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## Coach or Consultant?



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# Coach, Consultant, Trainer

Wearing multiple hats for teams

**Here's the scene.** You're there in a conference room with a team. You just noticed something. The team noticed that you noticed. Now the team is staring at you, waiting for a comment, a question, or a direction to follow. In that moment you have to decide what hat you're wearing: coach, consultant or in some cases, trainer. The team doesn't care. All

emphasis on the team as the means for achieving work results, there is little focus on the development of team skills and competencies. Organizations have not yet made the shift from individual performer to team performance.

There is a fundamental lack of team know-how on teams. It starts with the basics. Here's an example:

**“Teams are counting on you to have the means to get them where they want to go.”**

they want are better results. You have that goal in mind of course. You were hired to help the team get better results. But you also have a broader context: a more resourceful team. It's this underlying developmental objective that gives rise to the multiple hats and hat selection.

At one level, all coaching includes self development: learning, change, growth. With teams it is especially acute because most team members lack a basic understanding of what is required for effective team performance. I say this based on my own experience working with teams over the last five years and a review of hundreds of team assessments. The data confirm the experience and it is not surprising. Even though organizations continue to put more

the need to have explicit team agreements. All teams have team agreements. Mostly they are unspoken agreements, un-negotiated, and

**“Selecting which hat to wear in the moment is art, not science.”**

embedded in the culture of the team or organization. You can see those unspoken agreements in the behavior of the team. Everyone abides by them.

## Coach Hat

As a coach, I can share my observation, or as we might say, “articulate



what's going on,” and then ask the perfectly obvious coaching question, “How's that working for you?” and the follow up, “If you wanted it to be different, what would that look like?”

## Consultant Hat

Sometimes, as a team consultant I need to go a step farther. There are certain ground conditions that need to be in place in order for teams to work together effectively. Some of those ground conditions include clear team agreements, a process for updating or revising those agreements, and a back-up agreement for when the team doesn't live up to its agreements, because that will surely happen.

## Trainer Hat

There are also times working with a team that we need to set aside time

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to train the team in creating those team agreements. During that process it's likely I will shift roles from trainer to coach to facilitator – all in a brief period of time. The training is necessary in order for the team to get better results in the short term, and learn to be a more effective and more resourceful team for the future. These are also skills and competencies the team then takes to every other team they are on.

### Distinctions

The same hat sorting situations come up in relation to other team basics including alignment around team purpose, team accountability, communication, disagreement or conflict, and team diversity.

It's important to remember that teams are focused on results. They are under pressure to perform and have limited patience. They are counting on you to have the means to get them where they want to go. They are not making the distinction between coaching, consulting and training. And yet it is useful for the team to know that I will be interacting with them in these different ways and the purpose of each. In the early process of designing the relationship between myself and the team, I will cover these distinctions.



**“Choosing which hat to wear requires tuning into the entity that is the team.”**

- As a coach I help access the knowledge, wisdom and experience that already exist on the team.
- As a team consultant I have expertise in the subject of team effectiveness.
- As a trainer I am equipped with processes to assist teams in acquiring the skills to be more effective team members and create more effective teams.

In my role I draw on all three areas, as needed, in service of the team.

### Which Hat?

Selecting which hat to wear in the moment is art, not science. It requires tuning into the entity that is the team to help fulfill both the short-term needs of the team, and the developmental needs for this team and its members. •