Coach & Mentor

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Welcome to the 2010 edition of The OCM Coach and Mentor Journal

Contents

Has anything really changed?

Editorial – Ed Parsloe

Following the retirement of Eric Parsloe in May 2009, Ed is now Managing Director of The OCM.

In preparation for writing this editorial, I took it upon myself to look over the last 10 editions of this journal to see if there were any recurring themes. I read the editorials that Eric had written as well as numerous articles by many leading figures from the coaching and mentoring profession. It was a fascinating exercise, not only because of the quality of the articles (a theme continued in this edition) but also because of what it revealed.

On the surface, it would appear that the coaching and mentoring professional has been in a perennial state of flux for the last decade with theories, concepts and groups of people (tribes if you will) on a seemingly endless cycle of argument and counter argument. Amongst those articles describing a new approach or tool, there were many discussing the need to build a strong business case for coaching or the importance of developing and agreeing a common set of standards plus the need for greater cooperation between the various governing bodies of our profession.

Does any of this sound familiar? Has anything really changed in the last 10 years? I looked more closely at the articles written for this current issue and concluded that, whilst many of the themes remain the same, there is unquestionably a growing sophistication and a real sense of purpose about the direction in which we are heading. This edition does include discussion about theories old and new – Peter Hawkins, Ian Day and Kiki Maurey provide some fascinating insights. There are also articles about building a business case with some excellent case studies by Sara Wright, Liz Lambert, Lucy Braithwaite and Murray Thomas. Both David Clutterbuck and Charlotte Park add to this theme with their articles on what makes a successful mentoring programme and the importance of creating time to think for executives.

The articles by Erik de Haan / Anna Duckworth and Claire Hack perhaps, more than any, demonstrate this growing sophistication and shared purpose. The empirical research undertaken by De Haan et al demonstrates a clear desire to critically examine some fundamental questions about the effectiveness of coaching, namely attempting to discover if it really works and what aspects are particularly effective. As the authors suggest, these questions may be simple to ask but they are almost impossible to answer. This not only reminds me of the Leonardo da Vinci quote "simplicity is the ultimate sophistication" but it is also the guiding tenet of The OCM approach to coach-mentoring.

Claire Hack's explanation of the European Mentoring and Coaching Council's (EMCC) new European Individual Accreditation (EIA) is possibly one of the most important developments in the coaching and mentoring market to date. The desire to create a gold standard to promote the adoption of quality standards in coaching and mentoring so that we can create assurance in the market about the experience and quality of coaches and mentors and at the same time provide practitioners with the ability to distinguish themselves as competent to practice professionally has to be applauded and supported wholeheartedly.

So 'Yes' there is continuing flux and 'Yes' many of the same themes are still prevalent. However, I believe that the current discussions in this journal and the wider market demonstrate a level of sophistication and shared purpose that has not often been seen in the last decade. We are moving in the right direction. I hope that when I write the editorial for the 2020 Journal, my optimism will not have been misplaced.

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Coaching as an enabler of change

Sara Wright

The context

RS Components (RS) is an electronic, electrical and industrial distributor supplying a vast range of products to research and development or maintenance engineers. RS operates in 27 countries under the trading brands of RS, Radiospares, Radionics and Allied Electronics. A further 38 countries also receive products, via a distributor network, resulting in coverage of around 90% of the world's GDP.

RS is an organisation built on its ability to provide a high quality service to its customers. RS employees have a huge amount of pride in the company, its products and everything it stands for. The culture is historically paternalistic, people are – and expect to be – valued.

The challenge

A need to respond to a rapidly changing operating environment

The global economic downturn of 2008 brought a new level of challenge for the RS organisation. Operating conditions became tougher as a general slowing of world trading increased the focus on meeting cost and revenue targets. In response, RS announced a restructuring programme to streamline the organisation and strengthen operational resilience.

A number of factors needed to be addressed directly, to deliver change and continue to evolve an organisation fit for the future. Specific challenges included:

• A desire for an increased sense of ownership and individual accountability, e.g. decisions were often escalated to senior managers.

• A need to develop internal talent and ensure the right leaders were in position to implement strategy and develop employees.

Develop leadership and deliver change

RS's leadership development strategy focused on the following imperatives:

• For leaders to use coaching behaviours to manage performance, increase employee engagement and promote learning, e.g. during 1:1 meetings, performance reviews, career development interviews and appraisals.

• To shift culture towards empowering 'adult to adult' colleague relationships.

• A need to develop relationships within matrix reporting structures to strengthen collaborations and increase speed of decision making.

The solution

A robust development programme with practical application in the workplace

The OCM and Starr Consulting were engaged to deliver a leadership development programme to help develop a coaching style of leadership. After more than 50 hours study, successful delegates would also gain a credible external accreditation that they would value as individuals. The programme targeted senior leaders including members of the Executive Committee; ensuring role models for coaching were visible from the very top of the organisation.

Specific objectives of the programme included:

1. To give leaders a range of leadership coaching tools and skills pragmatic to their role.

2. To build coaching ability through increased self-awareness, receiving feedback, personal reflection and direct experience.

3. To challenge leaders by a programme with a higher than average level of commitment, e.g. self-study, personal coaching and assessment.

The programme was not designed to create internal coaches; instead it was for senior leaders to strengthen their skills through the integration of coaching into their everyday style.

A supported journey of learning

The four-month long programme was a blend of the following methods:

1. Self-assessment, (pre- and post-programme).

2. Classroom study, (theory, demonstration and practice).

3. Practice in the workplace, ie a minimum of three formal coaching relationships.

4. Telephone coaching by expert coaches.

5. Colleague feedback, via a competency based questionnaire.

6. Reading and written reflection.

7. Formal assessment and accreditation.
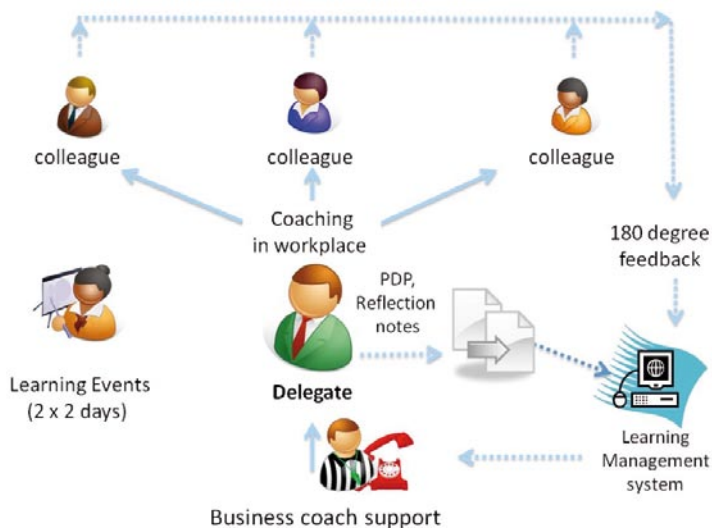
The approach is further illustrated below:

FIGURE 1.

Personal perspectives

The programme was a challenging time as delegates unpicked their own paradigms about how they led and the beliefs they had about people.

For many, the programme was a journey of self-discovery, challenge and personal growth. Many leaders began the programme believing they were 'coaching' managers. Individuals quickly recognised their own behaviour and mindset was actually more directive and controlling of the people around them. This same directive tendency was also linked to issues of dependency, increased workload, stress and a delayed decision making. Delegates quickly became engaged in the opportunity coaching presented.

The results

Engagement, ability and a common approach

Quantitative feedback was gathered as part of the accreditation process and during employee engagement surveys. Further qualitative and anecdotal feedback was gathered after the formal accreditation, either as part of the appraisal process or through regular reviews.

The feedback indicated that:

• Colleagues were solving problems without automatically asking for direction; they were thinking for themselves and exploring creative solutions.

• Engagement was increasing as a consequence of a more empowering style of leadership.

• Delegates felt more confident to have difficult conversations.

• Speed of decision making was increasing, as leaders began to foster empowerment by 'fixing' issues less often and instead encouraging decisions from others.

The business is embracing the concept of leadership coaching and real change is starting to happen. A second programme was as successful as the first and leaders are now pro-active in applying to join subsequent programmes. The opportunity to challenge their own behaviour and mindset, whilst gaining a professionally relevant qualification has broad appeal.

For RS Components, a calm sense of optimism grows. Reductions in operating costs have been achieved and recent sales trends are encouraging. A talented workforce, with a leadership driven to succeed are proving a winning combination. Whilst change is a recognised constant, leaders in the organisation are embracing coaching as a way of delivering results whilst developing people.

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Starting out

Lucy Braithwaite

exactly the right place to learn the skills and knowledge of brilliant coaching.

