

Shape-Shifting: A Behavioral Team Coaching Model for Coach Education, Research, and Practice

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The Special Meaning of This Article to a *JPOC* Board Member: Laura Pendergrass

As a board member of *JPOC* and a professional working in the fields of consulting and coaching, including both individuals and teams, it is a pleasure to be invited to comment on Laura Hauser's article, "Shape Shifting: A Behavioral Team Coaching Model for Coach Education, Research, and Practice." As I reflected on the Hauser article, I thought about it as a type of bridge between science and practice that *JPOC* also aims for as part of its mission. In a similar way, Hauser attempts to scientifically categorize and describe key tenets of applied practice with the aim of assisting practitioners in conducting their work in line with industry best practices related to coaching.

Given my own education and experience in consulting, I realize that there is a growing demand by companies to recruit coaches that will provide coaching for their teams and team leaders. Hauser's article focuses on the behaviors of a team coach as well as what influences or motivates the coach to assume certain roles as the coach works with the team. As Hauser points out, both individual and team coaching are widely needed.

In my own work, I have noted that individual coaching has the benefit of being similar to counseling relationships. That is, people usually feel more comfortable talking with other people one-to-one about their personal problems, including work-related problems. Yet there also exists a need in organizations for discussing team performance, including group dynamics and other work-related issues and opportunities, in a team coaching setting. Hauser notes that coach education needs to include training on variables specifically needed for team coaching. Particularly interesting to me as a coach is Hauser's development of a new typology of these behaviors and the choices the coaches make. The result is the creation of a new methodological framework, shortened here and in her article as *Shape-Shifting*. Importantly, Hauser notes that changing conditions during the coaching sessions determines the selection of the role or style a coach chooses.

In her research, Hauser was able to identify four roles that a coach may use in working with teams. Each of these roles forms part of the methodology to use in the Shape-Shifting framework. The conceptualization of these roles is useful in my own work, including the implications Hauser identifies with the Shape-Shifting framework for practitioners and educators. It is interesting here to note that both Hauser and Barossa-Pereira, whose article

also appears in this issue of *JPOC*, see their research highlighting need for credentialing organizations such as ICF to provide a standardizing of coaching competencies.

Hauser's research and development of the Shape-Shifting framework make a contribution to coaching and curriculum building. I hope that it will also encourage additional research that incorporates client experiences and perceptions of coaching in future issues of *JPOC*. ♦

Laura Pendergrass, PhD
JPOC Board Member

Introduction

As executive coaching has become an accepted and valued form of development in organizations (International Coach Federation [ICF], 2012), some practitioners find themselves asked by these same clients, "Can you also coach my team?" But what do coaches really do when coaching teams? What influences the coach's choices of actions and behaviors when coaching a work team? If these questions were answered, what implications may exist for practitioners, educators, and researchers?

As the coaching field matures, the demands for coaching are shifting, as are the ways in which organizations are conducting their business. For example, organizations commonly use external nonmanager coaches to deliver executive coaching services (ICF, 2012). In addition, many companies have adopted team-based structures to survive and gain competitive advantage in response to a knowledge-based economy, intense competition, and economic uncertainty (Clutterbuck, 2013; Edmondson, 2012; Gilson & Shalley, 2004; Sundstrom, 1999). Based on their review of the literature, Brown and Grant (2010) concluded that the

use of group and team coaching in organizational settings, as an addition to one-on-one coaching, could serve as a potential means to create change and improve performance at the individual, team, and organizational levels.

Despite the emergence of team coaching, literature on it remains sparse compared to the coaching field at large (Grant, 2009). Yet the literature is expanding, as evidenced by journal articles, books, and academic presentations (Bartolomeo, 2013; Brennan & Hellbom, 2013; Carr & Peters, 2013; Clutterbuck, 2013; Hawkins, 2014; Peters & Carr, 2013; Rousseau, Aube, & Tremblay, 2013). Historically, the term *team coaching* has been positioned in the literature as primarily conducted by an internal manager who tends to have direct authority over the team (Hackman & Wageman, 2005), such as the authority to provide (or take away) resources and compensation and to make decisions on behalf of the team. More recently, external coaches have been hired by organizations to provide coaching for teams and team leaders. Although literature exists about the internal manager who serves as a coach (Fournies, 1987; Hackman & Wageman, 2005), no literature was found about the work of external coaches, specifically their behaviors when interacting with a work team, even though 85% of all coaching services are conducted by external coaches (ICF, 2012).

Thus, a research study was conducted to learn about the work of external team coaches (Hauser, 2012). That study, which formed the basis for the present article, examined what an external team coach actually does and what influences the coach's choices of actions when working with a team. It was anticipated that inductive analysis of data grounded in the stories of professionals who coached work teams would produce a categorized list of descriptive behaviors and

influencers of those behaviors (a typology). The study went further, culminating in a new framework called Shape-Shifting: A Behavioral Team Coaching Model for Coach Education, Research, and Practice (also referred in this article as simply Shape-Shifting).

The four-quadrant Shape-Shifting framework depicts four role behaviors for external team coaches (advisor, educator, catalyzer, and assimilator). Each quadrant of the role behaviors is associated with a particular focus, such as team coordination, team learning, team cohesion, and team transition. Additionally, each quadrant is associated with the timing of the coaching engagement (beginning, middle, and end). Underpinning the four role-behavior quadrants are four key domains that influence the coach's choices of the enactment of certain role behaviors. These four domains include coach background, client perceptions and team readiness, team-based coaching goals, and systemic context.

This article discusses the Shape-Shifting framework. It begins by locating the research study in the literature and provides an overview of the methods from which the framework was created. The bulk of the article presents the study results, the Shape-Shifting framework, and the use and implications for educators, practitioners, and researchers.

