

Tri-namics for Coaching Triangles

Research Studies and General Findings

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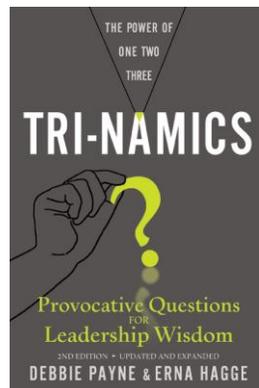


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Coaching Triangles were first conceptualized by Debbie Payne as a process for bridging learning and work application in 2000. Erna Hagge deepened the concept and process with the addition of peer coaching processes and models. Together they pioneered, piloted and evaluated this concept. Today it has developed to the power of three through their five-year partnership business, Deberna International, and evolved this into the Tri-namics System. This System is supported by their co-authored Resource Manual *Tri-namics Power of One, Two, and Three: Provocative Questions for Leadership Wisdom*, 2009.

Evaluation History and Studies

Terasen Gas Inc.

Coaching Triangles were first conceptualized by Debbie Payne in 2000, and then introduced into an organization (Terasen Gas Inc.) in 2002. Preliminary research and findings consisted of an internal survey (25 participants) and anecdotal comments.

University of British Columbia

The second significant application was a pilot offering introduced by Erna Hagge at the University of British Columbia initiated in 2003. An independent evaluation using qualitative interviews with 15 participants resulted in a written report complete with data and findings.

“Overall, participants placed much value and appreciation on triangle learning, coaching, and on acquiring coaching skills. Recognizing both the challenges and opportunities associated with self-directed learning, participants clearly acknowledged the potential influence that triangles may have on personal, professional, and organizational development.”

Vancouver Community College

Additional research on Coaching Triangles comes from a nine month pilot offering at Vancouver Community College (27 participants) concluding in June 2008.

“Those triangles who worked with a coach to help clarify their goals seemed likely to respond that they met their goals. Findings indicate that some did not meet their goals. This is understandable as goals tend to shift during the triangle process. If the goals need to shift it is part of the action learning, resulting in a positive triangle learning and leadership experience. 73% agree VCC should continue to sponsor the program”

Other Data

Other research results on Coaching Triangles come from:

- Direct communication to the authors of Tri-namics from individual triangle groups, Solicited or unsolicited testimonials
- Audio interview from two triangle learning partners Lars Mygind (Denmark) and Phil Johncock (Nevada) which can be listened to on www.deberna.com
- Coaching Triangles reference and resource for RRU master’s thesis papers.

Full research studies for Terasen Gas Inc., UBC, and Vancouver Community College, with statistics, questions, and detailed findings may be made available on request.

These General Findings are a collective selected summary of preliminary research, including testimonials; and provide insight into the value, challenges, recommendations and benefits of using the Tri-namics System for Coaching Triangles. Is this research statistically reliable and valid? It remains to be seen as this work is still in its early phase. We encourage people to continue to use and experiment with the Tri-namics System, evaluate, and share their findings. It is through our collective use that we are able to validate these preliminary findings.

General Findings

Survey Results

Topic Question	% agree or strongly agree
Look forward to meeting with Triangle partners	90%
Believe Coaching Triangles help them integrate learning and work	73%
Encouraged others to form a Coaching Triangle	68%
Agree there is sufficient structure with the Coaching Triangle approach	64%
Feel they are a better coach as a result of being in a Coaching Triangle	45%
Indicate their leadership competencies have improved as a result of being in a Coaching Triangle	42%
Will recommend Tri-namics to colleagues	86.7%
Will use skills learned in their work	80%
Agree the organization should continue to sponsor this	73%

Impact of Tri-namics learning

- New discoveries were made about approaching and solving workplace problems and challenges, and, some participants felt an increased sense of confidence and clarity in addressing workplace issues.
- Some participants noticed an increased personal consciousness towards taking a coach approach to situations and in looking for “coachable moments” at work.
- Self awareness and self inquiry was fostered.
- Communication was noted as having improved/transformed through the use of a coach approach.
- New relationships were made and participants learned more by meeting new people in their triangles from other areas

Most Significant Learning

- Learning about coaching
- Learning about a new and/or different approach to communication and conversation
- Learning about self (self awareness)
- Mentoring others who were trying to develop coaching skills
- The effectiveness of peer supported learning.

