



## Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

### Episode 67: Q&A – Coaching Teams

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#### [Intro Music]

**Brian Miller:** Welcome to the Coach Approach Ministries Podcast, where we help people find their way with God by training the best Christian coaches in the world. Our podcast today is sponsored by our Coaching Teams class, CAM 507. This is a 16 hour, live, online class taught over 8 weeks, starting Tuesday, October 31<sup>st</sup>. To learn more about this class, visit our website at [www.coachapproachministries.org/product/CAM507](http://www.coachapproachministries.org/product/CAM507). I'm Brian Miller, strategic director of Coach Approach Ministries, CAM for short, and today, I want to introduce a Q&A podcast we previously recorded with my partners, Chad Hall and Bill Copper. The audio isn't up to our usual standard, so forgive us, but I wanted to make it available to you because the content was so good. With no further ado, here is the Q&A on coaching teams.

Hi. This is Brian Miller, strategic director for Coach Approach Ministries. I'm joined here today by the CAM leadership team, the illustrious Bill Copper, executive director of Coach Approach Ministries, and we're also joined by the president himself of Coach Approach Ministries, Mr. Chad Hall. Thanks for joining me guys. This is a good time for our members only resource to not just give the answers we expect, we've read. We've all done a little bit of work in this. These are folks that are pretty engaged in coaching already, so our hope is to go a little deeper, behind the scenes, the kind of conversations that occur among coaches to find out what's really what. This question is about coaching teams, so here's the question, "What is different about coaching a team as opposed to coaching an individual?" Bill, you want to get us started there?

**Bill Copper:** Yeah. You know, there are several keys. There are a lot of nuances, and Chad can talk about some of the group facilitation skills that come in to play, but to me, the real distinctions between coaching an individual and coaching a team is first, understanding where the agenda comes from. So, getting clear with a team. With an individual, it's clear. Our client brings the agenda, but when it's a team, how does the team create the agenda. Secondly, is to get clear on how the decisions are made. So, when a decision is made about a path forward, how's that decision made within a team? Is it the leader that makes it? Do they take a vote? There's all kinds of ways, but it's different. With an individual, the individual makes the decision, but in a team, you've got to get clear about that. Then, the third piece would be making sure that individuals own actions. With a one on one client, it's clear that individual's going to take the action. With a team, you've got to be really clear that that's also true. The team may

have a goal, but individuals have actions to get to that goal. If you say to the team it's all of our responsibility to get this done, what you're really saying is it's no one's responsibility. It's really important when coaching teams that actions belong to an individual for a team goal.

**Brian:** Oh, that's a great start. Great piece there, Bill. Chad, jump on top of that, and take us a little farther.

**Chad Hall:** Yeah. Those are great, and just to turn that volume up on that last part, what Bill said, the actions are individual, but the commitments are communal. So, what you're not doing when you're coaching a team, you're not coaching members of the team to make individual commitments and then take action on them. The whole team has to be committed to whatever the action is. The action's assigned to an individual to carry out. As Bill mentioned, the decision making. Just think of all the decisions an individual makes when you go through a one-hour coaching conversation. What do you want to focus on? He has to decide that. What part of that? Where do you want to be in a year? All of those kinds of things, all those decisions. What you're doing when you're coaching a team is you're facilitating a process by which they can move through those decisions, through that coaching process together, and the biggest decision they have to make is how they're going to make decisions. Because if you haven't decided how you're going to decide, you can't move through the coaching process because everyone's going to come in with their own assumptions.

We're going to be coached as a team, and it's going to be consensus, or it's going to be majority vote, or we're really just looking to the team leader to make all the decisions, and we're just giving input. So, it's not just the decisions at the end of the conversation that are important. You've got to decide how to decide so you can move through the coaching conversation. From there, what I've found really helpful is just to use a lot of, what I would think of as facilitation tools, techniques, and skills. So, how do we hear from practically everybody? How do we develop that into a clear picture of a decision? How do we name it and then move on? I think a good coach is really effective at creating, I think of them as, creating awareness, experiences. For instance, when I coach a church leadership team, I'll use a model, and I'll say, first of all, we're going to clarify goals.