Literature

The first coach-specific doctoral research found in the behavioral sciences literature was conducted by Gershman (1967). The author evaluated how supervisors who acted as coaches improved their subordinates' attitudes and job performance. Coaching proliferated in the workplace during the late 1970s as managers took on the role of coaching subordinates toward improved performance

(Fournies, 1987). Coaching as a practice continues to expand (Brock, 2008) as a means for change and growth (Stober & Grant, 2006). Because coaching in organizations has its roots in the development of executives, managers, and their subordinates, coaching has been primarily conducted in a one-on-one format commonly referred to as executive coaching (Brown & Grant, 2010; Ward, 2008).

Although the topic of team coaching has emerged in practice, the literature remains sparse (Grant, 2009). Grant's extensive review of the behavioral science literature about coaching surfaced and found 515 articles published between 1937 and 2009. However, only 14 of these articles addressed coaching related to teams. Of these 14 articles, one was authored by Hackman and Wageman (2005), who conducted an extensive literature review and introduced a theory of team coaching. They defined team coaching as "an act of leadership" (p. 269). The internal leader of a team, or other leader within the organization, primarily served in the capacity of the team coach. The authors posited that coaches should focus on task-oriented interventions that address team performance processes as a means to influence team effectiveness rather than focus on interventions that address the quality of the interpersonal interactions.

In contrast to Hackman and Wageman's model, the leadership literature (Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001) revealed a conceptual model of team leadership that suggested that effective teams focus not only on task-oriented processes but additional processes. Zaccaro et al.'s conceptual model integrated four fundamental processes: cognitive, motivational, affective, and coordination. More recently, Reich, Ullmann, Van der loos, and Leifer (2009) found that product development team leaders were often consumed with project outcomes and thus paid little attention to the way

the team was operating or how effectively the team made use of itself to produce results, concluding that project teams should be led by external coaches.

Although no studies were found in the literature that specifically addressed what external coaches reportedly do and what influences their choices of behaviors when coaching teams, two studies were found related to the present study's purpose; however, they were conducted in the context of coaching individual executives rather than teams. One notable dissertation was conducted by Kleinberg (2001). He conducted a qualitative descriptive study using semistructured telephone interviews with 13 self-identified American executive coaches. Thematic analysis was used to code the data into emergent patterns and themes. The findings were categorized under three domains: descriptive/factual (e.g., work experience and education, recipient's background, expected outcomes); essences of the executive coaches (e.g., coach characteristics, beliefs), and cross-sectional (combination of the first two domains). Kleinberg concluded that effective coaching necessitates a basic understanding of the theory and practice of coaching, as well as the theory and application of the following bodies of literature: communication, humanistic and cognitive psychology, human development and consciousness, human learning and motivation, and systems theories. He also suggested that coaches apply an understanding of adult learning theory and humanistic psychology to themselves as a way to foster their own individual, ongoing development and lifelong learning.

More recently, Passmore (2010) sought to identify the key behaviors used by executive coaches that were perceived by coachees to have the most favorable impact on the coachees' experiences and progress. He interviewed six director-level coachees and used a grounded theory

approach to analyze the transcripts and build a series of descriptive and conceptual codes. The results from this small-scale study indicated that coachees use particular behaviors such as protecting client confidentiality, being collaborative, identifying take-away tasks, balancing challenge and support, stimulating the client's problem solving, communicating effectively, staying focused, containing emotions, helping develop alternative perspectives, using a variety of focusing tools and techniques, and practicing the use of self as a tool.

As organizations become increasingly complex, they rely more and more on teams to accomplish their goals effectively (Katzenbach & Smith, 2003). Available models and literature on coaching outline the approaches, roles, and behaviors of coaches who operate in a one-on-one format (Kleinberg, 2001; Passmore, 2010). Yet the practice of one-on-one coaching does not typically take into account the individual in the context of a team's performance goals, group dynamics, group development, or organization systems (Brown & Grant, 2010). If the practice of coaching becomes extended to the context of teams, then coaches also need to become skilled and competent in coaching teams, not just individuals.

Despite of the sparseness of literature and lack of consensus about the roles enacted during effective team coaching, some themes have emerged from the literature relevant to the present study:

1. *Outcomes of coaching*: The outcome of coaching in the workplace is oriented toward the achievement of goals, whether personal, interpersonal, team, or organizational, and assumes the need for a systemic approach to coaching (Grant, 2006; Hackman & Wageman, 2005; McDermott, Levenson, & Newton, 2007; Stober & Grant, 2006).

2. *The coach's approach:* Coaches use different approaches during coaching interactions. These behaviors range from (a) a more directive approach characterized by challenging and a task-oriented, tell-oriented, detached stance from the client; to (b) a more relational approach that is process-oriented, ask-oriented, and dialogic and that features a client-centered stance (Chapman, Best, & Van Casteren, 2003; Margulies & Raia, 1972; Lippitt & Lippitt, 1986); to (c) a combination of the two approaches (Brown & Grant, 2010). The particular behaviors depend on the context of the coaching situation. Coaches also may engage in facilitation at times during their work and use facilitation competencies (Schuman, 2005; Schwartz, 1994).
3. *Timing of interventions:* Coaches use different interventions at different times (beginning, middle, and end) during the course of a coaching interaction, whether it be a single coaching session or over the course of the life cycle of an entire performance process (Hackman & Wageman, 2005).
4. *Roles enacted through behaviors:* Coaches enact their roles through their behaviors (Park, 1926; Passmore, 2010). A coach enacts multiple roles and role functions during an individual coaching session and over the course of an entire coaching engagement (Gottlieb, 1997; Hackman & Wageman, 2005; Passmore, 2010; Reich et al., 2009; Schein, 2006; Stein, 2008; Whitherspoon & White, 1996).

5. *Influencers on the coach's approach:* The choice of coaches' various approaches are influenced by several different factors such as their personal attributes, background, and experiences (Campone & Awal, 2012; Passmore, 2010).

In summary, examination of the literature revealed a gap of knowledge about what an external coach behaviorally does when coaching a work team. This examination also revealed a gap of knowledge about what influences the coach's choices of these behaviors when working with a team.

