Pair-Coaching 101

Why, how, and how to actually make it work

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Check-In Protocol

I am  mad

sad

glad

afraid  I’m in! … Welcome!

https://liveingreatness.com/core-protocols/check-in/
What is pair-coaching?
And why is it so great?

How do I go about pair-coaching?

Marriage counselling
(How to make it work)

Selling it to your client / boss
What is pair-coaching?
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How do I go about pair-coaching?

Selling it to your client / boss
Pair-coaching is about 2 coaches working together with \( n \) coachees

\((n: 1 \text{ to many})\)
Why should you coach all alone?

Why should you do pair-coaching?
“I find it very intriguing to see that people find it normal that you always have 2 parents for one child, but only one manager or coach for a bunch of people. It is hard to think about everything when you program, as a coach it is even harder.”

Yves Hanoulle (emphasis added)
„Agile coaching demands many skills of the practitioner […] agile processes, […] teacher, facilitator, mentor, counselor, negotiator, and leader. Of course, this is a partial list; there may be no limit to the skills identified as valuable to our coaching profession“

Victor Bonacci (emphasis added)
Why Pair-Coaching is so incredibly powerful

- You have a very fast feedback cycle
- We all have *our* 5 senses
- Resilience
- An approach that scales (“philosophical alignment” - Bob Galen)
- Not only can you model a role, but interactions between two people
- Higher likelihood of connecting with clients / coachees
- You will have to be clear about your coaching goals
- Despite their best efforts, also coaches can have a bad day every once in a while

… and last not least…
Peer Feedback!

„I think as an individual, I have been really challenged with my own assumptions and my own weaknesses if you will, so having other coaches come up and say “Declan, let’s debrief that. Here’s some things I’ve noticed, did you think about this?” It’s really raised the bar on my game having someone else, because a client won’t do that for you, or most won’t, right? But if you are paired up with another coach and you can have that safety then you can have those conversations“

Declan Whelan (Emphasis added)
Additions from the audience (pros)

- Thresholds - you have a “critical mass of two”
- You can focus on different levels, e.g. the emotional level
- If you make a mistake, your partner can model reaction to failure (“This is ok”)
- More fun “it’s like dancing”
- Variety of presentation styles
Risks and costs

- Illusion of objectivity
- A high investment for alignment (philosophy, shared view of situation and approach)
- There is no guarantee for success

See also: marriage counselling
Additions from the audience (cons)

- Preparation takes more time
- You have to manage a multitude of opinions
- A lot of effort is needed for communication (being in sync)
- Meeting might take longer because coaches might need time to agree on how to do things
Reflect & share

● Reflect on your own: What are your current goals? How might pair-coaching help you get there?

  4 minutes

● Turn to your neighbor(s) and share

  4 minutes (2 minutes each)

Taking notes would probably be helpful :)}
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How do I go about pair-coaching?

Selling it to your client / boss
With whom can I pair up?

- Within the “job family”
  - Agile Coaches, Scrum Masters, Change Agents, ...
    - Coaches with less, more, or equal experience
    - Internal / external coaches

- Across roles: Product Owner, team member, team leads etc.

  -> There will be limits as to how deep the collaboration can go, especially as it relates to peer-feedback
How can I apply it?

Pair-coaching patterns (Victor Bonacci)

1. Trainer / Observer
2. Driver / Navigator
3. Contrarian
4. Co-Learners
5. ...
Reflect

- With whom could you pair up to achieve your goal(s)?
- What pattern(s) could you use?

Reflect on your own

4 Minutes (if you and your neighbor are done sooner you are free to use the remaining time to share)
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How to make it work (1/2)

- Willingness to work together
- Willingness to show yourself in front of another coach (courage and vulnerability)
- Willingness to learn
- No increased need to be recognized for individual achievement (not a lot of room for ego)
How to make it work (2/2)

- Be able to let go of some of your individual influence
- Empathy
- Working agreements
- Make expectations, roles, etc. explicit
- Make room for reflection (together)
Reflect & share

- How can you create an environment in which you and your coaching partner can be effective?

3 Minutes
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How do I go about pair-coaching?

Selling it to your client / boss
“One coaching for the price of two?!!”
or: how to sell it to your client / boss

- Explain the potential benefits
  - Higher degree of knowledge, skills, and situational awareness in coaching situations
  - $1 + 1 = 3$

- Point out similarities to other groupings
  - Developing software (solving complex problems) in teams; management teams, Scrum Master and Product Owner

- Create small success stories (e.g. workshops that you facilitate together)

- As long as you don’t have an official buy-in: what small steps could you already take?

- Radical approach: this is how we work
Discuss & share

- In groups / each table:

Come up with additional ways of selling pair-coaching and put them on a flipchart
5 minutes

- Pick your favorite solution and highlight it
- Each table shares its highlight (flipcharts will be part of the documentation)
Flipcharts from the group work at the tables

DON'T SELL IT; JUST DO IT

- Sell it as a learning opportunity
  - Cont. Improvement
- Prove it

→ Backfill
→ Building the skills (Juniors, Seniors)
→ Pair Training / to make energy/motive high
How do we sell pair coaching?
- Discount for first... months - demo the value
- Easier to sell when client "gets" how coaching created value
- Reduces risk

Outcomes so that we can demo how pair is more effective

Success stories: past performance

Try it before you buy it $8

Retrospectives or Reviews
- Fire all the managers, SHARPS
- We are not an engineering culture

Technical & Process Coaching

Supportive and Positive

Carolaking
- Customer Experience
- Project Management
- Process vs Methodology
- Team Balancing
- Sales

Emlyn is doing it

Pair + Mob Coaching, Garrus, @hjvsh

Expanding the skill set (team of "1, 7, 49, etc.")
- Individual development as an indirect people leader
- different personalities for different circumstances
- multiple teaching styles
- greater coverage / no single point of failure
- bigger changes faster
… a few last words

1. If you or your boss are sceptical: start small and try it in different settings
2. A well-functioning coach-pair takes time and attention, just like a team
3. Working in a pair is also a process of personal development; it will require a lot from you, but it can give back even more
“In the end, I find that my work is of higher quality, the impact is greater, and my “fun factor” is through the roof.”

- Bob Galen
Thank you

@gerrit.lutter
These two blog posts cover a lot of the content

https://medium.com/@gerrit.lutter/pair-coaching-a-non-definitive-guide-part-1-a3e92d5b0191

https://medium.com/@gerrit.lutter/pair-coaching-a-non-definitive-guide-part-2-29f7c0abf1ea
Additional Sources


Shout out to the photographers

Cat and Dog: Photo by Anusha Barwa on Unsplash

Buffalos: Photo by Uriel Soberanes on Unsplash

Couple with blanket: Photo by Chad Madden on Unsplash

Cat: Photo by Sticker Mule on Unsplash