So, I want you three to talk about what you want to see this team accomplish in the next year. You three, go talk about it. You three, go talk about it. They're talking, but that way, everybody's talking, being heard. They bring it back. They share it. Everything gets heard, and then we go into, "What are the themes you're hearing from everyone?" One of the things I like to do as the facilitator, team coach, facilitator, is by breaking them into smaller talking groups, it minimizes the chances of one dominant personality taking over the team. So, we're facilitating so everyone can hear, and be heard, and process. Sometimes that also means allowing them to introvert, so we allow some exercises to be conducted on a solo level. Just always looking at that kind of variety, and you're always moving people through that process, and the clearer the process, and the more they know what the process is, the better they can participate.

**Brian:** I love that. I love that it's one team, and drawing everybody out, and not so everybody has a say in some kind of idealized way, but so everybody has ownership and can move ahead with the agenda with full commitment and force, I feel like, depending on what role they play on the team.

**Chad:** Well, yeah. Brian, that's a really good point because not every member of the team, for whatever

the team is dealing with at the moment, not every person is as invested or as wise. I think about that in coaching an individual. If I say, "What do you want to focus on," there are probably five, six, seven, eight things that come to mind, but one of them is the right one. So, when I'm coaching a team, I think all the individuals on the team are kind of like the different ideas a person might have. So, they're all valuable. They're just not all as valuable. What we're not looking for, typically, is something that umbrellas over what each and every person wants to talk about. That creates a muddled confusion, but we do need to hear all those ideas so we can move on intelligently.

**Brian:** There's one agenda, and I want to get back to that, Bill, in just a minute. There's one agenda, but then you have different strengths on the team, and you need to make sure you hear the perspectives of different strengths on the team. There's different personalities on the team. You need to hear from the different personality types, so you're getting a fullness of what's going on. In the church world, there's different giftednesses, different types of leaders. So, to get a fullness of the team can really get a great perspective. Bill, I want to get your perspective on this because the first thing I think you talked about was making sure the whole team had one agenda. I think that's certainly harder when you have a team than when you have an individual. If I'm just going into coaching an individual, we can say, "Okay. What's the agenda today? What do you want to talk about? What do you want to take away," but when you have a team, it feels to me like there's got to be more pre-work done, maybe with the leader, or with somebody, with a team as a whole. I've found that to be the biggest struggle with me is most team meetings don't come in with a solid agenda, and it just bogs down quick.

**Bill:** Part of my work with teams is doing some contracting up front. We get an agreement up front. We do a little bit of teaching up front about what to expect, so the expectation that we set when I'm coaching a team is we talk about what the overall aim is, the overall agenda for the team. We're working on this project, or we're working on this, and then each time we get together, we talk about what piece of that are we going to tackle today. What's the agenda toward that overall, and we agree up front, how is the agenda set? Does the leader come in and say, "Today, here are the things we're going to talk about." Do we fish that out and take a vote? All kinds of teams use different methods for coming up with the agenda, but we've got to be really clear on how that is. So, I find that the more work we do up front, this is true with individuals as well, but with teams it's particularly important, and we've got to be sharper with our skills when coaching a team because we're paying attention, not just to one person, but to all the people on the team, and also, their interaction with each other. So, we're watching all of that when we're coaching a team and paying attention to those dynamics. All of those things that we talk about in building a team about trust, about how to communicate, and all those things that make teams effective, those come into play in virtually every coaching conversation with a team.

**Brian:** So, coaching a team is definitely harder than coaching an individual. That's what I'm hearing. Would that be true?

**Bill:** It takes more intensity. It takes more focus, or maybe a different focus because we certainly are intense and focus with our individuals, but we're paying attention to more things at the same time. Maybe it's harder. Chad, I don't know about you, if you would consider that harder or not, but it's certainly different.