Methods

The Shape-Shifting framework was the culmination of a qualitative descriptive study using open-ended questions and thematic analysis. The design of Hauser's (2012) study was inspired by grounded theory philosophy and methods (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). For example, the data were analyzed using an inductive approach to coding and analysis, meaning that codes and analysis were driven by the data rather than by a theory or preexisting coding framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, because an extensive literature review was conducted prior to data collection, it did not qualify as a classic grounded theory study.

A pilot study of this research was conducted to pretest and refine the data collection instrument, procedures, and trustworthiness of a proposed study (Creswell, 2009). A codebook based on the pilot data was developed and validated using an interrater reliability process with three research assistants. First, the principal researcher and three raters reviewed and revised the codebook. The principal researcher and two raters then coded the

pilot transcript. The principal researcher reviewed all raters' results and calculated interrater reliability as the number of codes agreed upon by the raters divided by the total number of responses reviewed. Interrater reliability was 0.84 (57 of 68). This surpassed Neuendorf's (2002) threshold for high intercoder reliability of 75% to 80%.

The data collection instrument and analysis processes were slightly refined so that demographic and educational information were gathered before each interview through SurveyMonkey, allowing more time for the study participants to focus on telling their rich stories about their real coaching situations.

Inclusion criteria for the study consisted of English speaking U.S.-based coaches who had a minimum of 3 years' experience coaching work teams in an organizational setting, serving in the capacity of an external team coach within the past year. Furthermore, each participant was required to have completed coach training or education, and/or earned an advanced degree in a related field such as, but not limited to, organization development (OD) or psychology.

Twenty-nine candidates were nominated by experts in the field of coaching, and human and organization development. Of these nominations, eight individuals (four female and four male) met the inclusion criteria and were available and interested in participating in the study. The age, experience, and education of all eight participants in this current study, with one minor exception, fell within the norm of participants in a recent global coaching study conducted by the ICF (2012) described the typical coach as over 45 years of age (63%), possessed a master's degree or PhD (60%) with 3+ years' coaching experience, and received coach-specific training through a program that was accredited or approved by a professional coaching organization (78%).

Instrumentation

A semistructured interview script of open-ended questions was used to guide data collection. Four primary areas of inquiry were covered during each interview:

1. How the coach described his or her role to the client when working with a team.
2. Description of a recent coaching situation (within the past year) that resulted in a positive change when working with a team.
3. Description of behaviors the coach actually used when working with a team.
4. Description of what influenced the coach's decisions about how he or she interacted with the team in that same situation.

Data Collection

Data collection took place through a 75-minute audio-recorded telephone interview with each study participant conducted in environments that provided privacy and freedom from distractions, such as the participant's private office. The telephone interviews were used because participants were geographically dispersed throughout the United States. Immediately following each interview, the researcher typed notes into a Post-Interview Reflection Researcher Memo to reflect and capture her thoughts about the interview. These researcher notes were later used as part of the data analysis.

A verbatim transcript was professionally created for each interview and checked for accuracy by both the researcher and the participants. The transcribed documents were imported into Atlas.ti for analysis as a means to help organize the

data, codes, and categories and visualize relationships among and between the data.

Data Analysis

Braun and Clarke's (2006) recursive, six-phase approach for conducting a thematic analysis was used to examine the data. Codes were deliberately created inductively from the bottom up based on the data rather than top-down using an a priori theoretical framework. Coding the first two interviews generated an initial list of 55 codes.

After familiarizing herself with the data, she noted consistencies and inconsistencies, surprises, patterns, and ideas for the development of initial codes, which were then used to create a visual mind map. This process of recursive reflection led to an initial theme:

The external team coach enacts different roles enacted through behaviors that changes over time depending on the situation (e.g., coaching goals, and the team's performance processes, the team's stage of development, etc.) The coach adapts his or her role behaviors to changing conditions. No one best style or role exists. No one best entry point exists.

Synthesis of the mind map and the list of the initial 55 codes produced an initial coding framework that was entered into an Atlas.ti software program. The framework continued to evolve as the data from each interview were read and re-read. Over time, codes were collapsed, deleted, and created as needed. Categories and subcategories of codes also were developed during this process, similar to *focused coding*, which "requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize your data incisively and completely" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57).

The finalized coding framework contained 102 codes organized under 9 categories. Themes for the entire data set were then refined, consistent with the practice of *axial coding* that brings data back together again in a coherent whole to form a thematic map that represented the relationship between themes and subthemes.

A thematic map was developed that represented how the themes fit together into a picture, culminating in the identification of an overarching theme and framework called Shape-Shifting. Finally, the Shape-Shifting framework was refined by four of the study participants who were available to attend a group follow-up phone call. The participants confirmed the findings and offered feedback that helped the researcher further refine a few of the labels of the role behaviors.

Thematic Findings

The thematic findings of the present study are organized under two main sections reflecting the study's research questions:

1. What do external coaches behaviorally do when coaching a work team?
2. What influences these coach's choices of behaviors when interacting a work team?

Behaviors

Data analysis revealed three key themes about what external coaches do when interacting with a work team.

Describe the Role of the Coach in Various Ways to Reduce Role Confusion

Participants reported that their choice of role descriptions was based on the client's perceptions about coaching. Some examples of different terms

included: *coach, executive coach, business man and coach, executive coach who also coaches teams, catalyst, guide, advisor, and team learning coach*. However, even when being very explicit about their roles, at times the underlying assumptions of the coach and the client were misaligned. For example, Jean reported going to lengths at the beginning of the coaching engagement to clarify her role as a coach by including a written agreement submitted to the team leader. Despite this, and to her reported dismay, subsequent conversations with the team leader revealed the leader's continuing misunderstanding that Jean would coach each of the team members rather than the team as a whole.