I wrote copious notes, gathered up my books and set out to tackle my learner sessions, reflection notes and knowledge modules. It felt as if my coaching journey had just begun. In preparing for my first learner sessions, I felt daunted by the fabulous coach I had constructed in my mind and aspired to be. How could I begin to help my learners in anything like the ways Eric Parsloe, Julie Starr and the Faculty Coach-Mentors had demonstrated, when I was just starting out? There was still so much to learn.

However, I was surprised just how smoothly the sessions flowed. An easy rapport was established and there were no gaping silences while I flapped around for a searching question. The more I relaxed and enjoyed being curious as to where the conversation would go, the more deeply learners explored. This sense of open curiosity has been really valuable in my training consultancy work too. For example, when I am scoping projects, being genuinely curious as to what my clients are really trying to achieve, rather than feeling rushed to move on to solutions, has led to far deeper conversations, better collaboration and more effective training initiatives. Both the client and I get to the heart of the true issue, rather than devoting effort to what they initially claim to be their training need and often transpires to be only part of the story.

Reflecting on my early sessions with learners, it became clear that my coaching was having a real impact despite me very much feeling like a novice coach. Deep learning was taking place – both for my learners and me – beyond our expectations. I realised that by focusing on my vision of a great coach, I had

I began The OCM Advanced Diploma coaching journey eager to build the skills, knowledge and experience needed to become my vision of a great coach. Instead, what emerged during my learning journey was a realisation that the key is weaving new knowledge and experience into one's existing talents, evolving as a better version of who one already is.

Sitting in the first workshop, surrounded by towering piles of text books and course manuals packed full of learning outcomes, felt a reassuring place to be. I had sought a robust and professional programme; one that would challenge and engage me, and this was certainly meeting my expectations. Further proof was the calibre of people in my cohort – impressive and like-minded people, many of whom were already operating as coaches or embarking on their own businesses to do so. This felt like

overlooked relevant skills and experience that I had already developed over the years, and which were key to my coaching role. For example, building trusted relationships or effective listening.

Another important factor was the coaching environment we co-created; one of trust, openness, possibility and a sense of shared journey. In an early coaching session, one learner was astounded by the profound insights she uncovered in an area that she had been grappling with unsuccessfully for years. Giving her time and space in this supportive environment and the occasional prompting question allowed her to explore the issue more fully. I learned to trust in the coaching process itself.

Although years of coaching experience and drawing on an established toolkit and knowledge base impact the quality of coaching, they are not a prerequisite to making a difference. The powerful learning for me early on was that much could be achieved before feeling fully credible as an established coach.

My bookshelf of course texts was a constant reminder of just how much there was to learn. How could I assimilate this new learning in a seamless way that fitted with my natural coaching style and not simply impose it in an effort to 'try things out'? Having reflected on my need to make these external inputs my own in order to coach authentically, I resolved to use instinct to guide what might be helpful to introduce to the session, rather than consciously introducing a tool, model or process to our conversation. This further helped in my quest to value the coach I was emerging to be, rather than focusing on an aspirational coach who would appear at the end of the programme.

The impact of my learning from The OCM programme has extended far beyond individual coaching sessions with my learners. I find myself self-coaching on an almost daily basis – perhaps something that happened before, but not as frequently, as coherently or with such powerful effect. In my work as a training consultant, I am more consistently asking searching questions of the teams I work with rather than 'suggesting' solutions. For example, in a planning meeting for a training conference, instead of the usual routine of diligently walking through each area of the project, I instead asked the project manager to focus on the aspects of the project they were most concerned about, and what they considered to be their top priorities for the week ahead. This elicited a far more meaningful (and interesting) conversation and the project manager was more enthusiastically engaged as it highlighted their responsibility for the project.

Deeper listening and awareness of differing perspectives are examples of skills finely honed by the programme but transferable to my wider world. For example, in a recent work meeting, a colleague was loudly broadcasting his impressive revenue figures and how his client relationships are something that we should all be aspiring to. A year ago, I would have rolled my eyes, judged him as arrogant and switched off. Instead, I was intrigued by what lay behind his words. Perhaps he's so passionate about his work, and genuinely pleased with what was undeniably a successful outcome, that he would have been bemused by others not sharing his excitement? I also began to consider how differently others might perceive him and the impact this could have on their interaction going forward. Being able to detach from the situation, suspend judgement and put myself in another's shoes without even realising

it, has been an unexpected and valuable outcome of my coaching experience.

There is much I still want to develop as my journey continues, and I don't foresee the learning ever ending. My coaching practice has been, and will continue to be, informed greatly by my reading, my experiences and openness to learn from inspirational people. However, unless I translate these inputs into something that I can make my own, and truly value my unique approach, I cannot be the authentic coach that I must be to coach well.

I began this journey seeking the magic formula needed to emerge at the end as a brilliant coach. However, I realised that I had overlooked relevant skills and experience that I brought to the journey already and that the coaching environment and process itself has immense inherent value; learners were finding deep learning even when guided by an inexperienced coach. Unlocking my own potential as a coach required an acceptance that "I am both 'enough' and also capable of more" (Starr, 2008). I still aspire to be a great coach – I am just kinder to myself in judging my achievement.

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Who and what makes mentoring programmes work?

It's probably no surprise to any reader, who has been involved in coaching and mentoring for a while, that well-designed, well-managed programmes deliver far better results than those that are just thrown together. While there have been very few empirical studies to demonstrate this, even a quick overview of a random selection of programmes indicates that there are radical differences in how useful participants find the programme, the amount of two-way learning that happens, the quality of the relationships, the sustainability of the programme and the organisational outcomes, such as employee retention and job commitment.

The advent of the *International Standards for Mentoring Programmes in Employment (ISMPE)* a few years ago encapsulated the basics of what "good" looked like. Now run and owned by an international consortium of organisations concerned to promote quality in mentoring, the standards provide a benchmark. Many organisations simply use the standards in the design of their programmes, but some also opt to have their programme assessed against the standards, to reassure stakeholders that this is indeed a quality programme.

In this short article, I review some of the core characteristics of highly successful mentoring programmes. I also try to give recognition to the unsung heroes of mentoring – the programme coordinators, whose efforts are pivotal to success.

Successful, effective mentoring programmes begin with strong **preparation.** There is an intense dialogue, led by the coordinator, between the programme sponsors, a steering group representing both potential mentors and mentees and stakeholders elsewhere. The aim of the dialogue is to be very clear about the business case for the programme, who it is aimed at, how long it will last (in terms of formal support from the organisation) and how participants will be

prepared and supported. These initial dialogues also help to establish how and when the programme will be monitored and evaluated; and any processes for troubleshooting.

Next comes **communication.** During the preparation, a detailed communication plan is developed to address the needs of all the key stakeholders. In particular:

• Mentors and mentees, to ensure they understand the benefits of taking part and have an opportunity to voice any concerns (e.g. will it be confidential?).

• Senior management sponsors (what will be expected of them in terms of support and being role models?).

• Participants' line managers, to ensure they support rather than undermine the mentoring relationships.

• The wider HR community, who may be pivotal in identifying and supporting potential participants and in keeping line managers on side.

It's also important to consider how to communicate to people, who are not selected for the mentoring programme this time around, but who would like to have been. They, too, need to be kept engaged and on side.

Training usually takes place before mentors and mentees are paired off. The ISMPE are unequivocal that both parties should receive sufficient initial training to understand their roles and the basic skills and behaviours of mentoring. Typically, where both mentors and mentees have been trained, and line managers briefed, over 90% of relationships deliver significant learning and are valued by participants. By contrast, programmes without training rarely deliver significant value for more than a third of participants.

Matching can be a tricky process. You need to have enough rapport for the two people to work well together and develop at least a basic level of friendship; yet enough grit in the oyster to stimulate real learning. Research into effective matching suggests that demographics on their own do not make a good basis for pairing, although matching for similarity of race will tend to deliver more empathy and psychosocial support. Psychometric matching doesn't seem to provide any better matching than random assignment. However, current experiments are using Reiss Motivational Profiling as a first filter, to establish compatibility of values. The theory is that, if this identifies the level of expected rapport in the relationship, other preferences by the mentee for the mentor's age, race, gender, location and so on can cope with the "grit" part of the equation.

Leaving the mentoring partners to just get on with it is a common mistake. They need **continuing support,** in several forms:

• Someone to talk to if the relationship is not working as well as it might, or if the mentor lacks appropriate approaches to deal with specific issues. This can be the coordinator, or a member of the steering committee.

• A resource of background information – for example, a library or an on-line extensive FAQ database.

• At least one review session in the first year, to reinforce the initial training and to build their confidence in performing the mentoring role.

Robust **measurement** feeds into the support process, by keeping the coordinator informed about the progress of individual relationships and identifying themes that can be addressed in the review sessions. Care needs to be taken in selecting

Professor David Clutterbuck

measures – most of those available are designed for forms of mentoring that are highly directive and sponsorship based. Beware anything that mentions "functions" of a mentor!

