

# What the Client Says – and What We Contract For

Interpreting Requests in Team Coaching

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## SESSION PURPOSE

# The Request Is Just the Beginning

## What Clients Often Say

"Fix the conflict"

"Align the team"

"Help them communicate"

## What Really Matters

What we **agree to do** shapes everything that follows.

This session explores how to interpret requests and form clear, coaching-aligned agreements that keep the **team at the center**.

# Learning Outcomes

01

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## Translate Requests

Turn surface requests into team coaching agreements

02

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## Identify the Client

Recognize when the team is the true client

03

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## Spot Re-Contracting Signals

Detect when agreements need clarification

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## Choose Your Stance

Distinguish coaching vs facilitation moves

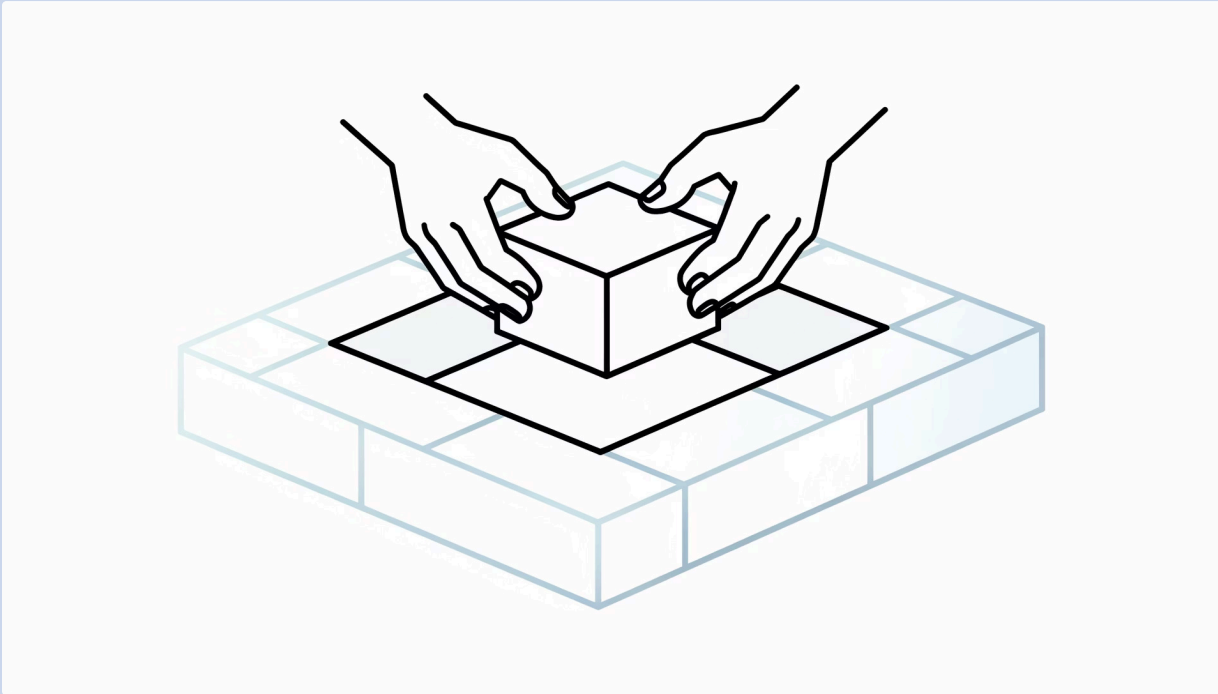
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## Take Action

Formulate one practical next contracting move

# Why Contracting Is the Core Work



## Team Coaching Reality

- Requests are often proxies for deeper needs
- Multiple stakeholders, multiple perspectives
- Agreements drift without attention

## Contracting Determines

**Who** the client is

**What** the work is

**What role** you hold

Developed for discussion only - Refer to Your...

# Common Pattern in Requests

"Fix the conflict"

"Get them aligned"

"Help them communicate"

- ❏ These statements describe **symptoms**, not agreements. They tell us where pain exists, but not what coaching relationship we're creating.

