aims and objectives of the team, leaders need to transmit their knowledge and experience to the people they work with. Hence, coaching enables team members to learn and develop and assists leaders in their task to provide resources and react to occurring problems.

   The following major steps are employed at the first stage of the methodology of team coaching:
   - distinguishing between coaching and management;
   - distinguishing between coaching and mentoring;
   - identifying the major characteristics of coaching;
   - analysis of the need of team coaching.

2. Identifying the advantages of coaching in a team environment
   In order to employ coaching efficiently, team members need to be aware of its benefits and the degree to which it will affect favourably their performance. There are at least two reasons why organizations should employ coaching. In the first place, global business is acquiring an increasingly intellectual character and leaders need to be highly competent in their professional field. Performance must add value for the company, its customers, and stakeholders. In the second place, team performance requires joint effort for accomplishing objectives, and coaching is an appropriate means for improving performance and raising productivity. This can be achieved by abandoning the traditional approach of the chain of command and focusing on business processes and new methods of managing team performance. At the second stage of the methodology of team coaching, the following major steps are employed:
   - transmitting professional experience about team coaching;
   - clarifying the role of team coaching;
   - clarifying the role of the team coach;
   - clarifying the relationship between the coach and team members;
   - sharing examples of team coaching.
3. Structuring the requirements to coaching in a team environment

In order to match the strategy of the organization, the requirements to the employment of coaching must be defined. This includes identifying the main aspects of the work to be done by the coach and the team, and fixing deadlines for achieving the goals set. The process consists of several broad stages with specific characteristics. The major steps followed at the third stage of team coaching methodology include:

3.1. Defining the dimensions of the team work

The coach should cooperate both in the development of the vision and the mission of the team and defining the priority tasks for its development. This is a complex process, which depends on the aims and the tasks of the team, but it requires organizational skills. The role of the coach is to formulate and define a suitable vision, which corresponds to the team strategy. They should assist and help the initiatives held for the implementation and execution and to define the direction of the team processes. Under the supervision of the coach the following events should be developed:

◊ Defining the mission and vision of the team

The coach is the person who helps the team to define the mission and the vision for a further development. They define the identity of the team and the way the efforts and resources are taken together. This calls that the following activities should be defined:

– developing a work plan for the team’s mission and vision;
– mission and visions – to correspond to the outer (surrounding) business environment (markets, requirements on behalf of clients, services, etc.);
– correspondence of the team mission and vision with the organizational cultural behavior;
– active advertising campaign for spreading the team mission and vision to all the people and institutions interested in it;
– putting the team mission and vision into official documents.

◊ Team meeting

In order to have successful team work the coach takes a vital part in the meeting and defines its directions and schedule. This is done in two ways:

Activities which are connected with the organization of the meeting

The coach should impose an effective model for preparation and guiding the meeting in a way that is most adequate concerning timing and the basic matters discussed. The most important aspects are the following:

– defining time which is most suitable for the meeting of the team members;
– logical outline of the items of the agenda;
– informing the team participants about all the items of the agenda;
– setting clear goals for all participants;
– clear (open) discussion of the team processes;
– equal debates between the participants in the team;
– summarizing the accepted and denied proposals/offers;
– strict record of the matters discussed.

Activities connected with the formatting the team

This is the most complex and difficult task that the coach should accomplish, because he should not only define the criteria for the successful team work, but also the structure. The aspects that seem most important are the following:

– defining and setting the team statute and regulations;
– electing competent and highly qualified people in the team;
– choosing people who will participate and cooperate with the team and its goals;
– defining the number of people who will be team members;
– defining the roles of the team members;
– defining the responsibility of each team member.

◊ Defining the key priorities for the team work

In order to have the team work in accordance with the set aims, the coach should help and cooperate with the people, so that they understand the main processes of the team work. The aspects which need to be emphasized are the following:

– setting a work-schedule for team work;
– defining the setting the activities for the team work (aims, tasks, etc.);
– defining the budget of the team;
– training the people form the team;
– consulting the people from the team;
– authorizing the people for the tasks they should work on;
– creating good work environment for the members of the team;
– stimulating the creativity of the team members;
– coordination of the team members’ efforts;
– trusting the team members;
– cooperation and help to the team members (moral, financial, resource);
– measuring the results of the team work;
– a fair judgment/assessment of the work of the team members.

3.2. Developing a plan for the team work in organizational change

The coaching of highly effective teams is a common practice when certain initiatives should be taken
for the change of the business processes in the organization or activities connected with its development. This calls for bearing in mind the various requirements for team effectiveness which are directly connected with the type of work and its proper management. The most important aspects are the following:

◊ Determining the need of an organizational change

One of the coach’s tasks is to help people realize that the development of the company depends on its skills and potentials to change the business processes. The coach should prepare the team for taking part in this change by taking the following activities:

− creating an objective assessment of the situation;
− understanding the essence of the work matter;
− informing the team members about the facts connected with the change;
− analysis of the critical processes;
− ranging the critical processes;
− choosing the due process (processes) for the change.