Triangle learning versus other methods of learning

- Small group format: fosters intimacy; allows for more participation and interaction; personal and professional development occurs; learning occurs from varied perspectives - all directions/all members
- Experiential learning: triangles offer immediate feedback in the moment
- Self directed learning: allows for flexibility; more focused learning is possible; more self responsibility is required; the learning can be directed to wherever triangle members want to steer it

Organizational Impact

Participants felt that the organization must place value on coaching and Tri-namics learning in order for this type of project to have the greatest impact on the organization.

Tri-namics can help with:

- Community and relationship building
- Fostering inclusion and diversity (e.g. triangles allow people with different values and beliefs from across the university and from different 'levels' within the university hierarchy to engage and learn together)
- Organizational culture (e.g. triangles foster a learning culture)
- Workplace effectiveness (e.g. triangles can help with workplace challenges, opportunities, and problems)
- Motivate others by example
- Can support continuous learning
- Encourages knowledge sharing
- Promotes people learning within the organization, it's effective, open, and humane
- They can make a significant contribution, the mix in roles at different levels – interaction: share confidential info. across different spectrums
- The impact can be huge if people value coaching and if they buy into coaching as a way to develop learning organizations
- The organization benefits from the 'ripple effect' and it creates a culture change
- Triangles help to enhance and build more intimate relationships and brings more people together more closely
- Helps people to resolve issues effectively – especially interpersonal issues
- It encourages open mindedness, respectfulness
- Triangles impact an organization whether the organization mandates it or not (e.g. the organization doesn't need to mandate that 'this is important'), triangles can make an impact at any level (e.g. the learning doesn't need to start at the top and trickle down), triangles support culture change in that

they offer people a safe environment to explore values and beliefs and related behaviour, the outcome of triangle learning from a coaching perspective is that people learn ways of changing the workplace conversation to a more positive interaction and this fosters stronger and ultimately more effective relationships – it also builds community, triangles can address workplace problems from a positive 'opportunity' perspective

- Through the effectiveness of the learning model it has an indirect impact on the organization, it's an effective way of reinforcing continued learning, if the organization values coaching then it's an effective way of making sure that the initial cost of taking the coaching course pays off through continued reinforcement of the learning

Testimonials and Comments on Coaching Triangles

"valuable opportunity to share experiences with others, and to gain insights in a private setting"

"This is a fantastic opportunity to increase the communication between people that may not otherwise find time to get together"

"Excellent method getting fish to swim in the same direction"

"Great way to get knowledge transfer, advice and to learn how one can improve their skills overall in this area"

"A way to establish an informal way to problem solves, use people who have familiarity with our situations as a sounding board, and adds a dimension of learning to our day"

"To get the perspective of managers from outside their normal sphere of influence"

"Program and concept is great, and has the potential for significant benefits for everyone involved"

"Opportunity to discuss challenges/issues with different perspectives given diverse responsibilities. The 'outsider's' fresh look"

"Feel free to exchange ideas within a safe area of confidentiality. Our meetings have always been beneficial, and have learned a lot about other parts of the company, and how to deal with difficult people and tough leadership situations. "

"Excellent, I am part of a great team"

"Professional interaction - not a whining or venting session - we usually try and talk about articles we read on human resource topics, leadership, culture etc"

"We have reflected on our leadership styles/competencies together along with the feedback received from Coachview and Myers Briggs"

"My experience with the Leadership Coaching Triangle program has been transformative"

"This process could be used as a foundation to begin succession planning"

“It’s an opportunity to allow members to engage in dialogue and work towards common goals that benefit both the individual and the college community”

“Development of inherent qualities...knowing when to be quiet and when to speak, amplification, authenticity”

“Deep respect and recognition of each others strengths...able to connect with others and ourselves

Challenges

“My Coaching Triangle had our first meeting yesterday; although it went really well, we are still struggling a little with the benefits.”