It's also important to gather data from both mentor and mentee, to obtain a clear picture of the dynamics of relationships. Measurement also encourages the mentor and mentee to discuss their relationship, leading to improved behaviours and outcomes.

Many programmes set a date for the ending of the formal relationship, although mentor and mentee often continue with their meetings informally thereafter. In these cases, it is important to **celebrate** the achievements of the relationship. We know from our research that recognising the relationship in this way has a very substantial impact on how positively it is regarded.

Right at the centre of all this activity is the coordinator. He or she promotes the

programme to participants and corporate sponsors; to protect it from the destructive forces of sudden economies and changes of management fashion; and to maintain the quality of the programme, often on limited budgets.

Great mentoring coordinators always have remarkable reserves of enthusiasm, both for the concept of mentoring, for the wider notion of developing others, and for the organisations, in which they work. They are widely networked within the organisation – known and respected across all levels and functional silos. Although most are also highly effective coaches and mentors themselves, this is not always the case – some of the most effective coordinators have recognised their own limitations in this respect and chosen to focus on making mentoring happen, rather than personally being a role model for one-to-one developmental behaviours.

So what does the effective programme coordinator do? Among the key functions are the following:

1. *Make the business case for mentoring.* Along with their enthusiasm, effective coordinators bring a strong sense of the pragmatic. They identify where mentoring will add most value to the organisation, by helping to solve thorny business issues, and they build a solid argument around how it will do so. They are not afraid to attach both hard and soft measures to the business case. Wherever possible, they engage top management in discussion, to ensure that they are fully supportive and that they understand at both intellectual and emotional levels what a difference the programme will make.

2. *Create a cadre of enthusiastic and active supporters.* Support from top management helps to give the programme prominence and shape, but only rarely do the business leaders spend substantial amounts of time on the programme. For that, the coordinator needs an active steering group of enthusiasts, who will take responsibility for assisting with the programme and a network of influencers, who will promote it passively. Both of

Who and what makes mentoring programmes work? (cont.)

these can be drawn from groups specifically targeted by the mentoring programme, but there is also much to be gained from widening out the involvement to an organisation-wide constituency, especially if the programme is a pilot for mentoring in general. The steering group members not only attend the same training as mentors and / or mentees, but are also encouraged to continue to learn about mentoring and coaching.

3. *Market the programme to participants.* Even when pushing at an open door, effective coordinators recognise the need to align expectations of both participants and other stakeholders, such as line managers, with the reality of the programme design and what mentoring can and cannot (or should not) do. They arrange lunch and learn sessions, distribute short newsletters and hold endless conversations to educate people and to encourage mentors and mentees to come forward. Even in large programmes, dedicated coordinators target people they think should participate and give the special encouragement to do so.

4. *Install robust systems.* Whether a programme is for five pairs or five hundred, they ensure that people can register easily, have the information and guidance to select an appropriate partner, are supported throughout the programme and receive the training they need for their respective roles. They also ensure that the measurement process gathers valid data from a high proportion, if not from all participants and that its results are used both to improve programme effectiveness and to motivate stakeholders.

5. *Remain in touch with the programme undercurrents.* They use all the resources they have at their disposal – formal measures, information and impressions

from sponsors and steering group members, and frequent casual conversations with participants – to monitor the health of the programme and the individual relationships within it. They may, in some cases, become almost a second mentor, although they are highly conscious of the need not to intrude into the relationships. They use this data to inform the content and design of further training and review sessions for mentors and mentees; and to counter any signs of "relationship droop" (the point in some mentoring relationships, where one or both parties backs off, fearing that they are imposing too much on the other).

6. *Benchmark against other organisations.* Even before the ISMPE provided a method of direct comparison against mentoring relationship dynamics in other organisations, effective coordinators sought out opportunities to benchmark their programme. They made peer visits to companies with schemes targeted at similar groups (for example, mentoring as part of graduate recruitment programmes); they attended conferences, where there were case studies of other organisations to discuss and dissect; and they developed peer networks with other coordinators. All of these activities are still very useful in keeping a programme in good shape and ensuring it delivers the maximum benefits for both participants and the organisation.

7. *Plan for their succession.* Running a successful mentoring programme is often a significant stepping-stone in their own careers. It brings people to top management notice in positive ways that may not have been obvious before. As a result, there is a trend for them to move on to other, larger assignments, or be head-hunted by other organisations, or take a career shift to become full-time executive

coaches and / or mentors. Preparing one or more strong successors is important in making sure the programme will continue and will thrive.

The bottom line

Successful mentoring programmes don't just happen. They require a significant amount of planning and, once they are launched, continuous attention and promotion. Once the habit of effective mentoring management becomes ingrained, however, all sorts of subtle benefits emerge within the organisation. For example, mentees feel supported in becoming mentors. And managers who have gained confidence in their developmental skills by being a mentor to someone else's direct reports (where the personal risks of "not doing it right" are much smaller) more readily adopt coaching behaviours towards their own teams.

To find out more about CA's two-day mentoring coordinator workshops, contact Jo Gray on +44 (0)1628 606850.

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Where were all the coaches when the banks went down?

Ian Day

Where were all the coaches when the banks went down? Pause for a moment to ponder this provocative question and see what thoughts, reactions, and ideas come to you.

There is no doubt that the collapse of a number of major financial institutions in late 2008 has led to a re-examination by many organisations of their priorities and needs for coaching and leadership development.

When I have posed this question at seminars and presentations, it has generated energetic conversations. The topic clearly touches a nerve. For some, coaches were not being used pervasively enough in the financial sector to make a difference to the wider organisation. For others, they wonder about the level of detachment of the coaches who were coaching senior leaders in the banks in the years leading up to 2009. For others, it makes them think about the nature of coaching and how can a non-directive intervention make any difference when the leaders involved were 'blind' to the situation? Along with this, how much responsibility did coaches feel when they read newspaper headlines about failing organisations where they coached?

From one simple question there are so many different views, reactions, and perspectives. This change in economic climate encourages an evaluation and every party has to ask themselves, 'where was I, what was I doing and what was my contribution?' As coaches, we have to shine the light on ourselves, our coaching practice and profession and ask, 'what are we going to learn?' The buyers of coaching services are asking questions far more ruthlessly now, and so maybe it is time to consider how coaching best adapts to this type of environment. How we put our own house in order will be crucial for the credibility and relevance of coaching in the post-recession economy and this encourages me to consider if coaching techniques should be different. It is these matters that my colleague John Blakey and I consider in our book "Where were all the coaches when the banks went down?"

Let's pause and take a step back to consider what led us to this point, and how coaching can remain relevant for the next decade.

Every profession evolves and matures. Relatively speaking, coaching is a very young profession emerging in the 1980s. The International Coach Federation (ICF), the largest global professional body, was only formed in 1995. The period up to 2009 was an economic boom time and during most of the decade we were talking about the 'war for talent', as the biggest challenge for many organisations seemed to be attracting, retaining and developing the right people. The indirect cost of losing these key people was significant, and the direct cost of hiring and on-boarding new talent focused attention onto retention. This seems a long time ago now, but this backdrop had a significant impact on the formative years of the coaching profession.

With an emphasis on attracting and retaining top talent, there was a focus on the relationship building skills so that coaching pinpointed the individual needs of the coachee. Showing concern for the client's welfare, empathy, active listening, respect for the client's perceptions, attending to the client's agenda, were all important to the coach and were emphasised in coaching books and skill development programmes.

Whilst these behaviours are all part of what makes a great coach, there are risks in making these the sole focus of a coaching approach. To an extreme, these behaviours can lead to collusion with the coachee's overly personal agenda which is irrelevant to business effectiveness, and so coaching becomes detached, self-obsessed and far too narrow. How many coaches have ever had the following thought in the midst of a coaching session – 'How did we get here and what on earth has this got to do with the people that are paying me to be in front of this person right now?' This may have been due to an over-reliance on person-focused relationship based coaching skills combined with loose 'contracting' and insufficient involvement of wider business stakeholders. It was as if the rapport between the coach and coachee was sacrosanct and had to be maintained at all times.

During the recession, coaching in corporate organisations took a hit and many programmes were cut. This suggests that coaching is seen as an optional extra and not considered as having a direct link to business performance. So how does a coach convince an HR Director or the Board to sponsor a coaching programme in challenging times as they are struggling to sustain the business?

At 121partners, a leadership development and executive coaching consultancy, we have witnessed a marked shift in the demands of organisational buyers of coaching in the twelve to eighteen months up to the end of 2009 as the 'credit crunch' transformed the economic environment. We noticed that we were being asked to coach for organisational 'needs' rather than for individual 'wants'.

Where were all the coaches when the banks went down? (cont.)

