coaching teams: environment + people

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“…groups are social systems. They redefine objective reality, they create new realities (both for their members and in their system contexts), and they evolve their own purposes and strategies for pursuing those purposes.

Groups are not mere assemblies of multiple cause–effect relationships; instead, they exhibit emergent and dynamic properties that are not well captured by standard causal models.”

~ J. Richard Hackman
A definition of coaching for this session:

**Actions** on behalf of a team, and **interaction** with a team, intended to help team members take advantage of their skills, talents, and collective resources to accomplish the team’s work.
FIGURE 2
How Team Design and Leader Coaching Jointly Affect Team Self-Management

Hackman & Wageman
Hackman’s Conditions

- real team
- compelling purpose
- “right” people
- clear norms of conduct
- supportive organizational context
- team focused coaching
60 - 30 - 10
Effective coaching requires....
the ability to observe the environment and group dynamics.
the ability to **interpret** your observations.
the ability to act to adjust the environment, increase opportunities, and decrease process losses.
Clarity:
People know what to work on.
They know how their work fits into the big picture.

Conditions:
People have the means to do the work.
Organizational structures and policies must support the work.

Constraints:
People know what should always be done
....and what should never be done.
People can articulate their bounded autonomy.
Hackman’s Conditions

- real team
- compelling purpose
- “right” people
- clear norms of conduct
- supportive organizational context
- team focused coaching
Clarity

Supportive organizational context

Constraints

Clear norms of conduct

Conditions

Compelling purpose

Steering
Scenario:

A firm placed agile testers on development teams with the expectation they would transfer their testing knowledge to the client teams they worked with.

After several successful years, some clients started complaining that the agile testers weren’t up on the latest practices. The company hired a new manager to re-invigorated the testing practice.

The new manager tried to motivate the testers laid out an extensive training program, scheduled meeting ups, and held a weekly lunch-and-learn.

But testers didn’t show up.
Discuss:

What interpretation would you make if you thought about this as a people issue?

What interpretation would you make if you thought about this as an environment issue?
What do you observe about…

• **clarity** about the product, and the difference it makes for customers

• **conditions** such as: organizational structure, formal and informal rewards, roles/job structure

• **constraints** such as: delegated decision authority, policies around budget, what behavior is expected and tolerated
Conditions

real teams
access to information
access to coaching
access to expertise
connection to org.
material support

Enabling

technology direction
architectural direction
allocated funds
delivery cadence

Constraints

what to work on next
product road maps
connection between org purpose and D2D work

Clarity
Scenario:

An agile team repeatedly failed to complete all the stories on their sprint backlog. In fact, the often finished less than half.

The program manager looked at the team’s velocity over time, and declared they must only commit to the average completed over the last three sprints.

The pattern continued, despite the program manager’s direction.
Discuss:

What interpretation would you make if you thought about this as a people issue?

What interpretation would you make if you thought about this as an environment issue?
What do you observe about…

- **clarity** about product roadmaps, what to work on next, connection between purpose and day-to-day work

- **conditions** such as the social system, access to information and expertise, feedback loops and connections to the organization, material support, flow of work into teams, time for learning and experimentation.

- **constraints** such as, delegated decisions, what people need to ask permission or approval for, rules, policies, standards (which can be helpful or not)
Conditions

Doing

Constraints

Clarity

- who is working on what
- strategies and approaches
- definitions of done

supportive organizational context

clear norms of conduct
Clarity

- who is working on what
- strategies and approaches
- definitions of done
- scanning for new information

Doing

- use of space
- use of materials
- use of talents/capabilities
- relationships
- information
- coordination
- visibility
- safety

Constraints

- time boxing
- initiating working agreements
- finding boundaries
- challenging limits

Conditions

- use of space
- use of materials
- use of talents/capabilities
- relationships
- information
- coordination
- visibility
- safety
Scenario:

An agile team seemed to be breaking into factions. One part of the team supported one technical approach, another wanted to go a different direction. A third group kept their heads down and avoided the arguments.

The team finished some stories, but several slopped into the next sprint and the next as the argument raged on.
Discuss:

What interpretation would you make if you thought about this as a people issue?

What interpretation would you make if you thought about this as an environment issue?
What do you observe about...

• **clarity** about who is working on what, visibility of where things stand, definition of done, shared approaches

• **conditions** such as: use of space, use of materials, coordination, visibility, safety, relationship

• **constraints** such as: decision boundaries, working agreements, standards
Looking back at your answers….

What is within your control?

What is within your influence?

What can you work with others to ameliorate?

What is the smallest action you can take to improve the environment for the teams you coach?
beginning

- enable the team to engage with their real work
- help people to understand the range of skills and experience in the team
- establish appropriate norms
Teams learn to work together by working together.
• mission / purpose
• communication paths and feedback loops
• design team agreements
• personal posters
• futurespectives
middle

• help the team look at how they are approaching their work
• encourage learning
• ameliorate environmental factors
Teams learn to trust by extending trust, building relationships, navigating conflicts.
Conflict is normal, inevitable, frequent. We only notice it when it isn’t navigated well.
structure

missing or misunderstood communication

position
focus

differences style
preferences

differences in
value priorities

personal
hostility
• identify what team members can learn from their experience

• focus on conditions that supported or hindered, so team members are in a better situation to help themselves
www.coachingbeyondbeyondtheteam.com

code = Agile2016session
(good thru 8/31/16)