# Breakout: From Ask to Agreement

Choose **ONE** statement from a team leader or sponsor:

- A. “Just help them communicate better.”
- B. “We need you to fix the conflict in the room.”
- C. “Can you align everyone before our strategy meeting?”

Discuss in your small group:

1. What might this request really be about beneath the surface?
2. Who is the client right now – leader, individuals, or the team as a whole?
3. What needs to be clarified or re-contracted before proceeding?
4. What is one clean next contracting move that keeps you in integrity?

Be ready to share:

- One insight about contracting

# Critical Distinction: Leader vs Team as Client

Shapes every conversation, intervention, and outcome.

Leader-as-client:

Individual development, leader owns change

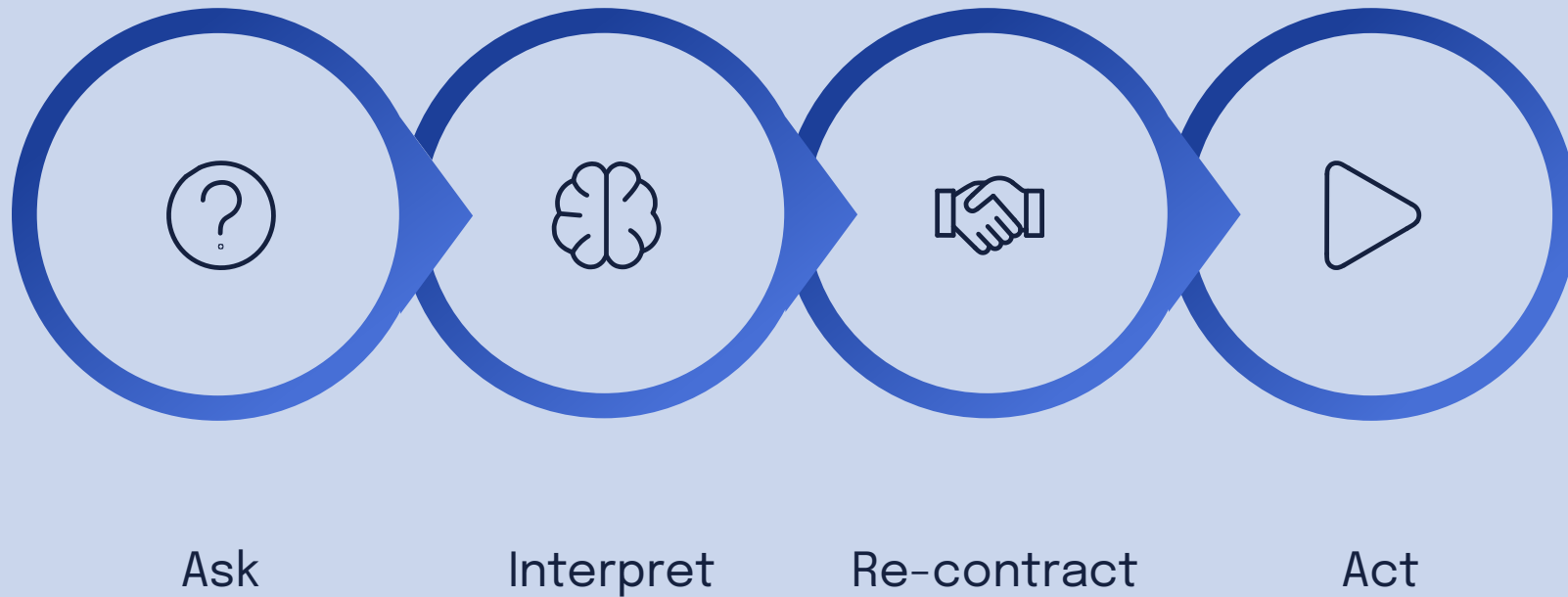
**What modality is needed? Is it really Team coaching?**

Team-as-client:

Collective experience, team owns change

**What expectations need to be set?**

# Interpreting Requests



Most coaching risk occurs between **Interpret** → **Re-contract**. This is where misalignment takes root.