Our programmes are being validated against the business agenda of the organisation rather than the personal agenda of a particular talent pool member. As this shift took place, we realised that it created a different emphasis in our style of coaching and challenged us to be creative in re-inventing our coaching presence to suit the new environment. In particular, we have had to focus upon the following skills to a much greater level than before:

• **Feedback –** How does a coach give feedback to leaders that informs and inspires?

• **Accountability –** How does a coach hold leaders accountable for commitments without blame or shame?

• **Challenge –** How does a coach challenge leaders to step out of their comfort zones whilst staying credible and realistic in tough market conditions?

• **Tension –** When is tension constructive? How can coaches practise creating and holding tension without risking burnout in key performers?

• **Systems Thinking –** How can a coach stay sensitive to 'big picture' issues (which may be outside the agenda of the coachee) such as sustainability, ethics, diversity, and the environment without losing focus on 'bottom line' results?

Together these skills are the FACTS approach to coaching.

In addition to this approach, coaches do not need to go far to find the answer of how to build on a strong relationship with a coachee based on trust and respect, and move to bottom line results. The ICF core competencies, for example, contain behaviours that could be described as more results focused:

• Positively confronts the client with the fact that he / she did not take agreed-upon actions.

• Promotes client's self-discipline and holds the client accountable.

• Creates a plan with results that are attainable, measurable, specific and have target dates.

• Challenges client's assumptions and perspectives to provoke new ideas and find new possibilities for action.

• Is clear, articulate and direct in sharing and providing feedback.

• Accesses own intuition and trusts one's inner knowing – 'goes with the gut'.

• Is open to not knowing and takes risks.

Coaches may be very familiar with competencies relating to developing empathy, trust and rapport, but less familiar with the behaviours described above. There are phrases like 'positively confronts', 'promotes discipline', 'holds accountable', 'challenges perspectives', 'direct feedback', 'takes risks', 'goes with the gut'. These phrases may seem uncomfortable for a non-directive coach. There is an 'edge' to these words that you can imagine drives results in a coaching dialogue.

However, these skills are not used instead of the relationship building skills but they expand on these and leverage them to improve performance. In the new economic times, I suggest that these 'edgy' coaching skills will be crucial if coaching is to stay relevant to the needs of the buyers of coaching. For it is these skills that will enable managers and coaches to get more out of the people around them without sacrificing high trust, personal relationships or reverting to a 'command and control' mind set.

Consider **Figure 1.** If a coach spends 100% of his / her time deploying relationship building skills (the extreme left hand side on the diagram), there will be a very strong relationship, even a friendship, with high levels of rapport, trust and empathy, but potentially no results. If the coach focuses on the extreme right hand side of the diagram there will be high levels of feedback, accountability, challenge and tension, but without the foundation of a strong relationship, the coaching is unlikely to last. So this is not a 'black and white' situation, but it is about the proportion of time that a coach uses their relationship building skills compared to their results focused skills.

In the boom times, it could be said that coaching has typically been 70% relationship focused and 30% results focused. This was appropriate at a time when the 'war for talent' was at its height and so coaching around the personal agenda served a purpose.

However, times have changed and the current challenges require a greater shift to an approach where results and return on investment for the business are not only valued, but seen as paramount by the coach. A purchaser of coaching requires more from coaching, with say 70% of the coaching work focused on results and 30% focused upon relationship building.

The FACTS approach requires coaches to 'stretch' themselves and their coachee in sessions that are quite challenging, which risk breaking rapport and risking their 'friendship' with the coachee in order to achieve results. Coaching is about challenging assumptions, examining habits, overcoming barriers and embedding change. For this to work the coach must feedback, challenge and hold the coachee accountable and be prepared to have discussions that feel uncomfortable and tense. Holding the tension is crucial

FIGURE 1.

COACHING APPROACH

Personal confidence

Relaxed and focused

Willing to take risks

Willing to break rapport

DELIVERING RESULTS

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

100%

100%

Typical coaching
70% relationship building

FACTS coaching
70% delivering results

until the 'heart of the matter' is opened up and resolved.

The underlying beliefs and orientation of the coach will enable him / her to enter and work with this tension and challenge. The coach is there to serve the coachee and the organisation sponsoring the coaching, and so any intervention will be designed to be positive and constructive. High potential individuals are typically robust and as the tension rises the coach has the confident belief that this will lead to a breakthrough. If the coaching relationship is built on solid relationship skills, it will be strong enough to sustain the tension and benefit from focusing on the heart of the issue rather than skirting round it. The coach needs high levels of personal confidence, a willingness to take risks, and a willingness to break rapport. At the heart of this is the importance of a coach holding direct communication as opposed to directive communication.

What has been described here are advanced coaching skills with the foundations of effective coaching remaining the same. If the coach holds the coachee in unconditional positive regard and has a belief in his / her potential to achieve greatness, this challenging approach is a positive intervention.

It seems an unstoppable force in nature that everything changes and evolves. In the same way the coaching profession must evolve to remain relevant to the post-recession environment. It is time for coaches to face the FACTS!

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Hands up if you want more time to think?

A personal perspective on the importance of creating time and space for thinking.

A few years ago, when I was still working in the corporate world, I was lucky enough to work for a very inspirational Chief Operating Officer who came into the organisation for one year on secondment. Not surprisingly, one of the first things he did was to ask his team for their thoughts on what each of us could do in our respective business areas to increase sales and / or profits and reduce costs. I went away and gave it some serious thought – I would probably call it self-coaching now – brainstorming ideas and options – and eventually came up with a few serious suggestions that I jotted down as a handful of bullets on an email, which I sent to my new boss prior to the next team meeting.

I printed off a copy for reference and duly turned up at the meeting to find my colleagues there with printed glossy binders full of PowerPoint slides to illustrate all their ideas, laptops at the ready to make their slick presentations. Well maybe you can imagine how uncomfortable I felt clutching my one page email! The new COO asked each person to share their thoughts and I watched the series of presentations. They did look impressive but I couldn't help thinking they hadn't actually addressed the question we had been asked. Eventually it was my turn – I apologised for not having done a presentation – and just talked through my four ideas and the financial outcomes of each one – it only took a few minutes. The COO looked at me, smiled and thanked me, pointing out to the team that I was the only one who had actually done what he had asked everyone to do, namely spend some time really thinking about what could be done. He concluded by saying that he was paying us to think and asked everyone (except me!) to go away and come back with some ideas when they had really thought it through – and no presentations!

I guess it was this experience that was the catalyst for me to recognise that if more leaders in the business could be encouraged to think, how much more productive could they be? And yet what happens – all too often – senior managers and directors in corporate life go from one meeting to another with their diaries full to capacity and their emails, particularly their cc emails never stopping and they do their critical, strategic, creative thinking … when exactly? Well unless this time for thinking is planned in, the answer might be never.

Even the newly elected American President recognised the need for allocating time for thinking…

"The most important thing you need to do," mused Obama at a meeting with David Cameron last year, "is to have big chunks of time during the day when all you're doing is thinking."

One of the most interesting books on this subject is 'A Time to Think' by Nancy Kline which was published nearly 10 years ago and she has recently published 'More Time to Think' which will hopefully encourage even more people to appreciate the need to create dedicated thinking time and space.

Imagine the reaction in some organisations if an executive was seen with a clear desk, looking out of the window, deep in thought? How many people would be enlightened enough to be pleased that real thinking and reflection were taking place – I'd be delighted if it was more than 20%.

No, sadly the immediate thoughts would often be that here was an executive who wasn't busy enough and we all know what this can mean in these times of continual re-structuring. And yet – an hour or two of quality reflection can produce some fantastic ideas which might make a huge impact on a company's profits.

So how can this be encouraged – yes, this is where coaching comes into play. Go back to the scene of the executive in their office, looking out the window deep in thought and put a coach in front of them asking challenging questions with long silences for the coachee to articulate their thoughts and suddenly the reaction on seeing this picture would be very different and quite acceptable to most!

How do we encourage thinking – by asking questions and listening to the answers – surely it can't be as simple as that? If it were this simple, wouldn't we all be doing it? Well actually no, because doing it assumes a few disciplines and attributes which sadly aren't as prevalent in business as they should be:

• We have the time to allow the person to think of their answer.

• We have the interest in what their answer might be.

• We have the time to listen to the person sharing their thoughts with us.

• We are completely open to hearing their thoughts rather than espousing our own.

• If their thoughts are radically different to our own, we have faith in the person and will actually relinquish control and allow them to make things happen in their own way.

We all regularly hear about organisations and individuals wanting to introduce a 'Coaching Culture'– well a simple definition of that is developing the 'ask not

Charlotte Park

tell habit' and if we ask questions, then we need to give people the time to think of their answers.

So what has to take place to allow more thinking time? Perhaps by insisting all senior managers / directors allocate at least two hours every week for thinking time, that can be visibly seen by their peers.

How they do this is up to them to decide, but it might be:

– sitting in their office staring out the window with no interruptions.