**Chad:** I would say it's more complex, but that's not necessarily harder. I think you get a lot of variation in terms of who's on the team versus who's a client, the individual client. Sometimes, individual clients are

really hard to coach for whatever reason, but it does tend to be more complex. I do think you need to heighten, or sharpen, some skills that don't get used as much in individual coaching. So, if you sharpen those skills, it could be easier to coach a team. If you don't sharpen those skills, it could be a lot harder.

**Brian:** What are those skills? Are they different from what we've already said?

**Chad:** Well, the facilitation skills are big. I think the ability to come up with exercises that facilitate everyone, not just being heard, but thinking. How do you facilitate everyone thinking, hearing from everybody, and having that conversation as a team? Those facilitation skills, and that kind of stuff. What kind of exercises to do, what kind of pre-work to do, but you also have the skills of group management. Keep people from fighting. Keep people from talking over the top of each other, and even setting those ground rules up front is really important. You need to be skilled with that, and skilled at, honestly, holding them to those rules. That's the role of the coach, noticing behaviors that are outside what have been the stated ground rules for the team, and to bring that up, and to help the team decide how to manage it. Typically, that's not a skillset that's being used in individual coaching.

**Bill:** Brian, I would say, part of the agreement up front is not just how the coach and the client, if you will, the team, is going to work together. Part of our work up front is how the team's going to work together. When there's a disagreement, how's that handled? When there's a conflict, how's that handled? So, there's a team covenant that's part of that original work beyond just the covenant between the coach and the team.

**Brian:** Yeah, I think just concise messages, for instance, would be one that we need to do well as individuals, but when it's a team, we've got to be quick to say the things that need to be said for the team's sake and not for our own sake. I think that's something that might need to be honed a little further.

**Chad:** Another one that comes to mind right there, Brian, is think about active listening. Active listening with an individual, I hear what you say, I reflect it back in a shorter, tighter, more compact version. When you're coaching a team, you're hearing what 12 people are saying, and what you're really listening for is what's the team saying, and can you hear that and actively reflect it back clear concise? You better be good as communicating when you reflect that back, and you better be really good at active listening, really hearing. It's almost like you're always at third level listening because again, it's so complex.

**Brian:** I love that. Let me add a really difficult question to the back end of this. What do you do when the leader of the team doesn't embrace coaching? So, as you're the coach, you're not necessarily the leader and maybe even probably not the leader, but the team's hungry for coaching. They see the benefits, how the agenda could be stronger, how the effects could be stronger. So, what do you do when the leader is not as open to coaching as the rest of the team?

**Bill:** Yeah. This is one of the more difficult challenges I think we face as coaches. When we come across a leader, and sometimes it can be not the positional leader, but a de facto leader in the group, sometimes it's an influence leader, someone people look to even if they're positionally not the leader, and when that person really rejects coaching, typically if it's the positional leader, when they reject how the coaching's working, how the team's going to work together, it's a difficult path. I find that I tend to do more directing there. I tend to do more teaching about team dynamics and how teams work together. I

tend to use more challenging language, but it's a fine balance that we have to have there because our role is not to direct. I find that one of the more difficult challenges, and I find it difficult if the leader, particularly a positional leader is not embracing what we do, it's hard to coach a team.

**Chad:** Yeah, when it's one of those de facto leaders, you kind of have the team leader as another party to it. So, you've kind of got them as the director who can help get that de facto leader in line, or not. Less of that seems to fall on the coach. I think the way you handle that really depends on your personality. Maybe, in general, the way you approach challenging clients. One of the approaches is to throw it right back to the team. One of the things we mistakenly do as coaches is we think, "I've got to solve this in my head and then do something out loud." I'm a big proponent of do your thinking out loud. If the team leader is against it, you bring that up. So, "It seems like a lot of you are really for this. The team leader, it seems like you aren't really for this. What do you guys want to do with that? How do you want to decide?" Maybe that's because most of the team leaders I've worked with who are maybe feet draggers or resistant, the more I try to pull them, the more they pull the other way. Heck, I just let them pull each other where they want to pull, but I'm going to make it intentional, and they may not be ready for coaching. That's always an option. You've got to be willing to live with that if you're going to take that approach.

