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choice

the magazine of professional coaching

Team & Group Coaching

The landscape of coaching many



GROUP & TEAM COACHING

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What are the differences between team and group coaching? When and how do you introduce team or group coaching? How do you effectively measure the impact of team or group coaching? This issue uncovers the secrets of successful group and team coaching experiences for both coach and clients, including how to design and launch programs to create engagement, inspiration, motivation and accountability for participants.



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VUCA Tools™ for a VUCA World

How Team Coaches Enable Teams to Decide

By Ann V. Deaton, PhD, PCC



When we see VUCA as a threat, the most primitive part of our brain gets activated, and we react in predictable ways:

Fight: We resist or deny change, even blaming those we hold responsible.

Flight: We attempt to escape or avoid deciding, to flee the path of change.

Freeze: We freeze in place, unable to decide or make a move in any direction.

Appease: We act to please the powers that be, complying and bending without considering if it's the right thing to do.

When we label decisions as risky and VUCA as dangerous, our actions are limited to survival responses. Faced with VUCA, when we most need to access our brain's rich evaluative and strategic capabilities, we simply react. There is a different way.

Thriving in a VUCA world is possible with the necessary tools. VUCA Tools™ arose from coaching clients sharing how overwhelmed they were by VUCA. It begins with a sense that having a term for our world's Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity offers valuable awareness – a sense that “I've got this!” Accepting VUCA as our new reality enables us to intentionally engage with changing circumstances.

VUCA Tools™ are four approaches well known to coaches: Values, Us, Curiosity, and Aspirations. VUCA Tools™ provide an antidote to VUCA by providing the tools for clients to stay grounded, collaborative, open, and confident in the face of VUCA, in other words, to thrive.

USING VUCA TOOLS™ FOR TEAM DECISION-MAKING

Values: Building a team's VUCA muscles begins with Values. Values are deeply important and provide insight into the stances members take on team decisions. Engage team members in identifying their core values.

First, provide a list of values, and have each person choose, define, and

rank their top five. Second, have the team identify its priority values. This list may include the values occurring most often on individual lists, and additional values important to the whole team.

Integrity might make the team list because it occurs on four of six members' lists. Openness might be chosen because it is important to the entire team, even if it wasn't in any individual's top five. Clarity about values provides stability in a VUCA world, understanding what will be consistently important as you make decisions.

Us: "A team is 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" (Katzenbach & Smith).

A team is greater than the sum of its parts, and the more diverse a team, the greater its potential. Unfortunately, diverse values and perspectives create greater likelihood for conflict when decisions arise. Assist the team in creating a clear sense of Us by helping them answer two questions:

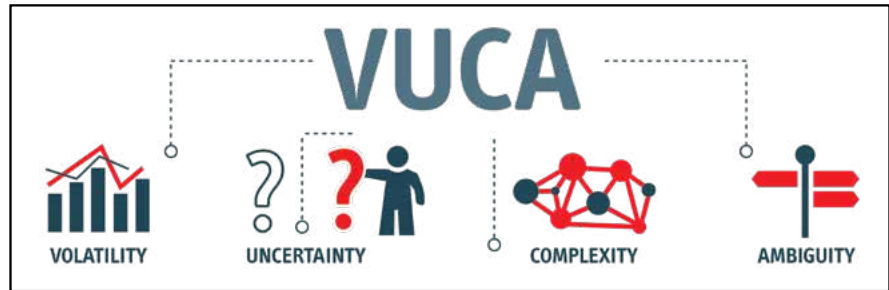
Faced with VUCA, when we most need to access our brain's rich evaluative and strategic capabilities, we simply react.

1. How do we choose to engage together?

Coaches can support teams in creating norms based on how they choose to behave (e.g., listen, share perspectives openly, support decisions), and how they respond when problems arise (e.g., ask questions, acknowledge missteps).

2. Who are we?

Help the team to discover and clarify the qualities that characterize the



team, and its individuals. The values exercise above is a start.

Another way to do this is to have each team member complete an assessment (e.g., Change Style Indicator, Strengths Finder), and create a team composite. Individuals become clearer around their unique contributions to making and executing decisions, and the team realizes its strengths and blind spots.

For instance, one team using the Change Style Indicator recognized their strong bias towards conserving the status quo when making decisions, and pattern of sidelining the single team member whose preference was to originate and embrace new ideas. The team recognized they needed her discordant perspective to make the most balanced decisions, even when it made them uncomfortable.

such as "what have we not considered that might be important?" expands the available wisdom before a decision is made.

Aspirations: When a team focuses on problems, on what's wrong or lacking, the brain's survival mechanism can get triggered. Team coaches help a team to refocus on outcomes they want as they make decisions. Adopting an aspirational outcomes mindset shifts the team energy and enables members to feel passionate rather than fearful.

Neurologically speaking, it gives each person access to the brain's strategic and collaborative decision-making capabilities rather than merely reacting to their challenges. One excellent approach to use with teams is the structure offered by The Empowerment Dynamic (Womeldorff & Zajonc).

These four VUCA Tools™ – Values, Us, Curiosity, and Aspirations – enable clarity and teamwork in challenging times. They empower coaches to support team decisions that enable thriving in the face of our VUCA world. •

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