– going for a walk or a swim or a bike ride at lunch time.

– meeting with a coach or mentor, which is a great discipline for forcing thinking time into the diary.

– attending an action learning set with like-minded colleagues.

– facilitating a brainstorming activity with their team.

– writing a reflection note on a very positive or a really difficult experience.

The 'how' list goes on – but the common theme is they're all about generating thoughts. Often we really don't know what ideas are inside us until we are asked a simple question like – so what can you do about this situation? I always believe there

are at least three options to any situation – do nothing, do the obvious or do the ridiculous. Now I appreciate the ridiculous is, by its very nature unlikely, but the ridiculous is often about what you would do if you had more time, or more team members, or larger budgets etc, and it is often worth exploring these so-called ridiculous notions, as like any true brainstorming, from these throw-away seemingly ludicrous suggestions can often come the seed of an idea that just might work, if only you make the time to think it through further!

Indeed can we afford not to spend time on creative and strategic thinking and therefore not making progress? Albert Einstein gives a definition of insanity as "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results" and yet all too often this is what happens in the world of business.

In conclusion, one of the reasons I am so passionate about coaching is that it legitimately creates thinking time. Whenever I am working with teams of senior managers or directors I will often include a facilitated discussion on the need to create 'Time for clear thinking' by asking a series of questions…?

• How much time do you spend on creative or strategic thinking?

• Where and how do you do this thinking?

• How do you encourage others to think?

• What happens if you don't make time for creative or strategic thinking?

All too often the conclusion is that all their thinking is on the spot, reacting to issues in the moment, time is rarely available to think about the long-term

future or to reflect and draw learning from recent experiences.

One of the reasons I have always been such an advocate of The OCM, even before I worked for them full time, is their huge emphasis on reflection in their accredited programmes which forces candidates to find time to reflect. This is commonly one of the parts of our programmes that initially candidates struggle with, particularly if it is at odds with the culture of their organisation, but very often they find developing reflective skills to be the biggest trigger of transformational change.

So how can we change this reluctance to making time to think? As I mentioned earlier, coming up with ways to encourage more thinking time is important and I refer to it at every opportunity, in fact it's become my soapbox! But perhaps if everyone was challenged to have a 'think time' at least once a week and it became the norm, then the answer to my original title question, might not be the resounding show of hands it currently is.

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Coaching Harmonics: Developing spiritual awareness

Kiki Maurey

I've long been intrigued with the question, '*how can I get in touch with my unconscious or 'spiritual' self?'* Associated with this new quest is whether there is, as appears to be the case, a correlation between the ability to access as a coach, one's *'inner spiritual self'* or *'soul's intelligence'* (of which intuition is just a part) and the level of competence in improving all those skills conditional to an effective coaching relationship. I've also suspected that by doing this I could also learn to better access my deeply held ethical values and beliefs as a coach and thus perhaps be more effective.

So my emerging hypothesis is that by better utilising my 'spiritual self' I can learn how to access the right 'state(s)' for building rapport, developing authentic empathy, positive intentionality and unconditional regard, suspending judgment etc. I've developed the phrase 'coaching harmonics' as a way of encapsulating these thoughts, and very real experiences.

Over the years I've also been fascinated by, let's call it 'spookiness', in human experience. You might have experienced it yourself as déjà vu, so-called 2nd sight, premonition, the feeling that someone is watching you, or that when you think of someone you haven't seen for some time, they ring or email you and say they've been having the same feelings about you!

Zohar (2004) provides significant clarity on what is spiritual capital, or spiritual intelligence:

"The intelligence with which we access our deepest meaning, values, purposes, and highest motivations... giving us an innate ability to distinguish right from wrong... the soul's intelligence... linked to the capacity to see lives in wholes, not fragments, and to regenerate ourselves."

This could be an important issue for those of us interested in understanding how we can use our own 'coaching states' in different ways. Certainly I've become a lot more conscious of what seems like an unconscious adoption of 'states' that mirror the coaching needs and challenges of my coaches. This has been helped by a disciplined year of deep reflection, almost like a part of me has been looking down on my coaching relationships, watching and learning about the process from a distance.

So what do I mean by 'coaching state'? I guess for me it means the kind of thinking processes and feelings I am experiencing during the coaching conversation. For instance, you may, like me, be increasingly conscious of engaging in different 'states', from a sharp intellect when it comes to issues and challenges of a practical nature, contrasted with a *'watchful, deeper, almost trance-like'* state where I become conscious of an inner wisdom helping to guide my coaching conversations with my coachees.

I admit that in the past I've found the latter state creeping up on me at times and because I was unable to 'label' or categorise it, it all felt rather intrusive and a bit annoying. Clearly for someone like me who was mostly a pragmatist and activist, I was suffering from being trapped in an 'over-educated' left brained state wishing only to go with 'professional knowns' in my coaching tool kit.

However, over the past year I've gone on a 'journey' of discovery via the fascinating world of quantum physics (and the new philosophy of quantum mechanics). This has offered up a metaphorical AND physiological explanation for what I frequently experience and have come to refer to as 'quantum weirdness' in human relationships.

This new philosophy offers a fundamentally different view of the universe and our existence within it from that proposed by Platonic distinctions and Newtonian physics etc. These assume classical assumptions of causal determinism, strong objectivity and localism, what Zohar (1990) calls *"The immutable laws of history portrayed by Marx, Darwin's blind evolutionary struggle, and the tempestuous forces of Freud's dark psyche…"* (p.18).

What has been an amazing revelation for me has been the exploration of some of the basic principles of quantum physics seen through the lens of a *'quantum model of consciousness'.* Some important findings from the strange world of quantum physics are:

• At the level of the infinitesimally small, elementary particles are characterised by a particle-wave duality, ie that they are both waves (smeared out over space) and particles (pinpoints of matter) simultaneously. We can either measure their exact position (as a particle), OR we can measure their momentum (as a 'wave', or a relationship spread out in space), but we cannot ever measure both particle and wave aspects at the same time[1].

• This quantum 'fuzziness' gives rise to a vast field of 'potentia' or 'probability wave', before sub-atomic particles become 'fixed' into the reality of 'everyday observable matter', once measured or observed (and hence the 'observer' plays a role in the creation of 'reality')[2].

• Every elementary particle seems to "… *"know" about changes in its environment and appears to respond accordingly."* The effect of "*…the state of all possibilities of any quantum particle collapsed into a set entity as soon as it was observed*

(means that) *a participatory relationship existed between observer and observed."* (McTaggart, p.13).

• And finally the sub-atomic property of 'non-locality', ie "*… the ability of a quantum entity such as individual electron to influence another… instantaneously over any distance despite there being no exchange of force or energy"*[3] (McTaggart, p.12).

These most spooky of quantum characteristics, ie waves of possibility and particles of experience being collapsed into one position by the 'observer-effect', the idea of superpositions of multiple possibilities in one's unconscious mind at any micro-moment, combined with 'at-a-distant' influence, opens up the possibility of a deep quantum inter-connectedness within all human relations.

So, rather than the universe (and thus human relationships) being a fixed set of properties where "*… physical reality was fixed, determined, and measurable (there is now) a vast "porridge" of being where nothing is fixed or fully measurable."* (ibid, p.27).

So how does this all relate to the concept of 'coaching harmonics'? In its simplest form Zohar (1990) states that:

"*Through the process of quantum memory, each of us carries within himself, woven into the fabric of his own soul, all the intimate relationships he has ever had, just as each of us weaves into his being all of his other interactions with the outside world… Two people who are in the same state, for instance, will have a more harmonious intimate relationship than two people who are in different states, as the wave fronts of their personalities*

meet in a superposition, one on top of the other or one entangled with the other… (analogous) with musical harmonies." (p.137).
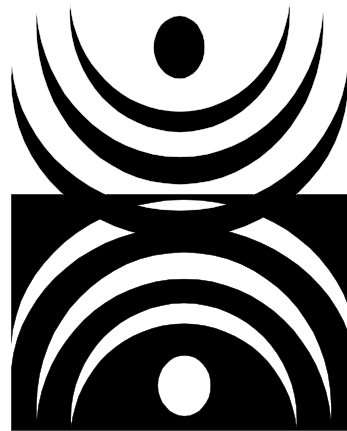
FIGURE 1.

Figure 1. above is equally valid in demonstrating our '*past selves'* interacting with '*our present selves'*. The "I" of who we are is where the two wave functions overlap (literally, in quantum terms). Harmonious phase relationships like that pictured above, depict 'resolution and reconciliation' with our past. By contrast, a fractured wave or phase relationship would depict tensions due to unresolved feelings in our 'past selves' affecting 'our present selves, and the "I" of who we are and the who we are *'BE-coming'.*

Since consciously focusing on these new learnings I am better able to 'allow' for what seems to be a higher order of 'spiritual connectedness or intuition'. I feel more connected to my environment and to my coachees 'in the moment' of coaching by utilising the "*… spirituality in the intuition of unity."* Chopra (p.47)… and importantly, I'm less confused or ambivalent about these sometimes 'intrusive spiritual skills'.

