



## What is Group Coaching? How Do You Develop Group Coaching?

Group coaching is used much more often now because it often can achieve more impact, more quickly and at lower cost. Group coaching leverages the untapped wisdom, support and networking among clients, employees and peers. But what do we mean by "group coaching"?

### First, What is Coaching?

The International Coach Federation has a definition for personal and professional coaching that is widely accepted:

*"... coaching as partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential, which is particularly important in today's uncertain and complex environment. Coaches honor the client as the expert in his or her life and work and believe every client is creative, resourceful and whole. Standing on this foundation, the coach's responsibility is to:*

- *Discover, clarify, and align with what the client wants to achieve*
- *Encourage client self-discovery*
- *Elicit client-generated solutions and strategies*
- *Hold the client responsible and accountable*

*This process helps clients dramatically improve their outlook on work and life, while improving their leadership skills and unlocking their potential."*

### So What is Group Coaching?

Simply put, group coaching is coaching in a group. However, there are many different formats for how that can be done. You could have one, some or all of the members of the group do the coaching to one, some or all of the group members. For example, a professional coach might coach each of the members of the group or the group members might coach each other.

Coaching could be done in one or several group meetings. It can also be done face-to-face or by means of telecommunications, for example, over the phone or Internet. Groups can be "externally" facilitated, that is, by someone who does not do the coaching or who does not get coached. In contrast, groups can self-facilitate, where one, some or all of the members are responsible for the facilitation.

Some people distinguish between group coaching and team coaching. They might define a team to be a group of people whose members all have the same purpose and goals, and work together in the same organization.

## Powerful Applications for Group Coaching

Group coaching is very popular because it can be used for a wide variety of results and applications. Here are some of the most popular:

### Problem solving among members

Coaching is great for solving complex problems because it guides and support group members to closely clarify the problems, identify powerful strategies to solve them, and specify relevant and realistic actions to implement those strategies. Members can share support and accountabilities to take those actions.

### Guarantee transfer of training

That same support and accountabilities can be used to ensure that group members actually apply the content that they got from some form of training, for example, from lectures, book studies and podcasts.

### Team building

The close engagement among members and their strong focus on helping each other can quickly form a close and confidential bond in which members come to rely on each other to achieve the goal of the team.

### Deep networking

Because members completely count on each other, they feel free to share more than business cards – they share their needs, open and honest feedback, and useful and practical resources among each other.

### Quickly spread, low-cost core coaching skills

Coaching is proven to be a powerful means to cultivate change in people. Organizational change, including cultural change, requires change in people as well. In some formats of group coaching, the members not only get coached, but they practice coaching, as well. The groups can be low-cost because the members do much of the work in the groups.

### Engagement of all employees

We are learning that, unless a change effort has the complete buy-in, participation and commitment of employees, then the change effort is not likely to be successful. That engagement has to start with the employees being authentic – open, honest and direct about what they are experiencing. They need to feel listened to, and respected. That can occur in these groups.

### Support and renewal groups

Research shows increasing burnout and cynicism among employees. Burnout is not necessarily caused by a person's workload. It can be caused by the person's perspective on their workload. Coaching can clarify perspective and what can be done about it

### Core Leadership Skills

There are many skills that group members will develop, regardless of the purpose of the group. For example, they will build skills in presenting to a group, asking for and accepting help, listening, asking good questions, action planning, and learning from reflection. A good group will also cultivate authenticity, engagement and accountability among members. All of these skills are critical to good leadership.

## Basic Considerations in Designing Group Coaching

It is very important to customize the design of group coaching to the specific way that you want to use it. There are many considerations to be made during the design. For example”:

1. What is the primary purpose of the groups?
2. Who will be in the groups?
3. Will they be from the same organization or different?
4. Will each work on the same topic or each work on different?
5. How will they be trained?
6. What resources will they need?
7. How will they be facilitated?
8. How will they be evaluated during and after the groups?
9. How many meetings will there be and for how long?
10. How will they communicate?
11. Who will primarily be responsible for the groups?
12. Is there a special coaching model that should be used?
13. Will the model need to be acculturated somehow?
14. Will they be integrated with other development methods?

## Basic Guidelines for Some Common Applications of Group Coaching

### To Spread Low-Cost, Core Coaching Skills

The organization should clearly specify the benefits of the groups for the organization and for each of its employees. Specific people should be assigned responsibility for the groups. Plans should be made for quickly starting and spreading the groups across the organization, for example, to have each group member go on to facilitate a new group (sometimes referred to as cascading groups). It will be less expensive if groups can be self-facilitated, so they might need to be trained for that. The supervisors of each of the group members will need to support their employees in the groups. Practical methods will need to be developed to evaluate the groups during and after their sequence of meetings.

### To Ensure That Students Apply Content from Trainings

The members of the group should be from the same training program, and the scheduling of the groups will need to match the scheduling of the trainings. The program’s trainers will need to know about the groups and the role of the groups in the program. The group’s coaching process will need to be designed around applying the content of the trainings. Members will need to reference straightforward materials from the trainings. Evaluations of the groups and training should be complementary and not overwhelming.

### To Develop and Strengthen a Team

The team will need a clear purpose or charter from the organization. The supervisors of the group members will need to support the members' time in meetings. The team will need clear procedures for membership, making decisions and generating recommendations. They might need a budget and timeline for their work, as well. If all members are from the same organization, then ground rules and facilitation will need to minimize any inhibitions from members working for the same supervisor.

### To Cultivate Deep Networks

The members of the group should feel a strong bond among each other, but have complementary resources and skills. For example, they each might be from a different business unit or organizations. Still, they should feel that they have a lot in common and could benefit from each other. The group process should include each member clarifying what he or she needs, and should ensure that his or her needs are always met in their meetings. Otherwise, the member will not continue to attend the meetings.

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For more information, see the topic “[All About Coaching](#)” in the Free Management Library at <http://managementhelp.org>

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