## Tips for Initial Contracting & Re-Contracting

Look beyond the surface and engage the team in defining the true scope of work.



### Interpret at Team-System Level

Analyze requests from the perspective of the entire team or organizational system, not just individuals.



### Assess True Team Status

Evaluate if the group genuinely functions as a team with shared objectives and interdependence.



### Invite Team Ownership

Encourage the team to interpret the request and take ownership of the potential work.



### Align All Stakeholders

Ensure agreement between the leader, team, and coach on purpose and scope.



### Distinguish Needs

Clearly differentiate between the needs of the leader, the team, and the organization as a whole.



### Transparent Communication

Share the initial request openly and transparently with the entire team.



### Co-Define Outcomes

Collaboratively establish clear team outcomes and measurable success metrics.



### Maintain Team Focus

Prioritize the team as the primary client throughout the engagement.

# Signals Requiring Re-Contracting

## Vague Outcomes

Success undefined or unmeasurable

## Leader-Only Framing

Team not present in the agreement

## Behavior Prescriptions

"Make them do X" language

## Hidden Evaluation

Assessment agenda not disclosed

## Event-Driven Requests

"Before the meeting" time pressure

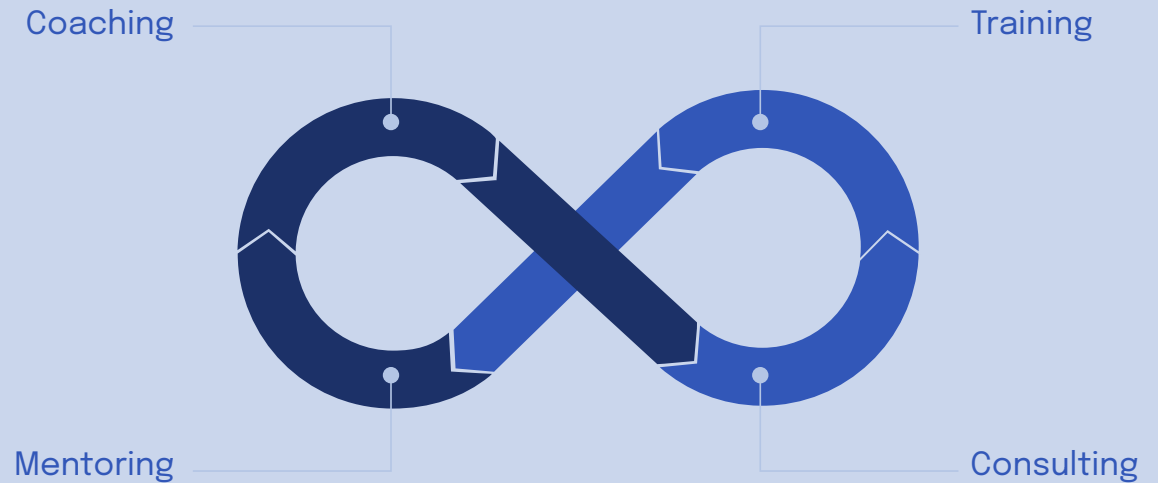
# Coaching-Facilitation Continuum

## Where Do You Stand?

Coaches move along a continuum based on what the work requires.

**Key question:** Who owns the thinking and the change?

Your contracting defines your position and protects coaching integrity.



# Closing Reflection

## Team coaching begins before the work starts

It begins in how we **interpret the request** and what we **agree to do**. Use your coaching skills, especially when contracting & re-contracting.

Check out [coachingfederation.org](https://www.coachingfederation.org) for the latest on ICF Individual and Team Competencies

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Reference the [ICF Core Competencies](#) and [ICF Team Coaching Competencies](#) packed with frameworks for effective, transformative coaching.

## Thank You

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*1.5 ICF Core Competencies:*

*Establishes & Maintains Agreements ·  
Demonstrates Ethical Practice · Facilitates  
Client Growth*

One insight I'm taking:

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One contracting tactic I'll try:

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