The duality of quantum mechanics as both philosophy and a physics demonstrates the reality of harmonics or waves of interconnecting quantum 'states' both between 'our-inner-selves' as well as between ourselves and others: That we all of us interact with our environment in profound ways, and have an effect on everyone around us, whether we know or like it. This of course then offers up very real opportunities for how we take charge of our own lives / destinies and how we support our coachees in determining these for themselves.

Clearly this involves becoming clearer about one's own inner truths as a coach. To do this meant letting go of my left-brained comfort zone and to first explore the more spiritual and intuitive side of *me-as-coach* and secondly, getting to grips with understanding likely levels of coaching intervention in order to better understand how I applied my 'different states'. As Stephen Covey once said: "Go there first" and on that basis self-knowledge really helps me develop a set of coaching tools that complement 'who-l-am' as a coach as well as the coaching challenge to hand.

The next useful step in my journey was revisiting the 3 types of 'Quotients' that are common in us all (what I've nicknamed

[1] The Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, Goswami (p.36).
[2] Zohar (1990), chapter 3, Consciousness and the Cat (pp.38-49) and Goswami, chapter 6, The Nine Lives of Schrödinger's Cat (pp.79-104).
[3] This quantum phenomena knows no bounds as defined by classical physics, including speed of light or distance – in that nonlocality can connect 'quanta' instantaneously across the universe giving rise to 'action-at-a-distance' (Chopra, p.76) as well as waves of possibility / potential outcomes, or 'potentia'. Chopra writes, "Thus the domain of potential must be outside (classical) space-time. Potentia exist in a transcendent domain of reality." (p.59).

Coaching Harmonics: Developing spiritual awareness (cont.)

'the 3-MEs') that can be usefully overlaid within the 'Situational Coach-Mentoring Continuum', **Figure 2.** The *'3-MEs'* could also usefully capture left and right-brained thinking, in both me-as-coach and in my coachees:

• The Intelligence Quotient = what 'I think'

• The Emotional Quotient = what 'I feel', and

• The Spiritual Quotient = what 'I am / BE-coming'

In the 2nd part of Coaching Harmonics I shall explore why spiritual intelligence can help us manage our different coaching 'states' and how this fits nicely into the different levels of coaching interventions.

In the meantime, here are a few things to ponder about harmonics, and tuning in:

Some of us will remember as children, struggling to learn that simplest of instrument the recorder, and being part of a caterwauling ensemble, beyond reasonable hope of being in tune as a group. It was both unbearable and hilarious.

Similarly remember our frustrations at not quite being able to tune the radio into the station we desperately want, or not quite getting a clear enough signal on our mobile phones in order to make that all important call.

Remember now, times when you've felt so in-tune, so at peace and so in harmony that it's taken your breath away (well, at least a bit). Try and find ways to access those feelings in between the *"busy-ness"* of your life, be it with a person, a book, a piece of music, digging the garden, being with your kids or whatever. You never know, you may get some surprising thoughts bubbling up in the *"quietness of your BE-ing"*!

FIGURE 2.

LEVEL OF COACHING INTERVENTION		
"Situational coach-mentoring continuum"		
Intellectual Quotient	Emotional Quotient	Spiritual Quotient
LEFT BRAINED		**RIGHT BRAINED**
SKILLS Externally focused	PERFORMANCE plus POTENTIAL	PERSONAL Internally focused
Finite / concrete	Role / competences	Complex / evolving
Short term	Medium term	Longer term

Adapted from: Parsloe, E, (Sept 2008.ppt / p.3) *"Situational coach-mentoring continuum"* in *"Leaders in coach-mentoring"*, The OCM Briefing Workshop

Finally for me, the work of Zohar and Goswami and their exploration of some of the basic principles of quantum physics as applied to a 'quantum model of consciousness' is simply captivating:

"… at the level of the infinitesimally small (the quantum world), there are no boundaries, no separations, just a vast field of energy and possibility that connects all of us, and everything in our universe… to explore new explanations of consciousness and its impact on the material world, through us as the 'observers' or 'experiencers'."

Kiki is currently writing part two of Coaching Harmonics: Our coaching "states".

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What's happening in the coach / mentor marketplace?
Claire Hack

As the value and benefit of coach / mentor support is becoming increasingly recognised, demand in the market place is growing along with the number of coach / mentors offering their services in our steadily growing industry. As with many emerging professions, in these early days where standards of good practice are evolving in a context of little regulation, a wide spectrum of coach / mentors are able to practice, with a varying degree of competence, professionalism and ethical practice.

This has led to an increasing demand for clarity on good practice in coaching / mentoring as well as how to recognise this in coaches / mentors. This clarity is being called for by the market place to provide greater assurance about the experience and ability of coaches / mentors. Likewise it is also being demanded by practitioners, who seek recognition of their ability and want to distinguish themselves as competent to practise professionally.

The European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) is committed to ensuring good practice and the expectation of good practice in coaching and mentoring across Europe and beyond. To achieve this we are focused on promoting the adoption of quality standards in coaching and mentoring.

In particular we aim to do this through two routes;

1) Our European Quality Award (EQA) accredits coach / mentor training programmes, assuring that the training meets our professional European standards and Competence Framework. We have been supporting training providers to develop these quality standards in their programmes since 2005, and you can find details of programmes which hold the EQA at www.emccaccreditation.org

2) Through our European Individual Accreditation (EIA), we also encourage individual coaches/mentors to work to professional standards, by accrediting professional capability and practice.

Why another accreditation?

With the confusion in the market place about the range of coach / mentor qualifications, accreditations, memberships, our aim at EMCC remains true to our guiding principles. We are providing light and clarity on good practice, what it looks like and, with EIA, a form of recognition.

We have created the gold standard, of good practice in coaching / mentoring and are proud to say that we have set the bar high, so that when someone is EIA accredited the professional level at which they operate will be recognised.

This means that buyers and users of coach / mentor services can rely on EIA as a mark of quality and coaches / mentors who hold this accreditation are improving the opportunities they have for being successful in acquiring work.

The EIA is relevant for anyone involved in coaching / mentoring, whether it's just one part of a role or it's the main function. Individuals can apply for accreditation at the level appropriate to them from Foundation to Master Practitioner. The advantage of the EMCC's accreditation process is that individuals can join and get accredited early on in their experience as a coach / mentor. As they develop they can gain accreditation at higher levels reflecting their growing ability and experience.

So what exactly is EIA and how does this accreditation differ from a qualification?

One of the challenges we have right now is creating clarity about the difference between a coach / mentor qualification and accreditation, this is something that we are very clear about at EMCC.

A good qualification is a fantastic way of developing and providing evidence of a certain level of competence, that is, knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge. An accreditation on the other hand indicates professional practice. Namely that the competence (which a qualification guarantees) is actually being used in the workplace, the coach/mentor has a successful track record and they operate to professional standards of practice.

EIA looks for evidence in 4 areas:

1) Competence: Individuals are competent at a given level. By that we mean that they have both the knowledge and ability to apply that knowledge.

2) Experience: Relevant level of coach / mentor experience.

3) Ongoing Practice: Individuals continue to practice in a professional manner by working in line with ethical codes of practice, reflecting on client work and evaluating their coaching / mentoring.

4) Professional Development: Individuals continually develop, engage in supervision and contribute to the profession as a whole.

What makes EIA unique is its five specific features. Each of these can be found in other coach / mentor accreditations, but no other accreditation offers all five together, and it is this that sets EMCC EIA as the gold standard, driving the professionalism of our industry.

What's happening in the coach / mentor marketplace? (cont.)

1. Levels
We offer accreditation at four levels:

Foundation
Practitioner
Senior Practitioner
Master Practitioner

This creates a development path and means that people entering the coaching / mentoring industry can do so in a professional way from the level at which they start practising. It also means that buyers and users of coaching / mentoring are able to recognise and select the most appropriate level of coach / mentor.

2. Competence framework:
We assess competence against a framework which is evidence based and was the result of extensive research. The framework remains a dynamic tool and as such it has recently been updated to reflect current best practice.

3. Assessment:
All applications are fully assessed for evidence of the clearly defined assessment criteria before being scrutinised by an external verifier and then going to a panel for endorsement. We only use trained and paid assessors, who are also experienced coaches / mentors and hold their own EIA. Because of our rigorous assessment process, users and buyers of coach/mentor services can have confidence in the ability and experience of an EIA coach / mentor.

4. Reflective practice:
We demand a more sophisticated level of reflection. Coach / mentors are required to reflect on and identify learning from their client work, client feedback, CPD, and supervision. They then have to show how this has been applied to their practice.

