

The Coaching Manager

Inclusion, Control & Affection.

In the last chapter I discussed the importance of a successful coaching manager being able to display the same coaching behaviours in a team environment as he or she would display on a one to one basis with individuals in the team. I emphasised the fact that a coaching manager should work with individuals in relation to supporting them to identify the team goals and to contract and agree how they and the team were going to work together. It was also stressed that the coaching manager would not take for granted individuals understanding the goals and agreeing to contracts in a team setting and as such the coaching manager would always follow up such agreements on a one to one basis.

In this chapter I am going to explore an area of teams that managers are not terribly good at and that is in using the model of "inclusion", "control" and "affection" a model developed by William Shutz, an academic expert on groups.

"Inclusion" is a vital step for a team member to start to function effectively and productively in a team and without this step happening the individual concerned will not function accordingly. New members to a team must be included from the start and they must be made to feel part of the team. Many managers do not take the necessary steps to fully induct people into teams and as such many new team members take time to get functioning. In many cases, if a manager does not pro-actively take steps to ensure inclusion then the other team members may view the new team member with suspicion and distrust. How can anyone function in such an environment?

So, how does the successful coaching manager manage to include new people to the team right from the start?

Firstly, the coaching manager should have a "one to one" with the individual concerned. They should outline the aims and objectives of the team, the processes (rules, contracts, boundaries) by which the team operates and then a broad outline of the team members in terms of team roles and experience. Managers should remain silent

about their own personal opinions about other team members because if they don't, there is a high chance that the manager's opinions (and perhaps prejudices) will "cloud" the new team member's opinions on future teammates. Not a healthy scenario!

Once this has happened then the coaching manager will introduce the new member to the team ensuring that beforehand he has spoken to each of the present team to inform them about the new member. The coaching manager will also ensure that perhaps a "buddy" scheme is set up whereby one team member supports the new person to "find their feet". The manager will also start to facilitate the new person's induction in the team meeting setting by asking them for their input where appropriate. This will put the new person at ease and will make them feel that not only are they being included but also that they are starting to play a role within the team right from the onset. They will start to feel valued.

I have seen too many examples over the years of where "inclusion" has not happened. I have seen managers recruit new team members and send them on initial training courses of up to six weeks duration and not make contact with them even once! I have seen managers start team meetings and not even introduce the new member and worst of all I have heard of situations where a new member was given the low down on their new team members in depth with the manager outlining who was good, who was bad, who they should mix with and who they should avoid! How comfortable did you think this new team member felt going to their first team meeting??

Whilst outlining and stressing the role of the coaching manager in team inclusion, the coaching manager should also be enabling and supporting the individual to be pro-active themselves. They should be encouraging the new team member to make early contact with the team and to make sure that they made themselves known to teammates at meetings by encouraging them to introduce themselves rather than wait for someone else to do it.

Without "inclusion" many new team members will not only fail to function effectively, they may even leave the team! Once inclusion has been achieved then the new team member can go on to the "control" and "affection" stages.

Control.

After the members feel "included" within the team, then the dynamics are such that team members can start to exercise a degree of "control". By "control" I do not mean taking over the team. "Control" could mean a number of things but generally team

members can exert control by simply putting their point of view across or, by airing concerns, or by putting forward proposals and suggestions. Too often, although people feel part of the team, in that they "get on well" with the manager and their team mates, people do not feel comfortable in putting across their views, whether they be ideas to move the team forward or whether it is to feedback some constructive criticism. Sometimes this lies with the confidence of the individual team member but in my experience in generally lies with the manager taking overall control of the team and doing most of the directing. The end result of this is that talented individuals keep their ideas and views to themselves thus preventing the team from developing further.

To ensure that each member of the team is able to exert a degree of control, the coaching manager must be an excellent facilitator. They must be able to ensure that during team meetings team members have their say and are able to put their ideas and suggestions forward. In order for this to happen the coaching manager should build a "team charter" or "team agreement" whereby the team knows exactly what is expected from them in both team meeting situations and also out-with team meetings. Basically the "team charter" is a form of contract, which outlines how the team is going to operate, both in terms of process and behaviours. When everybody buys into the charter then behaviours improve and ideas, concerns and suggestions tend to come out rather than being only discussed in the "avoid at all cost" "corridor conferences". How many times have you been to a meeting where not much was said by the team during the meeting, but when people broke for a tea-break the level of noise from the team immediately rose! Usually out-with the earshot of the manager!