◊ Team motivation for taking part in the organizational change

The coach should find the right way in order to motivate every team member and the synergic efforts of the people. This is a difficult task for every coach, because people have different motifs, prejudice and style of work. That is why it is necessary to set and have in mind the following characteristics:

− which are the common factors that motivate the team members;
− which are the common factors that demotivate the team members;
− which are the specific motivational factors for each team member (money, power, security, pleasure and work satisfaction, acknowledgment and recognition);
− how can team work be motivated;
− how can the coach create interest in the team members to the change.

◊ Eliminating the resistance of the team for taking part in the organizational change

In order to help the members to take part in the organizational change, the coach should not only motivate them, but should be able to recognize their resistance (if there is such). This is an important prerequisite for the change to take place, because the fear of such change can affect negatively the peoples’ behavior which can be brought upon the whole team. The coach should be a leader in the initiatives for ignoring and dealing with the resistance or it should be kept at a minimum level. For this reason it is necessary to:

− to determine and fix the worries of the team members;
− to analyze the reasons for the resistance;
− to ignore or minimize the stress in the team members;
− to create and develop feeling of security in the team members;
− to utilize adequate mechanisms for resistance management.

◊ Initiatives for effective management the team work in the process of organizational change

To manage the transformations and changes in accordance with the team aims and targets – to do this we need the respective suitable conditions to be created. The coach should define the directions of the rational development and management of the changes and transformations enable and strictly follow for its proper accomplishment by:

− making the working procedures for the team members easier;
− defining and recognizing team members’ problems;
− solving the problems;
− overcoming the different opinions in the team;
− optimizing the communications within the team and between the people in the team;
− effective leadership in the team;
− uniting/getting together the people of the team.

4. Feedback on the outcomes

The team coach should have a feedback for its effectiveness and if necessary he/she should be able to take the necessary measures. This may happen using methods and techniques for getting the right and necessary information – using different quizzes, questionnaires, or direct contacts with the members of the team. Using the available data, the coach should be able to make decisions for the further development of the team and team work.

The role of the manager changes in organizations which rely on team work and delegation of decision-making authority. Managers in such organization are no longer supervisors, but leaders [6], whose responsibility is to guide team performance and solve arising problems through coaching and providing the necessary resources for achieving relevant goals. The coach must encourage and boost the morale of team members, provide assistance in critical moments, and train team members in specific professional areas.

Some authors [5] believe that coaching requires a systematic approach as it is related to two processes of managerial activity. First, the focus is on the whole team rather than the individual, which affects three aspects – objective, performance, and approaches to accomplishing that objective. Second, the team is viewed as a system which requires interaction with customers, formal and informal teams, business partners, etc. From a systematic perspective, team coaching consists of the following elements [4, 5]:

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Joint work with team members – team coaching is a process implemented within a team; it involves all team members, and ignores the personal approach to the individual. The idea is to benefit from synergy and overall efficiency of team performance.

Team synchronization of performance – team coaching does not aim at merely raising employees' productivity or improving their competence, but also at facilitating their performance within a team. It is more difficult to coordinate the competences of team members than to train them to acquire such skills.

Developing leadership abilities – team coaching is a process encouraging joint team initiatives. Each team member needs to cultivate abilities which will enable him to be a leader in his field and to make crucial decisions related to specific functional aspects.

Cultivating communication abilities – coaching is not all about improving business processes or boosting the efficiency of an organization performance. Its objective is to improve communication among team members and their relationship with stakeholders.

The role of the team coach might be presented through identifying his functions and responsibilities which include [2, 6]:

- Supervising function – i.e. to observe whether organizational objectives are accomplished in line with the input effort of team members. Major responsibilities of coaches include:
  - synchronizing the objectives of the team and the organization;
  - assisting team members in understanding their assignments;
  - scanning the environment within the organization to collect information that would benefit the team.

- Coordinating function – i.e. to ensure that team performance meets customer demands and monitor the relationship between the team and the other teams within the organization. Major responsibilities of the coach include:
  - monitoring whether team performance meets customer requirements;
  - monitoring performance efficiency and goals accomplishment;
  - assisting the team in solving potential problems related to other teams;
  - clarifying rules and procedures which the team has failed to understand.

The function of monitoring managerial decisions – i.e. to monitor whether decision-making in the team is adequate. Major responsibilities of the coach include:
  - guiding team members in making rational decisions;
  - analyzing reasons underlying inefficient decisions.

- The function of team training – i.e. to monitor the need of team training and organize the process of providing that training. Major responsibilities of the coach include:
  - identifying the need of training in the team;
  - improving the efficiency of team training;
  - ensuring smooth implementation of team training.

- The function of establishing and maintaining adequate social climate within the team – i.e. to encourage team members towards more efficient communication and mutual understanding in the process of work. Major responsibilities of the coach include:
  - to ensure that team members trust one another;
  - to provide a favorable environment encouraging respect among team members;
  - to ignore conflicts within the team;
  - to seek consensus within the team;
  - to motivate the team;
  - to encourage front-line ideas of team members.

The aim of the coach is to synchronize team performance and boost team activity. This is related not only to certain professional competences but also to adequate team behavior. Those guarantee the fulfillment of objectives and the achievement of team synergy.

Conclusion

Coaching is a managerial approach which leads to optimizing team performance and efficiency. Contemporary business dynamics requires that companies embrace coaching as it improves results achieved by teams. This publication has accomplished two main objectives:
  - it has elucidated the nature of team coaching;
  - it has revealed some methodological and managerial characteristics of team coaching.

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