5. Inclusivity
We welcome all coaches / mentors and recognise that competence can be developed in many ways, so whether an individual has an EMCC EQA qualification, or has developed through other routes, what's important is that they meet our Competence Framework.

Working towards and achieving an EIA has many benefits. It raises personal credibility and professionalism, distinguishing individuals as professional coaches / mentors, who work to rigorous and demanding standards. It also demonstrates a commitment to continual development and improvement in coaching / mentoring ability.

Our unique approach to accreditation provides assurance for users / buyers of coaching / mentoring services of the competence and ability of individuals. EIA is seen as a demanding accreditation of a quality which raises the credibility and standards of our profession.

EIA not only provides a framework for personal development, but the very process of applying is hugely developmental.

Assessment criteria:

Figure 1. is an overview of the assessment criteria for EIA at the four different levels. To find detailed guidance on how to provide evidence of this, please refer to the EIA – Guide to Applying, which can be downloaded from our accreditation website.

We recognise that working towards an EIA demonstrates a serious personal and professional commitment and we aim to support individuals as much as possible through the process.

We run EIA awareness events across the country which explain EIA in more depth, explore the process as well as the specific assessment criteria. We also run EIA events which support coaches / mentors in the process of applying, allowing them to bring their applications/questions and work with trained assessors in a group format. In addition to that we also provide the opportunity to have one-to-one personal support from an EIA adviser, who is a trained assessor.

Whether currently studying or already an experienced practitioner, the EIA guidelines, which can be downloaded at www. emccaccreditation.org, help to understand what level to apply for and how to collect, collate and provide relevant evidence of criteria from client hours, client feedback, competence to reflective practice on client work, CPD and supervision.

In addition to applying for EIA, adopting the professional standards we have set out contributes to professional development and improves standards of practice.

What's next?

Our aim is to continue to promote and drive the use of quality standards through EIA which, whilst being of European design, is globally recognised. This is an exciting time for us at EMCC and in the coach / mentor profession as a whole, as we shape and contribute towards higher standards, consistency and greater professionalism.

Claire Hack, EIA Manager, EMCC UK

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FIGURE 1. A SUMMARY OF THE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA IS SHOWN BELOW FOR EACH OF THE FOUR LEVELS. THE EIA GUIDE TO APPLYING PROVIDES MORE DETAILED GUIDANCE ON THESE CRITERIA AND HOW TO PRESENT EVIDENCE OF THEM.

Levels of Coach / Mentor Accreditation	Foundation	Practitioner	Senior Practitioner	Master Practitioner

PRACTICE (the minimum requirements shown below)

COMPLETED PRACTICE

	Foundation	Practitioner	Senior Practitioner	Master Practitioner
Length of experience	1 year (from start of coach / mentor experience)	3 years (from start of coach / mentor experience)	5 years (from start of coach / mentor experience)	7 years (from start of coach / mentor experience)
Number of client contact hours	50 hours	100 hours	250 hours	500 hours
Number of clients	5 clients	10 clients	20 clients	40 clients

ONGOING PRACTICE

	Foundation	Practitioner	Senior Practitioner	Master Practitioner
Learning log last 12 months	5 items within last 12 months	5 items within last 12 months	5 items within last 12 months	5 items within last 12 months
Client feedback	5 within last 12 months	5 within last 12 months	5 within last 12 months	5 within last 12 months
Adhere to code of ethics & diversity policy	Required	Required	Required	Required

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

	Foundation	Practitioner	Senior Practitioner	Master Practitioner
Application of CPD	16 hours per year	16 hours per year	32 hours per year	48 hours per year
Application of 'Coach or Supervision'	1 hr / per quarter	1 hr / per quarter (min quarterly)	1hr / 35hrs practice (min quarterly)	1hr / 35hrs practice
Contribution to the profession	Membership of a professional body	Membership of a professional body	Membership of a professional body	Membership of a professional body and contributes to development of coaching / mentoring field

QUALIFICATION / COMPETENCE

	Foundation	Practitioner	Senior Practitioner	Master Practitioner
Evidence of competence described in competence framework	EQA training / APEL programme at this level, or Submission of evidence	EQA training / APEL programme at this level, or Submission of evidence	EQA training / APEL programme at this level, or Submission of evidence	EQA training / APEL programme at this level, or Submission of evidence

Coaching supervision Professor Peter Hawkins

At the core of continuing professional development is continual personal development, where our own development is weaved through every aspect of our practice. When this happens every client becomes a teacher, every piece of feedback an opportunity for new learning, producing practices that support the balanced cycle of action, reflection, new understanding and new practice. Supervision provides a protected and disciplined space in which the coach can reflect on particular client situations and relationships, the reactivity and patterns they evoke in them and, by transforming these live in supervision, can profoundly benefit the coachee, the client organisation and their own professional practice.

What is supervision?

In Hawkins and Smith 2006 we defined Supervision as:

 "The process by which a Coach with the help of a Supervisor, can attend to understanding better both the Client system and themselves as part of the Client / Coach system, and by so doing transform their work and develop their craft."

Coaching supervision has three elements:

• Coaching the coach on their coaching.

• Mentoring the coach on their development in the profession.

• Providing an external perspective to ensure quality of practice.

Role and purpose of supervision

I believe that the role and purpose of the supervision of coaches builds strongly upon the work carried out by those in the helping professions, but some important changes are needed in order to really support the executive coaching agenda.

The process of rigorous supervision helps the trainee link the theory and skills they learn on courses to the real-time experience of working with coachees. On workshops you may learn models and develop competencies, but these do not by themselves produce an excellent coach. Supervision provides the reflective container for the trainee to turn their competencies into capabilities.

Supervision is there to serve the developmental needs of the coach / supervisee, the individual clients of the supervisee, the client organisations that employ the coach, as well as the profession.

Supervision should be focused on outcomes including:

• The provision of the key part of continuous professional development and action learning of the coach.

• Help for the coach to develop their internal supervisor and become a better reflective practitioner.

• The provision of a supportive space for the coach to process what they have absorbed from their clients and their client's system.

• Help to keep the coach honest and courageous, attending to what they are: not seeing, hearing, allowing themselves to feel, or not saying.

• A chance to look at where and how the coach may need to refer the client on for more specialised help.

The stages in a supervision session

In the 1980s I developed a five stage coaching model CLEAR **(Contract, Listen, Explore, Action, Review)** to the stages of supervision or coaching the coach.

In this model the supervisor starts by **Contracting** with the supervisee on the boundaries and focus of the work. Then the supervisor **Listens** to the issues that the coach wishes to bring, listening to the content, feelings and the ways of framing the story that the coach is using. It is important that the supervisor lets the coach know that they have both heard the story and 'got' what it feels like to be in their situation. Only then is it useful to move on to the next stage to **Explore** with the

FIGURE 1.

THE COACHING CONTINUUM

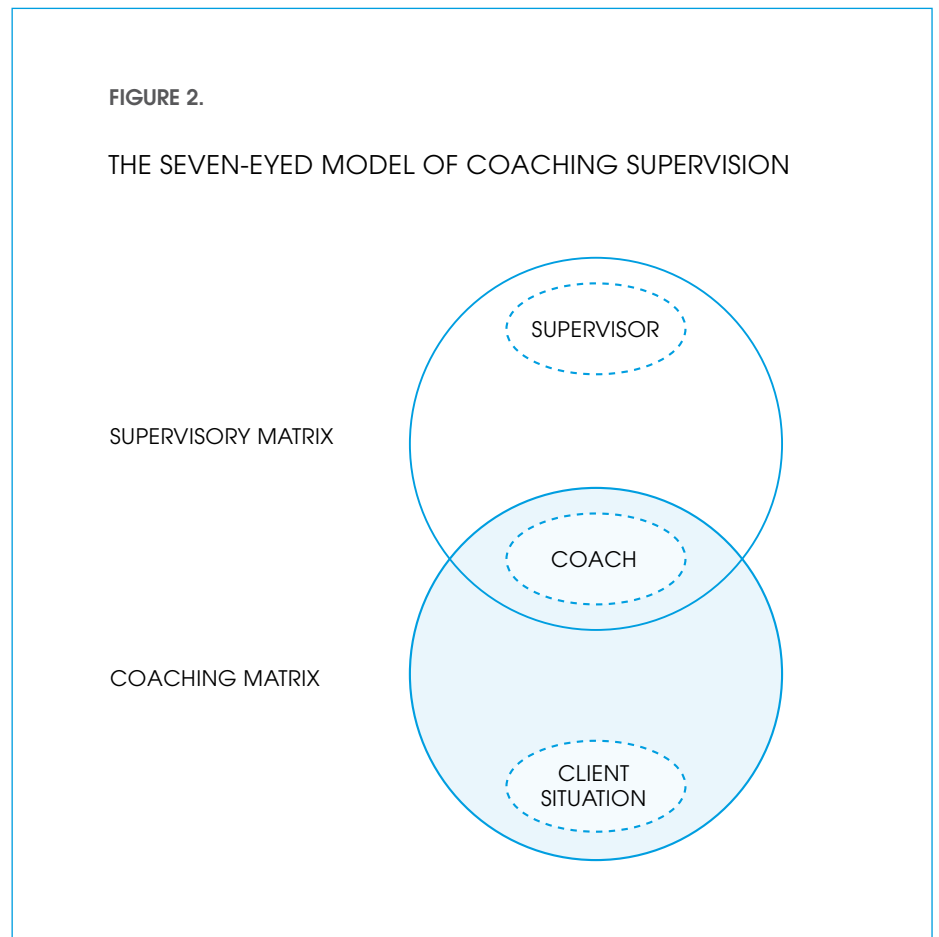SKILLS — PERFORMANCE — DEVELOPMENT — TRANSFORMATION
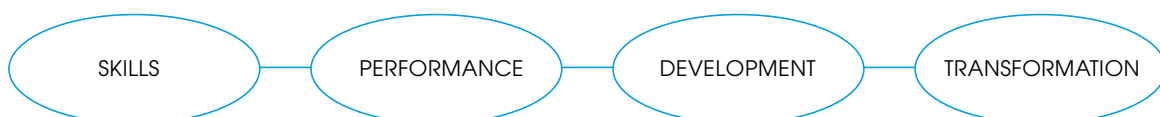
coach what is happening in the dynamics of the coaching relationship and the live supervisory relationship, before facilitating the coach to explore new **Action.** Finally **Review** the process and what has been agreed about next steps.

