

A New Organizational Learning Framework: Tri-namics Coaching Triangle System

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The workplace of today is a demanding environment that requires multi-tasking, flexibility and resilience, collaborative teamwork, fast and effective decision-making, technological innovation, strong transformational leadership at all levels, and continuous learning. Successful organizations find ways to engage and motivate employees so they are effective and productive, maintain a healthy work life balance, and develop their talent. A number of different programs and approaches have been taken by organizations to help employees think creatively, cope with workplace stress, learn about health and wellness, reduce conflict, manage time, learn new technology, learn to multi-task and ensure safe work practices.

Research has shown that personal and professional development is an ongoing process that requires repeated efforts over time in order to be most successful. However, few—if any—approaches focus on helping employees create a sustainable, self-directed workplace program that stimulates the mind, fosters and improves relationships, provides space and a place to practice learning, increases leadership and coaching skills, and provides time to think. There are also very few that encourage and support sustained learning and application after formal training classes or that foster self-directed leadership development.

Similarly, we also know that follow-up, one on one coaching, aids in retention and application of learning by—as some studies

have shown—up to 80%. It was with these factors in mind, that The Coaching Triangle System was developed. The Coaching Triangle System provides an organization with a cost-effective self-directed organizational learning framework that uses a peer coach approach to develop leadership skills and enhance learning.

As defined by us, a coaching triangle is a group of three individuals that agree to come together and:

- Self-orient using the resource field book, Tri-namics Coaching Triangle System™;
- Obtain supported as needed by a coach, mentor, consultant, or facilitator that knows the Coaching Triangle System; and
- Self-manage and self-lead by choosing when, where and how to meet and learn; and what to learn and practice

What is so new about this? Three people meeting together does not seem unusual. The difference is in how they come together, why they come together, what they actually focus on, and the intention that is taken to form and sustain

their coaching triangle. The Coaching Triangle System works best when it is designed and recognized as a formal learning group system which is self-selected by individuals trusted to work on business or organizational opportunities and issues who are accountable to each other and guided by a supporter knowledgeable in the Coaching Triangle System.

Forming a coaching triangle is simple! Find one other person that you would like to learn with. The two of you then decide on a third person and invite them to join you. It is important to choose people who will help you grow and who you feel are the right people, organizationally speaking, for you to spend time with. Once formed, the three members then attend a two-hour guided self-directed Orientation, agree to their guidelines and complete their contract and charter. The coaching triangle then meets as determined by

the group and as its members continue to receive value—with guidance and support as required.

The creation of a coaching triangle is logistically easy. The hard work and

Coaching triangles can help people achieve results:

While working on a Master's Degree in Health Care Leadership at Royal Roads University I was part of a Coaching Triangle. We believe this unique relationship was foundational in supporting consistent high achievement for each of us. ...in fact I now offer a workshop in my own organization to introduce other staff to this way of learning and accomplishing together—Dammy Damstron Albach

unique value comes from what happens next: exploring the depth of the orientation process and Tri-namics resource book; the interplay of relationships; the reality of taking initiative for self-directed learning; the application of a coach approach; and the individual self-growth. Commitment to the coaching triangle and each other can lead to success.

Organizations that take on the Coaching Triangle System approach will often have several different triangles across the organization. These triangles may be cross-functional, cross-level, same-level, similar education, same gender, mixed gender, etc. They may focus on leadership, engagement, coaching, learning, or anything that the organization would like to raise up for awareness. In common each coaching triangle has three people. Unique to each is its own defined purpose and commitment, its own learning and practicing, and its own different and specific goals that they create for themselves. For example, at Terasen Gas, one Coaching Triangle was comprised of a Human Resources Leader for Labour Relations, a Vice-President of Development, and a General Manager of Operations. Another one consisted of three executive assistants. At the University of British Columbia several different coaching triangles were formed from within a group of people that attended coaching courses. If the three people have the right intention in forming and

Coaching triangles provides space for practicing leadership:

In my own Coaching Triangle we explored and clarified in a candid manner, our leadership strengths and weaknesses. The dialogue allowed each of us to look into the mirror and see the reflection more clearly of how others see us as leaders. The greatest value of Coaching Triangles is that they create the opportunity to practice leadership skills in a non-threatening environment—Daryle Britton, Vice President Human Resources, Terasen Gas, Inc.

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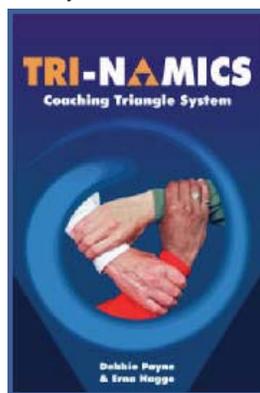
space for learning, experimentation, and practice in a way that does not currently exist in workplaces today. Triangle partners reported that they were solving real issues and problems together and that the practical tangible results were valuable. They also reported that the opportunity to listen, to learn, to be coached, and to challenge each other was a unique experience, which they found enhanced their workplace relationships and added unique value. Through this unique experience, new conversations were stimulated, and, as Peter Block writes in the January 2008 issue of *Leadership Excellence*, “the key to transformation is to start a different conversation.”

are committed and supported in their triangle learning, they will create value for themselves and value for their organization.

The value of the Coaching Triangle System approach is not just anecdotal. To assess the value and impact of the approach—as used at the University of British Columbia—an independent evaluation and study were performed. The results support the premise that the Coaching Triangle System creates new

As the Coaching Triangle System grows, it is interesting to note that the Tri-namics resource has also been adopted by individuals—as a useful tool for self-directing their own learning—and by dyadic partners in a mentoring relationship to help them hold the focus. Most recently, the Coaching Triangle system was introduced to leadership facilitators at Leaders Today—an organization that works with youth—who provided insight into some valuable ways that the system could be adapted for their constituency. The possibilities and opportunities to use the system in many different environments continue to emerge. New possibilities are evolving and more are likely to develop as the system is introduced and integrated into the workplaces of organizations looking for innovative ways to manage their talent.

Coaching triangles can be an effective application towards the need organizations have to create shared leadership, foster initiative in employees, and sustain more formalized learning. Triangles can promote just in time learning, a culture of coaching in the workplace, and an organization of employees who expect and create value from building business relationships in different ways.



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