So, the successful coaching manager should facilitate the construction of a team charter and then ensure that this charter is adhered to. The coaching manager must also play their part in ensuring their meetings run effectively in that they should facilitate their meetings in that all team members get their say on each issue and that every member gets equal airtime. That means sometimes encouraging certain people to contribute more and with others, limiting the amount of airtime that they tend to use. Above all the successful coaching manager must be self-disciplined and not continually "hog the limelight"

Once you have enabled the team to exert "control" you will start to see energy levels rise and the coaching manager will always have to be prepared, as a result of this, to ensure that this energy is channelled appropriately. Do not let meetings degenerate into "dumping grounds" where all the issues and all the concerns take

over the entire meeting. By all means if there are concerns then they should be aired but it is totally counter-productive for the coaching manager to start to agree with all concerns as this potentially could prevent the team from moving forward. In fact it may cause the team to go backwards. The coaching manager in this instance must facilitate and coach the team towards a productive and positive outcome. This is an area where I have seen many managers come unstuck. They have encouraged the team to be open and when they have been (particularly in areas of concern) the manager has struggled to move the team forward productively in that they have been left "hanging". By that I mean, that the team have aired their concerns and although the manager has listened, he or she has moved the conversation on and perhaps shot off at a tangent in order to avoid the concerns and to get down to "the important business". This must be avoided at all costs as it only serves to increase dissatisfaction. The successful coaching manager always facilitates and coaches the team towards a positive outcome.

So, in summary:

- Encourage "control" by facilitating the construction and implementation of a team "charter".
- Facilitate and coach the team in team meeting situations in order to encourage participation from all team members. Avoid "hogging the limelight"
- Channel the resultant increase in energy accordingly. Do not leave the team "hanging" on any issue and coach them to productive outcomes, regardless of the issues being raised.

Affection.

What do we mean by affection in teams? Affection in some cases will mean love; showing warmth to; a liking towards. And perhaps this is where we start to go wrong in teams. Affection in the case of teams means simply that we appreciate the contribution of others. It doesn't mean that we have to agree with what others in the team are saying, but what we should appreciate is the fact that they are contributing both in terms of effort and input of ideas. Too often we are too quick to discount people's inputs and contributions because we have our own ideas or that, perhaps we haven't listened fully to what people have to say.

Once someone is "included" in a team, and then they are able to have a degree of "control" they must be given some "affection". This "affection" may only take the form of listening to ideas and it may only take the form of two words – thank-you. But these two words

are probably the most powerful form of motivational feedback there is!

If you consider the analogy that the model of Inclusion, Control and Affection is the equivalent of the foundations, structure and cement of a building then we can start to see why each part of the ICA model is important. Consider, the building. You must have strong foundations. The equivalent of this in a team is the need to ensure everyone is included. Without the team members being included, the result is that they feel isolated and tend to withdraw and their input is lessened thus the team suffers. In a building if you have shaky foundations then the whole structure is put at risk of collapse.

In a building once you have a sound foundation, you have to make sure that the supporting structure, in terms of the walls and roof is sound. In a team, the structure must be there in terms of the people and the people not only have to be included, they need to have some control. Imagine a building with an insecure wall or roof. How often have you heard the term, "the roof caved in"? The same can be applied to teams. Without giving people some form of control, you may have the foundations of a team, but your whole structure will be very shaky unless you give people the strength by giving them some control.

Finally, in a building once your foundations are laid and you put up the supporting structure, you have to secure that structure by the use of cement, nails and screws. You can do similar with a team by ensuring that affection takes place. Listen to people's contributions. Thank them for them. They may not always be taken up but at least people will say, "I was given a good hearing". Always thank people for the efforts that they put in. This is the cement and nails that keeps a team together.

In summary;

- Include everyone from the start. Make them feel welcome and ensure that each team member includes everyone else.
- Ensure that everyone in the team exhibits a degree of "control" in that they feel comfortable inputting their ideas and contributions.
- Show "affection" by thanking each person for his or her effort and contributions and ideas. Encourage the individuals in the team to do likewise. A coaching manager will lead the way but will also encourage participation from each individual.

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