“For me, there is still some uncertainty as to what the group is getting out of it. Because benefits are hard to see (or not tangible), it’s hard to encourage others to form a group.”

“It has been difficult to meet given logistics”

“Still unsure about benefits”

“Had 7 sessions before having to collapse the triangle because 1 member was terminated”

Recommendations and Suggestions for Tri-namics success

- Start the system with professional coaching hours support for the first 6 to 8 meetings.
- Book first few meeting close together to ensure commitment and establish the rhythm for learning
- Have a few of the triangles share the benefits they have found, and how they structure their format.
- Have professional coaches available on call for support through abstract problems or opportunities
- Encourage some 'inter-triangle' meetings to share experiences.
- Better explanation about self-directed learning
- More time spent on Orientation
- Set realistic time commitments and honor them
- Set a clear purpose and realistic goals for the triangle (personally and as a group). Revisit goals regularly.
- Structure meetings, define roles and responsibilities related to logistics, plan agendas and use of time
- Have fun and keep each other motivated
- Ensure your triangle is a fit with your bigger learning goals
- Revisit and stay focused on individual and group goals
- Do more pre-planning and coordination of meetings between meetings
- Stay more connected with triangle members between meetings for pre-planning and follow-up
- Set a boundary on time for the life of a triangle
- Have a process in place for people to change or join triangles
- Do exit or finishing interviews as people leave or triangles dissolve (to support program evaluation)
- Recognize that triangle learning is not for everyone
- Honor your time commitment and make it a priority
- Make it easy for people to meet the group commitment
- Have a positive attitude, make it fun to go to, be enthusiastic, believe in the benefit

- Connect with a resource person who has had a positive triangle experience, ask them questions and have them talk about their experience
- Stick to the time commitment
- Meet more than once a month
- Meet a lot in the beginning until you all feel secure with each other. Practice coaching
- Be clear on how you're going to work together
- That a more clear explanation be provided on workplace self-directed learning during the informational sessions or in the upfront communication and how it differs from typical workplace workshops, courses, or programs.

Benefits

- It's helping me to clarify and reach my work related goals
- I'm learning more about the organization by meeting these new people – this was not an intended goal of mine
- Inadvertently I'm gaining confidence about what I already know about coaching
- I'm learning to question myself
- It has given me insight into work situations (changed them for the better)
- It gives me more confidence in using a coach approach to conversations
- It's giving me better communication skills
- I'm discovering new ways to approach problems and challenges
- It enables me to approach problems with more confidence and clarity
- It's giving me more confidence
- I'm thinking more consciously about coaching
- It keeps me aware of coaching and stimulates ideas about coaching
- It keeps me encouraged and connected to supporting the creation of a coaching culture
- I'm using the coaching model in my personal and work life – mostly in informal settings
- It's helping me hold onto the coaching skills it allows me to actually try using the things I learned about, it affirms and confirms the things I learned about
- It's helping me take a new approach to communicating and problem solving in the workplace and in my personal life
- It's helping me be more aware of looking for “coachable” moments at work
- It's helping me in both my personal life and work life
- It's helped me keep coaching in my consciousness – in the fore, usually when you take a workshop it's great in the moment but you quickly let it all go
- I'm asking more open ended questions because of the triangle experience

Factors to Consider

Defining Success (what works best)	Defining Challenges (when it did not work as well)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Met with their coach• Met regularly as a triangle• Applied and wanted to learn more about coaching• Created for themselves action learning• Met their goals• Applied their learning in their work environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Did not meet with their coach• Were not focused on goals or had loosely defined goals• Had infrequent or no meetings• Found no application to their work

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