Enact Four Different Types of Behaviors

Participants reported using a wide range of behaviors when asked about what they actually do when working with teams in organizations. The behaviors were coded and organized into categories representing four different types of behaviors: advisory, educational, catalytic, and transitional. The data indicated that the four different types of behaviors tended to be associated with particular team outcomes: team coordination, team learning, team cohesion, and team transition. The most frequently quoted types of behavior were catalytic and educational, followed by advisory. The least frequently reported behavior was transitional.

1. *Advisory behavior*: Six participants reported using advisory type of behaviors, consisting of activities such as telling, advising, recommending, suggesting, and characterized as being more directive than dialogic. This type of behavior focused on team coordination wherein the coach helped the team define and negotiate the coordination of their work such as roles, perfor-

mance tasks, structure, frequency of meetings, decision making, and communication processes. For example, Joe shared an experience where there was a need for "establishing the structures and processes through which they'll work," which required "a minimum set of administrative structures" that help the team "be more efficient and effective."

2. *Educational behavior*: All of the coaches reported the use of an educational type of behavior when they worked with teams in organizations. This type of behavior focused on team alignment and learning wherein the coach tended to use tools, models, and other frameworks in support of the team's development and performance. The desired outcome of these behaviors is to create a common ground and frame of reference for the team working together. Christine reported that she wore "the hat that was required at the time." At times, this involved introducing a model and helping the team use the model to create a common ground, or frame of reference for working together. She shared, "I also introduced to them the action learning cycle as a fundamental way of learning, which is "to do, to reflect, to plan, to do, to reflect, to plan" [a repeated cycle], and to be very intentional about that."

3. *Catalytic behavior*: All the coaches reported using catalytic behaviors that were more dialogic in nature such as listening, describing observations, and inquiring. Catalytic behaviors are characterized as "sitting beside" the team,

wherein the coach observes the team in action and then shares and inquires about these observations. The purpose of catalytic behaviors is to cause or accelerate a positive change in the team and produce team cohesion particularly during periods of stuckness and difficulty. Thus, the behaviors often address issues occurring between and among team members to resolve conflicts and deal with resistance. Jean described a situation when she observed an interaction within the team that appeared to violate one of the team's agreements about listening to each other. She said that she observed a "softer spoken Asian member of the team being talked over" by one of the U.S. team members. She reported using the following intervention, "I would like to just pause for a minute and talk about some observations that I've been noticing and wonder if anybody else has seen this."

4. *Transitional behavior*: Some coaches reported using behaviors categorized as transitional, which focused on the closure of the coaching engagement. During this time, the coach tended to help the team assimilate and appreciate their increased level of development and the coach began detaching from the team. Amber described how she exited a coaching engagement by giving feedback, inviting the team to self-manage moving forward, and building capability within the team. She would say: "Okay, here's what I saw you doing that I thought was effective and here's what I saw that I don't think is effective

and is not going to serve you going forward. So let's talk about how you want to do it differently next time."

Behaviors Dynamically Shift at Different Times
External coaches who work with teams reported dynamically shifting their role behaviors both in the moment depending on the situation at hand and in concert with three different phases of the coaching engagement. These three different phases were classified as beginning, middle, and end:

1. *Beginning*: Focuses on team coordination wherein the coach helps the team set its foundation such as clarifying roles and performance tasks and setting ground rules about how they operate together. For example, Jean shared that she "suggest[s] they develop their own definition of a high-performing team—ground rules with task and structure type of things."
2. *Middle*: Focuses on team learning and team cohesion. These behaviors tend to be more dialogic than directive and include negotiating conflicts, dealing with problematic group dynamics, and organizational hierarchies. For example, Christine reported "there's all sorts of different constellations with different hierarchies and different histories and different roles and different risks and different backgrounds." She elaborated by saying this phase was "messy" because this is "when the team struggles and when the coach has developed strong relationships with team members," thus making it a challenge to "stay clean" and stay in the coaching role.

3. *End*: Focuses transitioning the team to work independently with minimal support from the coach. The focus becomes more on the acknowledgment of the team's achievements, synthesizing key learnings, and offering suggestions for future development. Paul explained, "As time goes on, we talk more about their key learnings and changes that have made a difference for them individually and collectively." Some participants reported becoming more directive with individual team members who approach the coach for guidance. For example, Joe explained that as his work with the team winds down, individual members often contact him for conversation and suggestions about their personal career growth and training opportunities.

Table 1 depicts a summary of the study findings about the four types of behaviors in relation to the intended outcome of the behaviors, and during what time of the coaching engagement (beginning, middle, or end) when the role behaviors are most often used.

Influencers on Behaviors

After the study participants described their stories about a recent situation when they interacted with a work team as an external coach, the participants were asked to reflect on what influenced, or informed, their choices about how to interact with the team given their recent team coaching situation. Four key influences of the coach behaviors emerged in the data. The first influence, the coach's background, is *internal* to the coach, whereas the remaining three influences are *external* to the coach. Participants reported making choices about how to shift their behaviors when in-

teracting with a team depending on these internal and external factors.

Coach Background: Generalized to Coaching Yet Specific to Teams

Variation was found in the participants' backgrounds in terms of education, training, and years of experience coaching and working with teams. Yet, in general, coaches reporting having a broad and diverse background related to helping both individuals as well as teams. For example, Amber reported that her training and background helped her acquire and use "different lenses" and tools to "help [her] make decisions about what interventions to make." She added, "But I am using my other tool, which is myself." She reported learning how to use herself as an instrument through years of training with National Training Laboratories (NTL). She also reported being certified to use several instruments such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Leadership Effectiveness Analysis, and Intercultural Development Inventory.

Notably, the theories, models, and tools appear to be drawn from disciplines related to coaching such as OD, gestalt, learning, systems, and leadership. Substantial variation characterized the data, as no one methodology or tool was reported by all eight participants.

