DEVELOPING MENTORING & COACHING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Papers from the 1st EMCC Research Conference
7 & 8 July 2011, University of Twente, Enschede, The Netherlands

Book Extract:
Measuring the Capability of a Team to fulfil a "Change 2"
Michel Moral, Stephane Vallée &
Florence Lamy

Editors:
Ines O'Donovan
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The European Mentoring & Coaching Council

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MEASURING THE CAPABILITY OF A TEAM TO FULFIL A "CHANGE 2"

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If a team is intending a "change 2" (according to the Systems theory, a change 2 is a move from a stable state to a very different stable state) is it possible to measure the capability of that team to eventually succeed this change? A measurement tool based on first System's Theory was designed by the authors to answer the question. It has been applied to several executive teams in France and to a large number of coaches and managers in France and Morocco. Results show differences between the populations: persons involved in a collective work are less inclined to change. Surprisingly, little difference is observed between France and Morocco. New areas of investigation are opened.

Keywords: Teams, change 1, change 2, preservation, transformation

INTRODUCTION

Team coaching has recently been "rediscovered" in the English literature. The Foreword written by Katherine Tulpa at the beginning of Christine Thornton's book (Thornton, 2010) says: « It is the first book to cover this growing and important area of coaching to the depth…. ». Peter Hawkins (2011) draws a short history of team coaching which really started with the conceptualization established by Hackman & Wagerman (2005).

In France, Olivier Devillard conceptualized team dynamics in 2000 using the concept of "team maturity". Alain Cardon published about team coaching methodologies based on System's Theory in 2003. Michel Moral published a multifacet overview of theory and practice in 2007. Large French companies are requesting more and more often team coaching journeys. Most of team coaches are using Systems Theory as their preferred conceptual framework and the reference to tools such as TMS (Margerison & McCann, 1985) or SPI (Belbin, 1981) is declining.

Another conceptual framework used by coaches practicing team coaching in France is the *Collective Intelligence* paradigm, especially since the publication of the study done by Anita Williams Woolley et al. (2010). This study proposes a tool to measure collective intelligence and suggests several key influencing factors like the average social sensitivity of group members (as measured, for instance, with the Baron-Cohen Eyes-test, Baron-Cohen et al., 2001), the presence of females in the group. According to this study, the collective intelligence is negatively correlated with the variance in the number of speaking turns by group members.

All current methodologies propose tools to analyze and describe the current and desired state of the team but the capability to go from one to the other is not assessed.

OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

In this research the initial question is the following: if a team intends to make a "change 2" is it possible to measure the capability of that team to eventually succeed in making this change? Not many tools or methodologies related to Systems theory have been designed. Measuring the capability to change has not been done by anyone.
Working on the principles of the System's Theory, Michel Moral and Stéphane Vallée have created an automated tool addressing the original question. This tool having been used with a significant number of teams, it is now possible to analyze the data and question the theoretical construction of the tool. Completely new concepts emerge that are discussed in this paper.

CHANGE 1 AND CHANGE 2

A change 2 is a transformation of the system (for instance a team) such that the new state is stable and cannot regress naturally to the initial state. As represented in Figure 1, it is like a small ball in a valley which can move to another valley separated from the first one by a mountain. Change 1 is like climbing the mountain but being unable to reach the top. In that case natural gravity will pull down the ball to its initial position.
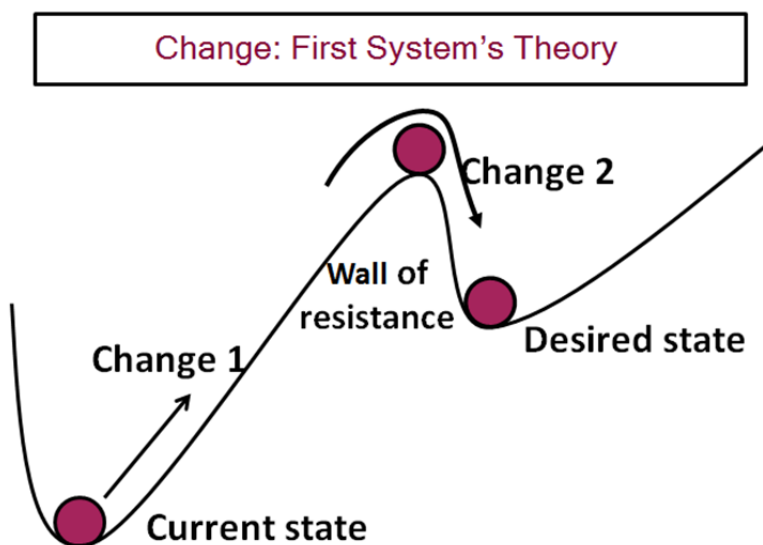

