



Enhancing Collaboration and Team Coaching: Challenges and Pathways Forward



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Introduction

Collaboration has become a critical driver of organizational success in today's complex, interconnected workplace. Yet many organizations continue to struggle with building high-performing teams capable of innovation, resilience, and collective problem-solving. Team coaching has emerged as a strategic tool to enhance collaboration, but it comes with its own challenges.

Key Challenges

1. Siloed Structures and Competing Priorities

- Functional silos create barriers to information sharing.
- Teams often prioritize local objectives over enterprise-wide goals, undermining collaboration.

2. Psychological Safety and Trust

- Without trust, team members are reluctant to share ideas, admit mistakes, or challenge assumptions.
- Leaders may unintentionally create environments that suppress openness.



3. Over-Reliance on Technology

- Virtual and hybrid collaboration tools enable connectivity but can erode authentic human connection.
- Miscommunication and lack of nuance in digital exchanges limit team cohesion.

4. Leadership Role in Team Dynamics

- Managers often lack the coaching skills to facilitate effective collaboration.
- Traditional hierarchical approaches can stifle collective ownership and accountability.

5. Measuring Impact of Team Coaching

- Organizations struggle to link team coaching to tangible outcomes like performance, innovation, and retention.
- Lack of clear metrics makes it difficult to sustain investment.

Pathways Forward

- **Foster Psychological Safety** — Encourage candid dialogue and normalize constructive conflict and appropriate differences of opinion openly discussed.
- **Train Leaders as Coaches** — Equip managers with coaching skills to facilitate collaboration, not just manage tasks.
- **Align Team Goals to Strategy** — Create clear line-of-sight between team objectives and organizational priorities.
- **Balance Technology with Connection** — Use digital tools intentionally while prioritizing opportunities for human interaction.
- **Measure What Matters** — Track collaboration outcomes (innovation, engagement, retention) alongside business metrics.

Possible Research-Based Opportunities

There are two highly impactful articles published in 2018 that provide **evidence-based insights on teamwork, collaboration, and interventions to enhance team effectiveness**.

The first, authored by **James E. Driskell, Eduardo Salas, and Tripp Driskell**, offers a comprehensive review of research into what constitutes teamwork and collaboration. They present models of teamwork, including Transition, Action, and Interpersonal Processes, and examine how factors such as team selection, training, design, and composition influence performance. The article highlights opportunities for applying these insights to modern teams operating within the **Input–Process–Output (IPO) business model**, as well as to areas such as team creativity and applied practitioner settings.



The second, authored by **Christina N. Lacerenza, Scott I. Tannenbaum, Shannon L. Marlow, and Eduardo Salas**, focuses on the use and effectiveness of **Team Development Interventions (TDIs)** as strategies for improving team performance. They review four evidence-based approaches—team training, leadership training, team building, and team debriefing—offering practical recommendations supported by research. The article notes that while traditional team-building activities often produce only short-term benefits, scientifically grounded interventions such as action learning, guided self-correction, and structured debriefing can produce sustainable improvements in team effectiveness.

Together, these articles underscore the **critical importance of intentional, evidence-based approaches** to building and sustaining effective teams in today's complex organizational environments.

Call to Action: As you refine your talent and leadership strategies, consider: how are you embedding evidence-based teamwork practices into your organization's structures and culture? Leveraging these research-backed interventions could significantly strengthen collaboration, innovation, and performance across your teams.

Conclusion

Enhancing collaboration through team coaching and other team interventions, is not about one-off interventions—it requires embedding trust, alignment, and coaching skills into the fabric of organizational culture. Organizations that invest in these areas will build teams that are not only more collaborative but also more innovative and resilient in the face of change.

References

Driskell, James E., et al. "Foundations of Teamwork and Collaboration." *American Psychologist*, vol. 73, no. 4, May 2018, pp. 334–348. Lacerenza, Christina N., et al. "Team Development Interventions: Evidence-Based Approaches for Improving Teamwork." *American Psychologist*, vol. 73, no. 4, May 2018, pp. 517–531.