Perceptions by the Team About the Coach's Role and the Team's Readiness for Coaching
Most of the participants reported that the client's perceptions and expectations about coaching influenced the way in which the coaches described their role to clients. The coaches reportedly chose terms to describe their role to clients and potential clients based on the clients' perceptions about coaching as an intentional means to reduce role confusion. For example, some participants

Table 1
Summary of the Four Role Behaviors

Role Behavior	Types of Behaviors and Examples of Coded Behaviors	Intended Outcomes of Behaviors	Timing or Phase of Coaching Engagement
Advisor	Advisory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Telling ◆ Declaring ◆ Advising ◆ Recommending ◆ Suggesting 	Team coordination	Beginning
Educator	Educational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Facilitating ◆ Learning ◆ Using and presenting models, tools, frameworks 	Team learning	Middle
Catalyzer	Catalytic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Inquiring ◆ Observing ◆ Naming observations ◆ Evoking ◆ Provoking ◆ Identifying patterns and alternatives 	Team cohesion	Middle
Assimilator	Transitional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Culminating and assimilating team experiences ◆ Detaching from the coaching engagement 	Team transition	End

reported specifically not using the term *team coach* because it was a new term that did not exist within the clients' (or potential clients') frame of reference. Herb reported that he made a conscious choice in 2007 to describe his role to clients and potential clients as an *executive consultant*. He explained that his clients (typically C-suite) "understand when a consultant comes in, he's going to impact the system," not just individuals. Second, Herb reported that some "misunderstanding" exists about the term *coaching*. His coaching work is developmental in nature; yet he found some clients view the terms *coach* and *coaching* as a remedial intervention rather than developmental. For example, Herb reported hearing someone recently say, "Well, if I need a coach then I shouldn't be the [chief executive officer]" and "Well, if I've got a coach, does this mean I'm in trouble?"

Another element of the coaching situation that influenced a coach's actions was categorized as *readiness*, defined as the team's ability and willingness both to work together as a team and to be coached. Amber explained that teams need to have a "willingness to be open, their willingness, their commitment to making changes" and to have a "belief that the leader is going to take the work seriously." She added, "But if the team members are not really open or willing, and they feel like there'll be retribution and they can't be open and they're not, then I haven't got a contract with the team."

Team-Based Coaching Goals

Coaches reported two primary types of coaching goals when working with teams that helped influence the coaches' choices of behaviors: improving team effectiveness and improving team performance and productivity. Herb shared an example of the coaching behaviors he used with a senior leadership team to improve its effectiveness and,

in turn, improve its performance. He said to the team:

"You can either be a learner or a judge. We all have it within us. What we're going to have to do is eliminate the dysfunction so we could create a new culture that could be successful." By the time we got to the second day—about noon the second day—they ponied up to the table in a way that totally surprised me. They came up with a team credo, so to speak, that was four principles they felt was imperative that each of them abide by, that unified them as a team, gave them a broad brush of their behavioral boundaries that they expect from each other. And they were so excited. And these are seasoned, hard-core guys anywhere from 45 to 60 [years old].

Meanwhile, George reported the implementation of a 16-week coaching process aimed at coaching the team toward higher effectiveness and performance.

Systemic Context

Woven through many of the participants' stories was the importance of attending to the systemic context of coaching. The systemic context appeared to be a latent variable that affected the work of the coach, particularly in a team context. Coaches reported simultaneously paying attention to, and helping the team pay attention to, the interrelatedness of the whole system in which the team existed. The interconnected systemic context within which the coach and their clients work reportedly heightened the complexity of coaching teams and has a significant impact on both the coach's behaviors and the team's ability to achieve its goals.

All eight participants described paying attention to the whole system, including the systems and subsystems of individual team members, the collective team, leader of the team, other organizational departments, the team's clients, and external consultants and agencies. Variation existed in how the coaches worked with the teams' systemic contexts. For example, John primarily focused on the systemic connectivity between the team members (plant managers), as well as the team leader with the team members. Christine's work included broader constituents, such as the team's clients. Joe's work involved matrix teams made up of various stakeholders who each came with every distinct personal and policy perspectives such as constituents of the military and environmental agencies.

During analysis, the metaphor of *leverage* emerged from some participants, who inferred that the effect of coaching interacting elements of the system were greater than coaching only one part of the system (e.g., an individual or the team). They appeared to be aware of, and attend to, not only the interrelationships and impact of the team as a subsystem, but also to other systemic connections and interactions in their surrounding environment. For example, Joe explained that when extending the coaching effect, he served as a link between people. He found that by coaching each of the team members individually as well as with the team, "we could get great synergy by the coach's detailed knowledge of the members on the team." He described the benefit of intentionally linking various team members together to share information and resources by saying it added "an element of richness and understanding to the team environment that becomes very helpful to individuals and to the team."