Figure 1. Systemic Approach of Change

When the ball is at the top, it can either fall on the right to a new stable state or fall back to the initial position.

A Change 2 needs energy to go to the top where there is a final resistance to overcome. Once the decision to go to the desired state is done, the system gains some energy in letting-go to the desired state

In order to succeed a Change 2, the *Transformation* forces (those providing the energy needed to move to another state) must exceed the *Preservation* forces (those tending to maintain the system in its current state).

In this research the *Preservation* and *Transformation* forces are qualified and measured with a tool.

PROCESS AND MEASURING TOOL

The measurement tool, Change2Team, was developed by Michel Moral and Stephane Vallée in 2009. The basic idea originates in some of the processes used in group facilitation, team building and team coaching. For instance, it is recommended to establish the functioning rules of the group at the beginning of a training cycle. The facilitator defines together with the participants the rules that are essential and to be complied with in any case. Usually, groups agree that assiduity, punctuality, confidentiality and readiness are key, among others, to sustaining well-being.

In Change2Team, assiduity, punctuality, confidentiality and readiness have been aggregated into what we call a *functioning mode*: **Respect**.

We have defined ten such functioning modes; five of them (**Respect**, **Listening**, **Contribution**, **Presence** and **Feedback**) are characteristic of the *preservation* attitude (attitude being taken as defined by Allport, 1935) and the outstanding five (**Metaposition**, **Audacity**, **Explicitation**[1], **Humility** and **Openness**) represent the *transformation* forces.

Table 1.
Definitions of Preservation and Transformation Functioning Modes

Preservation	
Respect	Protect the group and its members, be punctual, respect confidentiality, deliver on time.
Listening	Try to understand, reformulate, explore misunderstanding.
Contribution	Participate, cooperate, share, and avoid shallowness.
Presence	Be present. Be here and now as an actor of what is going on.
Feedback	Sincerely return the positive, propose options for the negative.
Transformation	
Metaposition	Observe the group, the interactions, others, enlighten the process.
Audacity	Dare to think, dare to dream, dare to do.
Explicitation	Dare to say, dare to meta-communicate, dare to oppose.
Humility	Suspend judgment, question our uncertainties, accept doubt, be patient.
Openness	Accept to be surprised, learn with pleasure, and accept to be amazed.

The conception of these ten functioning modes was inspired from the first, second and third System's Theories and refined after coaching experimentation with client teams. These ten modes of functioning are mutually exclusive.

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[1] This is a neologism. It means making explicit what is implicit.

A paper and pencil version of the tool was designed in 2007 by Florence Lamy and Michel Moral and used until 2008 with clients. In 2009, a set of ten cards was created and used during team coaching sessions: each member of the team was given a set of cards and asked to select three of them representing what was needed by this team to fulfil the mission. Late 2009, the first automated version of the current tool was released. A number of tests were done with groups of coaches (peer groups for instance) in order to fine tune the parameters and the questions, which resulted in the stabilisation of the tool end of 2009.

The questionnaire proposes 20 situations with four possible responses for each situation. These 20 situations are representative of the different stages of team activity: muster (a project team...), analyse (a situation, signals from the market...), create (a process, an organisation, a product) and execute (deploy, decide, and do). In the tool it is possible to equally distribute the questions between these stages or favour one of them when a client wants to focus on it. In this study we have used the version of the tool with equally distributed questions.