**Brian:** What's the dynamic of a coach alongside a team leader? So, I think in my mind, I'm picturing the coach doing the process through the meeting, but the leader's going to play a role there too, of course, or maybe that's part of the problem, it feels like there's a fight for control of the process. How can you best come alongside the leader of the team with process?

**Chad:** We always adapt to the client, so you better adapt to the leader when you're coaching a team. I can remember coaching teams in the software company where I worked, and we had one sales team that was coached for quite a while, and the leader was really hard charging, type A, your sort of stereotypical, poster child, corporate team leader. What I found really worked, and I adapted to that, I adapted to that by honoring her, making it clear she was the leader of the team, making it clear I brought no content. I was not a subject matter expert. They were the experts as a team, and her role on the team was to make decisions. For instance, one of the things we did early on was we decided how to decide, and there's no right or wrong way to decide. The only wrong way is to not decide how to decide. So, I coached them to decide that their decision-making process was for everybody to speak into the decision and for the team leader to make a decision, but it was her decision to make. So, I always process things that way. It's your decision to make. What's your decision? Sometimes she felt like I was putting her on the spot, but that was what they had determined was going to be the best way to go forward. I think to not have too much of a stake in it, to not care too much how they do things but to just make sure it's explicit how they do things. For me, I find it much more challenging to work with a team where the team leader is passive, not passive aggressive, not passive resistant, but just passive, almost absent, almost like, "I just want to be a fly on the wall." I find that's really challenging because lots of times the team members are looking to the leader. They're a different voice on the team, typically. So, to have one that is absent is really challenging, and I find that challenging to draw them out sometimes.

**Bill:** I thought something you said there really resonated with me, Chad, and that is that often times, the leader who is resistant, sometimes the root of that resistance is confusion about your role. So, when you

can assure them that your role is not to usurp any of their authority or responsibility, but rather to facilitate that, that sometimes can be an ease to that.

**Chad:** I think we talked on a different podcast about challenging clients and challenging client behaviors. In a team situation, one of the real challenges is disengagement. I've found the more people who are engaged in the process, whether they like it or don't like it isn't really as big of a deal as whether they're engaged in it, but the disengaged team member or team leader, gosh, that gets really hard because they've become absent from the coaching process. Again, if you're dealing with an individual, and you've got an individual who's disengaged, you kind of call that out, you decide whether they want to continue coaching, and maybe they don't want to. When seven of the members are engaged in the process, and maybe one or two are disengaged, it's really challenging. The team leader can help them get engaged, but if the team leader is disengaged, you may have your work cut out for you.

**Brian:** What I'm hearing is a great place to start is with the team leader before your meeting with the whole team, making sure there's an agenda set, making sure that the leader knows that the agenda is her agenda and not my agenda, and that we are experts on process and people and bringing everybody into full engagement, which, what team leader wouldn't want their team engaged unless they didn't want their team involved somehow which is a whole other issue. I love that. That's very helpful to me. Guys, I always appreciate you making time for the members of the coaching community here and bringing your expertise to them. Thanks a lot.

**Chad:** Thanks Brian.

**Bill:** Thanks Brian.

**Brian:** I sure hope you enjoyed that podcast on coaching teams. We appreciate you joining us, and if you don't want to miss any of our podcasts, I invite you to subscribe to our podcast at iTunes or at Google Play. Next week, I'll be talking to Chad Hall about assessing your website for clear action steps. Our podcast today was sponsored by our Coaching Teams class, CAM 507. This is a 16 hour, live, online class taught over 8 weeks, starting Tuesday, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017. To learn more about this class, visit our website at [www.coachapproachministries.org/product/CAM507](http://www.coachapproachministries.org/product/CAM507). We'll see you next week.

[Outro Music]