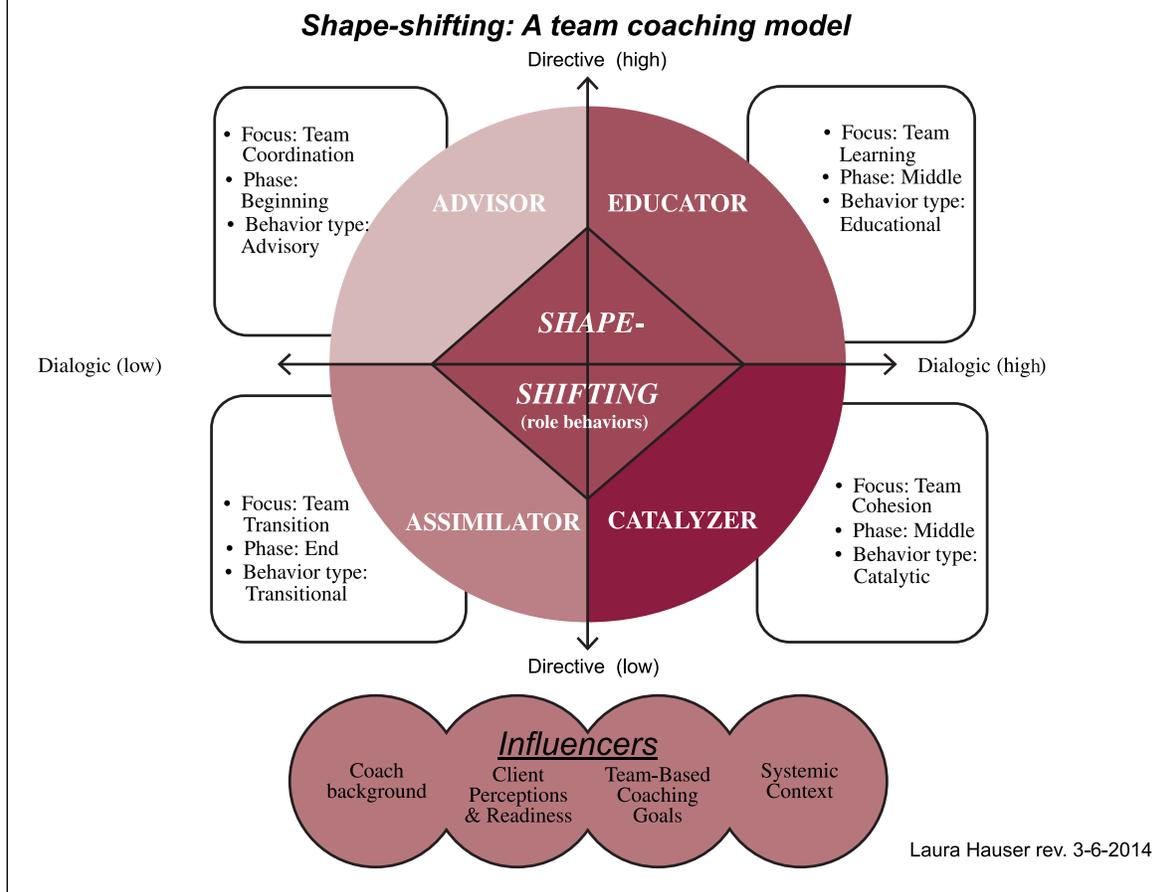
Discussion

Shape-Shifting Framework

The study findings were synthesized and integrated into an overarching theme of *shape-shifting* (McEldowney, 2002), meaning "an archetypal metaphor for transformation and change" (p. 224). It depicts the adaptations the coach makes in behavior during individual interactions as well as throughout a coaching engagement as a means for supporting the growth, development, and change in a work team (see Figure 1). If coaching serves as a process to support transformation and change, then the construct of shape-shifting aptly characterizes the coach's ability to shift (change at will) one's shape or form. This suggests that the shape of a coach's action in any given moment is informed and influenced by factors that exist within the contextually complex coaching engagement and environment. This concept of modern-day shape-shifting was further illustrated by Fenwick (2006), who described the need, particularly in environments of rapid change, to "transform their practices and understand their knowledge as more mutable and fluid, . . . literally learning to perform different selves and knowledges in different environments" (p. 299).

The model depicts four coach role behaviors, meaning roles enacted through behaviors (Katz & Kahn, 1978) falling on two continuums: *directive* (Gottlieb, 1997; Hamlin, Ellinger, & Beattie, 2009; Lippitt & Lippitt, 1986) and *dialogic* (Bushe & Marshak, 2009). The intensity of the gradation of the shades of maroon colors indicates the comparative frequency in which the coaches appeared to spend their time when working with teams. Darker shades indicate more time spent embodying the behavior, and lighter shades indicate less time spent embodying the role behavior. Although

Figure 1
Shape-Shifting



coaches shape-shift around and through the entire spectrum of role behaviors, most of their time was reportedly spent using catalyst and, secondarily, educator role behaviors. The finding that the coach shape-shifts his or her role behaviors in the moment and over time is consistent with earlier work by Chapman et al. (2003) and Hackman and Wageman (2005). The role behaviors are:

1. *Advisor* (high directive, low dialogic): Characterized by coach behaviors that are highly directive, such as telling, declaring, advising, recommending and suggesting. The advisor uses his or her

expertise and specialized knowledge to help the team coordinate and structure its work through defining and negotiating what they do and how they do it (e.g., their roles, performance tasks, frequency of meetings, and decision making and communication processes). Advisory behaviors occur more often than not during the beginning of a coaching engagement.

2. *Educator* (high directive, high dialogic): Characterized both by coach behaviors that are instructive (one-way communication) and those that are more

conversational (two-way communication) and focused on shared meaning making. Instructive behaviors may include teaching a new model or tool for the team to apply. The educator role is also characterized as facilitative by fostering two-way conversations that help the team make meaning about the new knowledge and/or skills and its application to the team's performance. Oriented toward team learning, the educator attempts to help the team acquire new knowledge and skills and to reflect on their experience and impact of the use of their new knowledge and skills that may result in a shift in thinking and behaviors that guide behaviors. The educator role behavior tends to be used during the middle of a coaching engagement, when the team is motivated to learn new knowledge and skills that help increase team performance and effectiveness.

3. *Catalyzer* (low directive, high dialogic): Characterized by behaviors such as observing, describing, and inquiring about the team's interactions and performance that may result in shifts in the team's thinking and behaviors. In doing so, the catalyst evokes and provokes the team to examine its mental models, assumptions, and meaning-making processes. Rather than offer advice or instruction, the catalyst serves as a peer or partner who engages the team in dialogue with an intention to help the team break through to higher levels of team development and cohesion. The catalyst role behavior tends to be used during

the middle of the coaching engagement when the team has some experience of working together and may encounter periods of stuckness such as conflict, resistance, or dips in performance.

4. *Assimilator* (low directive, low dialogic): Characterized by a lower level of interaction with the team that often occurs at the end of the coaching engagement. Rather than providing direction to the team and continuing to build a relationship with the team, the assimilator helps the team and the coach transition from active engagement to culmination and detachment from the coaching engagement. The assimilator witnesses the team's independent use of their acquired specialized expertise, acknowledges and helps the team assimilate its increased capacity for team performance and effectiveness, and may offer ideas (when asked) about ways the team and team members might consider the transfer of their development to future endeavors.