The questionnaire is given to each member of the team who can distribute 3 votes among the 4 possible responses. He can give the three votes to one response or share them out to three different responses. Each functioning mode is therefore represented by 8 responses and can receive a maximum of 24 votes.

Some adjustments are made in the programme to account for the fact, for example, that a person who puts his three votes on one of the four possible responses will be more in favour of that particular kind of behaviour.

As soon as the tool was stabilised, we started to accumulate data.
It is assumed *a priori* that a "Change 2" is possible only if the *Transformation* rate (sum of the votes given to the five *Transformation* functioning modes) is prevalent.

THE POPULATION

The questionnaire has been given to 278 persons who fall into three sub-populations.

1. Coaches who have responded independently[2],
2. Managers and executive who have responded independently,
3. Persons belonging to a team, all of them being managers or executives.

Populations 2 and 3 have the same profile, they have management responsibility and they work in an enterprise.

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[2] They were often part of peer groups or training groups with no collective mission.

Table 2.
Population researched

	French	Moroccan	Total
Coaches	166	17	183
Managers & executives	10	8	18
People in teams	77	0	77
Teams	9		
Persons per team	8.5		8.5

RESULTS

We compared the different populations with the Student test at p<001. The homogeneity of variance was checked at p<.0005.

Coaches have their *Preservation level* at 56% with a dominance of **Presence** (14%), **Contribution** (12%) and **Feedback** (13%). Within *Transformation*, **Explicitation** (11%) and **Audacity** (10%) are the highest percentages. We can say that coaches are well balanced in terms of functioning modes. French coaches compared to Moroccan coaches show no significant difference.

Managers and executives have *Preservation* at 63% with a dominance of **Presence** (15%), **Contribution** (15%) and **Feedback** (13%). Within *Transformation*, Humility (5%) has the lowest percentage. French managers and executives, compared to their Moroccan colleagues, show no significant difference.

Moroccan coaches appear to have a significantly higher **Humility** than Moroccan managers and executives. This result is not really a surprise considering what we know about Moroccan culture and coaching culture.

The first key outcome in this comparison of the populations is that there are few cultural differences between France and Morocco in terms of functioning modes for a given type of activity (coach or manager).

The second key outcome is that people in a team appear to have a significantly higher *Preservation* attitude. They have significantly lower **Explicitation**, **Audacity** and **Humility** than the coaches**.** People working in a team seem to favour smooth relationships within the team and to be cautious in their collective actions if we compare them to independent coaches.

The teams were compared and the results are summarised in Table 3.

Firstly, all teams show a *Preservation* rate above 50%, and therefore no team has a *Transformation* rate above 50%. According to our assumption, none of these teams are ready to fulfil a "Change 2" but team coaching is the opportunity to fix this issue. By working on the lowest functioning modes, it is possible to increase the *Tranformation* rate.

Table 3.
Comparison of Teams

Industry	Type of team	Preservation %	Highest mode	Lowest mode	Second lowest mode
Communication	Exec board	57	Presence (17%)	Explicitation (7%)	Metaposition (7%)
Communication	Exec board	57	Contribution (17%)	Humility (4%)	Metaposition (7%)
Services	Exec board	58	Presence (13%)	Humility (8%)	Metaposition (8%)
Coaching	Exec board	60	Presence (15%)	Audacity (7%)	Explicitation (8%)
Automotive	Sales board	64	Contribution (17%)	Explicitation (6%)	Metaposition (6%)
Distribution	IT board	65	Presence (17%)	Humility (4%)	Metaposition (7%)
Distribution	Finance board	66	Presence (17%)	Humility (5 %)	Audacity (6%)
Airline	Ops board	69	Contribution (18%)	Humility (4%)	Metaposition (4%)
Chemistry	Exec board	70	Presence (18%)	Openness (6%)	Metaposition (6%)

The lowest functioning modes are **Metaposition** (first lowest, 7 out of 9) and **Humility** (second lowest, 5 out of 9). Working on transferring (or transmitting) **Metaposition** from the coach to the team is THE fundamental act of team coaching. The work related to **Humility** is not done very often during team coaching. The reason is that executive team members have not been trained to accept uncertainty and doubt. They have been selected because they are proactive and pushy.