Located underneath the role behaviors are the four key influencers that were reported to act upon coaches' choices of role behaviors: coach background (Campone & Awal, 2012; Gottlieb, 1997; ICF, 2012), client perceptions (Gottlieb, 1997; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010; Margulies & Raia, 1972) and readiness (Chapman et al., 2003; Harris & Cole, 2007; Hauser, 2009; Laske, 1999; Prochaska & DiClemente, 1994; Ratiu & Baban, 2012), team-based coaching goals (Grant, 2006; Hackman & Wageman, 2005; Hamlin et al., 2009; McDermott et al., 2007; Stober & Grant, 2006), and the systemic context (Brown & Grant,

2010; Grant, 2011b; Hieker & Huffington, 2006; Hornstrup, Tomm, & Johansen, 2008; Senge, 1994; von Bertalanffy, 1968). These influencers are interrelated and serve as a foundation both during in-the-moment coaching interactions with a team and during the course of the entire coaching engagement.

Conclusions

In addition to the Shape-Shifting framework that serves as the primary contribution of the present study, four study conclusions merit further discussion:

1. *External coaches attempt to reduce role confusion about the emerging practice of coaching work teams by describing their role based on the coach's understanding of the client's experiences and perceptions of coaching.* Coaches in the present study described their role in varying ways to increase understanding between the coach and the client, reduce role confusion (Katz & Kahn, 1978) about how they would engage in their work together and avoid unintended negative consequences for themselves and the team (Thompson, Estabrooks, & Degner, 2006). Role clarity is particularly important at the beginning of the coach's work with a team. These findings begin to address Liljenstrand and Nebeker's (2008) call for research about the reasons why coaches use different terms such as executive coach, consultant, and personal coach to describe their roles.
2. *Coaching a work team is more complex than coaching individuals due to*

the systemic context. The systemic context of coaching a work team contributes to the increased complexity of coaching teams versus coaching individuals (Brown & Grant, 2010; Grant, 2011a; Hieker & Huffington, 2006; Hornstrup et al., 2008; Senge, 1994; von Bertalanffy, 1968). Study participants intentionally coached with a view of the whole system. Paying attention to the whole system and their interrelated influences and connections is critical because the system impacts the team and the team impacts the system. Concepts of working with whole systems are well documented in the family systems and OD literatures (Senge, 1994; Tomm, 1987a, 1987b, 1988; von Bertalanffy, 1968) and more recently in the coaching literature (Brown & Grant, 2010; Grant, 2011a, 2011b; Hieker & Huffington, 2006). It follows that team coaches need to understand the nature of the whole system and the way the entire system and its part act, interact, and mutually shape one another.

3. *The effect of working with a team's larger organizational system is greater than coaching only one part of the system (the team), thus creating leverage.* Participants stated that working with the larger organizational system enabled them to leverage their effort and the coaching effect. For example, some participants reported observing and intervening with the team's interplay between individuals, the team, and other parts of the organizational system including customers, thus enabling them to support the team, help members reframe

their perspectives, and overcome obstacles to task performance. Similarly, Brown and Grant (2010) advocated for systemic coaching, arguing that coaching the interconnected elements of the system better enables performance improvement at the individual, group, and organizational levels. Thus, the systemic nature of teams can make coaching a team potentially very powerful compared to coaching individuals. Coaches who do so should be aware, however, of the complexity, costs, possible risks to confidentiality, and implications for contracting, coaching goals, and client education.

4. *Coaching work teams, compared to coaching individuals, requires a broader base of knowledge, skills, and experience, notably related to team performance, group dynamics, team development, and systems.* Coaches across the globe and in the United States tend to have advanced formal education and coach training (ICF, 2012). Coaches who work with teams need a solid foundation of knowledge and skills related to coaching in general (Bachkirova, Sibley, & Myers, 2011; ICF, 2010; Wildflower & Brennan, 2011) as well as competencies related to team task performance, group dynamics, team development, and systemic thinking.

Implications for Practitioners

The Shape-Shifting conceptual framework provides a typology about role behaviors that could serve as a self-reflection and developmental assessment tool on the part of the coach, whether in-

ternal (manager as coach) or external coach. Such reflection could lead to new awareness about one's skills, knowledge, and abilities, and may shed light on the personal and professional development of oneself and one's coaching practice. Coaches could use the Shape-Shifting framework as a lens to examine and innovate their own practice as they help teams better work together. For instance, the study's findings emphasized that coaches need knowledge, skill, and experience related to teams, particularly in team coordination, team learning, group dynamics, and systems thinking (Brown & Grant, 2010). The sample for the present study strongly indicated that the coaches demonstrated a broad base of knowledge and practice, notably team-related knowledge. The application of the framework to one's coaching practice could not only enable a more reflective and coherent practice but would also help identify additional knowledge bases and competencies required above and beyond those needed to coach individuals such as systems thinking, group and team development, team performance outcomes, and group facilitation.

By using the Shape-Shifting framework to examine their practice, coach practitioners could gain a deeper understanding about their own effectiveness and development opportunities. For example, they may ask themselves:

- ♦ "Looking at the framework, what is more characteristic and what is less characteristic of my work with teams?"
- ♦ "How might the intentional and conscious use of shape-shifting help increase the effectiveness of my work with teams?"
- ♦ "How might this framework influence and expand my repertoire when working with a team?"

- ♦ “What are the implications for my further education and development of myself as a coach who works with teams?”

Implications for Educators

Currently, students of coaching partake in education about coaching offered through university programs, training companies, and other avenues. However, the education historically focused on the foundational knowledge, skills, and competencies required for effectively coaching individuals. Although the knowledge and skills base required to coach individuals serves as a critical foundation for coaching work teams, the present study shows that additional knowledge, skills, and competencies are required to effectively coach work teams. Based on the present study findings, the range of knowledge, skills, and competencies required to effectively coach work teams—beyond those needed for coaching individuals—needs to be clearly articulated. Thus, future research could extend Grant’s (2011a, 2011b) teaching agenda, particularly those areas related to organizational change and systems. Educators could synthesize and implement into their curriculum the group and team-based knowledge bases such as the structure and coordination of teams, team learning, team dynamics, and team transition, and organizational systems. These knowledge bases as well as their underlying theoretical premises should be considered in graduate education textbooks, journals, and training programs.

The findings and conclusions of the present study pose implications for the curriculum and standards related to coach training programs. This is particularly needed because coach training programs and coach-related academic programs are becoming more common (Liljenstrand & Nebeker, 2008). The findings of the present study emphasized that a primary difference between

the skills needed to coach in a team setting compared to an individual setting is that the coach needs a strong understanding of group dynamics and group-based dialogue processes, in addition to the individual interpersonal and rapport-building skills needed when coaching individuals (Brown & Grant, 2010). If coaching helps individuals and teams attend to systemic and complex group factors, then there is a strong indication that educational institutions, training providers, and certifying bodies should ensure curriculum and standards that enable well-educated, trained, and skilled coaches in key knowledge areas. These areas include knowledge such as team task and structure, group dynamics, and processes including dialogue, facilitation, stages of team development, and systems.

Implications for Credentialing Bodies

The results of the present study indicate several implications for credentialing bodies such as the ICF and European Mentoring and Coaching Council, which certify coaches based on their standardized core coaching competencies. First, university curricula should include an evidence-based team coaching concentration, so that coaches may become competent not only in the context of coaching individuals but also in coaching teams and groups. This could fundamentally change the structure of continued education by adding areas of specialty such as team coaching to universities, training delivery programs, and accrediting bodies by increasing or changing the flow of capital, wherein coaches would not only purchase coach education and certification but also purchase specialized team coaching education and certification.

Second, this education needs to encompass foundational knowledge (Drake, 2009) and training in the four knowledge areas related

to teams, which include task, group dynamics/process, group development, and systems (Hauser, 2011). Foundational knowledge about models of change also needs to be incorporated in coaching education (Grant, 2011a, 2011b). Given that the majority of coaches serve in an external capacity (85%) according to the recent ICF (2012) global study, education also is needed on the difference between coaching as an internal manager and as an external coach who has no formal power and authority compared to an internal manager coach, as well as on how to navigate the inherent third-party and fourth-party relationships and expectations (such as team members, team collectively, team leader, HR sponsor). This type of well-rounded coaching education, including individual and group supervision (Clutterbuck, 2013), is anticipated to produce well-prepared coaches who are better equipped for the rigors of both individual and team coaching.

Limitations

The present study findings were based on a small sample of self-reported data from a small group of practicing coaches. No direct observations were made regarding the actual behaviors external coaches enacted with work teams. It is anticipated that as the practice of team coaching grows, so will the ability to find a broad sample size for conducting additional research. In the meantime, the present results do provide evidence about a coach's behavior and influencers of those behaviors when coaching a team, and the results point to the need for future research, particularly outcome studies.

The present study has additional limitations that are acknowledged. For example, one such limitation is researcher bias (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013). Although researcher bias existed in the present study as in every study,

its effects were intentionally contained. An additional notable issue potentially impacting the trustworthiness of the study results relates to social desirability wherein a participant's motivation to provide responses or perform in certain ways may be intended to make the participants look good in the eyes of the researcher (Bryman, 2008).

Recommendations for Research

The study findings, related literature, and key conclusions of the Shape-Shifting framework discussed in this article suggest that the practice of coaching work teams is on the cusp and needs more definition. The literature suggests that coaching both individuals and teams could serve as a potential means to create change and improve performance at the individual, team, and organizational levels. At the same time, a paucity of coaching theories and frames specific to teams exists. Although the present study offers a new framework that begins to fill the gap, much more research and development of the practice needs to be done.

The theoretical basis of team coaching needs to be more finely enunciated. There appears to be a large chasm between academics who study coaching individuals and those who study coaching work teams. The former tend to provide useful knowledge, frameworks, and techniques (Brown & Grant, 2010; Hackman & Wageman, 2005). The present study has added to the literature and proposed a new framework for coaching work teams. Bringing these two disparate contexts of coaching (individual and work teams) together would be extremely useful for furthering scholarship, particularly in the fields of coaching, coaching psychology, and OD.

Additional empirical studies need to be conducted. One such study would be to further test and refine the Shape-Shifting framework using a

survey-based design. This future study would administer the survey to both internal and external coaches and contrast their reports of role behaviors and the influencers of these behaviors. Ideally, the study would include a large sample of participants who represent a diverse range of experience and educational backgrounds. The findings of this follow-up study could inform coach education and certification standards.

Outcome studies are greatly needed in the research of coaching, particularly regarding coaching teams. An outcome study could include using the typology of role behaviors and influencers on role behaviors presented in the Shape-Shifting framework as a mechanism for examining distinctions between what coaches say they do and how teams experience what they do. This follow-up research might illuminate the impact of the team's expectations of the coach's role behaviors. Further, this kind of research could reveal the impact of the coaches' role behaviors on client effectiveness, which would add valuable outcome data to the coaching literature. This would be of substantial benefit to the field, as much of the reported benefits of coaching a work team are anecdotal rather than evidence-based. This may lead to a better understanding of the perceived value and benefits of coaching work teams.

Final Words

The Shape-Shifting framework for coaching work teams serves as the primary contribution of this research study to the literature. It also serves as a basis for further research and holds implications for researchers, coach practitioners (including organizational leaders, OD consultants, and coach psychologists), and educators.

The practice of coaching in the context of work teams has the potential to lead to beneficial out-

comes for the teams, their organizations, and the coaches themselves. More deeply understanding these benefits and limitations, and how they may be best achieved, requires continued research and development of the practice. The researcher's hope is that the present study opens multiple conversations about coaching in the context of work teams and points to further study that will advance research, practice, and education of coaching. ♦

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