Audacity and **Explicitation** are modes on which team coaches are often focusing.

DISCUSSION

The key result is that none of the teams we have studied was ready to change, despite the fact that they all ask for a "Change 2". Consequently, the first objective of a coach at the beginning of the team coaching journey should be to help the team to improve its readiness to change. The results also show that coaches, on average, are more open to the idea of change than their coachees but are still on the *Preservation* side. Appropriate supervision approaches should fix this.

We have not seen any similar research in the literature and a new area of investigation has been opened. Several improvements need to be considered.

1 - The tool is an expert view which accumulates a number of *a priori*. As mentioned above, the general architecture of the tool is inspired from System's Theory but the outline and weight of the ten modes of functioning are decisions made by the creators of the tool.

Change2Team was initially designed to measure the capacity of a team to fulfil a "change 2". Using the tool with client teams, we discovered that not all the teams who request a team coaching aim at such a challenge.

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Example: We used the tool with the executive team of a company which develops and sells high technology devices. Their challenge was to extend their activity from Europe and the USA to the rest of the world. Using Change2Team was extremely useful to help them understand that their *Transformation* forces were not sufficient and that working on **Metaposition** and **Humility** with the coach would help them to fulfil the "Change 2".

The General Manager of this company asked us to coach the Finance team. This team had no "Change 2" in mind. Their concern was related to frequent and violent internal conflicts. Change2Team showed very low T*ransformation* forces and balanced *Preservation*. In fact they had quite a nice set of functioning rules and, when they were meeting, for instance, the team members were usually present, on time, prepared, listening, etc..

But the coaches were alerted by the very low level of **Metaposition** and **Explicitation**. In fact, when a conflict occurs the team never tries to understand how it started and how it developed and what kind of modification in the team functioning would prevent the same fatal mechanism in the future. In addition, team members were not inclined to make explicit the issues and concerns. Work done on **Explicitation** was enough to improve the functioning of the team.

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2 - The statistical results that we presented are incomplete: we do not have precise data related to the populations (for instance gender, age, etc..) and consequently we cannot analyse if another factor is prevalent (for instance, young persons might be more inclined to go into *Transformation*). We also feel that we need to split the teams into several categories and do a variance analysis.

3 - We need apply the hypothetico-deductive approach and produce assumptions prior to data crunching. This would prevent the risk of "belief bias" (Rosenthal, 1966).
– Lastly, we should explore non-French speaking coaches and teams.

CONCLUSION

Team coaching is a new area of coaching. In its infancy coaching used existing tools such as personality assessments (16PF, MBTI, etc...) or team management tools (Belbin, TMS, etc…). These tools have the advantage of being largely used and therefore able to show metrics based upon very large populations.

The move from "person centric" to "environment centric" models in the area of coaching started at the beginning of the third millennium and Systems Theory became an inevitable reference framework, especially in team coaching. It is now understood that differences in performance and well-being of teams are not correlated with group cohesion, motivation

and satisfaction (Woolley et al., 2010). Consequently, a new domain of investigation is now opened.

Change2Team was created to reflect the fact that both personality and environment contribute to individual and collective behaviour. Our intent was not to create a tool which can predict future performance. Concepts like "relational intelligence" or "emotional intelligence" nurture this ambition.

Our intent was to create a tool which can predict the capability to fulfil a "Change 2" and to help the coach to identify how he can help the team to improve this capability.
Our intent was also to create an approach which contributes to the improvement of knowledge by providing honest information (i.e. information created by using a scientific methodology) from the existing data.

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