This model can be developed and utilised differentially depending on the nature of the coaching. In Hawkins and Smith (2006) we outlined a continuum of coaching: please see **Figure 1.** on opposite page.

The form of supervision being used needs to match the coaching approach, thus performance coaches need performance supervision and transformational coaching needs transformational supervision and elsewhere we have shown how this changes the CLEAR intervention.

The Seven-eyed Coaching Model: A process model of supervision Figure 2.

In 1985 I developed a more in depth model of supervision which later was developed along with my colleagues Robin Shohet, Joan Wilmot and Judy Ryde at the Centre for Supervision and Team Development and became known as the seven-eyed supervision mo del (Hawkins and Shohet 1989, 2000 and 2006). I then further developed and adapted the model for the world of coaching, mentoring and organisational consultancy with my colleagues at Bath Consultancy Group (Hawkins and Smith 2006), **Figure 2.** The purpose of the model is to provide a complete range of different areas that can be focused on in supervision and the range of styles necessary. It is based on a systems understanding of the ways things connect, inter-relate and drive behaviour. It illustrates the way in which the systemic context of the coachee can be mirrored in the coaching relationship and how the dynamics of the coaching relationship can be mirrored in the supervisory relationship. I set out below the seven

FIGURE 2.

THE SEVEN-EYED MODEL OF COACHING SUPERVISION

SUPERVISORY MATRIX

COACHING MATRIX

SUPERVISOR

COACH

CLIENT SITUATION

areas of potential focus that can be useful to both supervisor and supervisee in reviewing the supervision they give and receive and help them discover ways they can expand their supervision practice.

1. The coachee's system
Here the focus is on the coachee and the content of the issues they have brought to the coaching and the wider issues of their organisation. It includes, not only the problem both parties want help with, but also how they are presenting and framing the issues.

2. The coach's interventions
Here the focus is on the interventions the coach made and alternative choices that might have been used. It might also focus on a situation in which the coach is about to intervene and explore the possible options

including the likely impact of each.

3. The relationship between the coach and the coachee
Here the focus is on the relationship that the coach and coachee are creating together.

4. The coach
Here the focus is on the coach themselves, both what is being re-stimulated in them by the coachee's material and the dynamics of the client system, and themselves as an instrument for registering that which is happening beneath the surface of the coaching relationship.
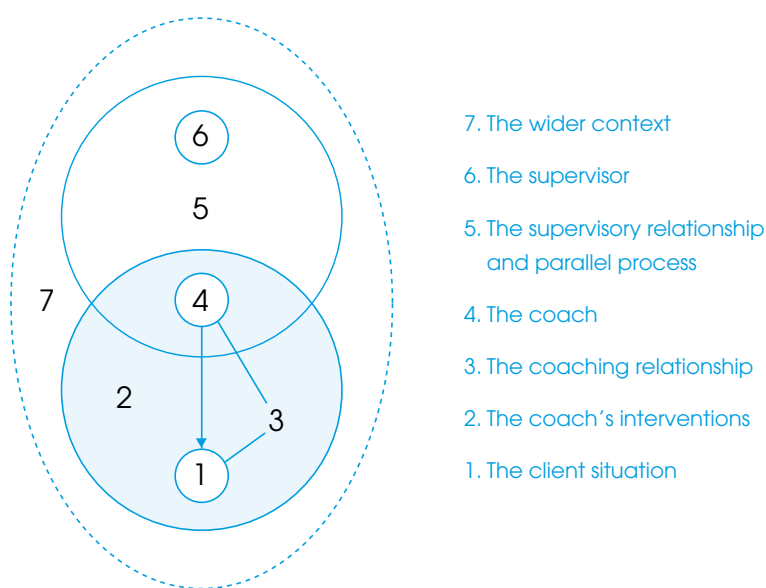
5. The supervisory relationship
Here the focus is on the live relationship between the supervisor and the coach. The focus needs to include what the

Coaching supervision (cont.)

FIGURE 3.

THE SEVEN MODES OF COACHING SUPERVISION

7. The wider context

6. The supervisor

5. The supervisory relationship and parallel process

4. The coach

3. The coaching relationship

2. The coach's interventions

1. The client situation

the coachee and adopt a pose of pseudo objectivity (mode one). Others see their job as coming up with better interventions than the coach managed to produce (mode two). This can often leave the coach feeling inadequate or determined to show that these suggested interventions are as useless as those previously tried. Other coaches have reportedly left supervision feeling that the problem with a coachee was entirely their own pathology (mode four).

"Single-eyed vision", which focuses only on one aspect of the process, will always lead to partial and limited perspectives. This model suggests a way of engaging in an exploration that looks at the same situation from many different perspectives and can thus create a critical subjectivity, where subjective awareness from one perspective is tested against other subjective data.

Each mode of supervision can be carried out in a skilful manner but it will prove inadequate without the skill to move from mode to mode. We have devised a training method for helping the supervisor to skilfully use each mode to explore the timing and appropriateness for moving from one mode to another.

coach has absorbed unconsciously from the coachee system and how it may be being played out in the relationship with the supervisor. Unconsciously the coach can treat the supervisor in the way their coachee treated them.

6. The supervisor self-reflection

The focus for mode six is the supervisor's "here and now" experience with the coach and what can be learnt about the coach / coachee / client relationship from the supervisor's response to the coach and the material they present.

7. The wider context

The focus of mode seven is on the organisational, social, cultural, ethical and contractual context in which the coaching is taking place. This includes being aware of the wider group of stakeholders in the process that is being focused upon: the client organisation and its stakeholders, the coach's organisation and its stakeholders, and the organisation or professional network of the supervisor.

Using all seven modes Figure 3.

In talking with supervisors and coaches who have approached others in search of help in exploring coaching situations, we have discovered that often supervisors are stuck in the groove of predominantly using one of the seven modes of working. Some focus entirely on the situation with

The most common order for moving through the modes is to start with mode one talking about specific coaching situations. Then to move into modes three and four to explore what is happening both in the coaching relationship and for the coach / supervisee. This may well explore the here and now relationship in the room between the coach and the supervisor (modes 5 and 6), and/or bringing into awareness the wider context (mode 7). Finally having gained new insight and created a shift in the supervisory matrix, the attention may turn back to mode two, to explore what different interventions the coach might use in their next session to create the needed shift in the coaching matrix. The coach might even try out some

of these interventions in what we term a 'fast-forward rehearsal' Our experience shows that if change starts to happen live in the supervision, it is far more likely to happen back in the coaching.

The model has also been used as a way of empowering the coach (ie. the customer receiving the supervision) to be able to give feedback on the help they are being given and request a change in focus. It can be used as a framework for a joint review of the supervision process by the coach and supervisor.

Training as a supervisor

In 2002 the debate about the need for supervision began to change in coaching. Some of the professional coaching bodies in the UK and the USA started to argue that all coaches should receive supervision from trained and qualified supervisors. In response Bath Consultancy Group led the way in the development of a certified training programme in the supervision of coaches and mentors.

Our starting belief was that these professions had much in common with other helping professions when it came to supervision, but were also significantly different as their work was focused primarily on the individual client. Work-based coaches and mentors always have, in contrast, a minimum of three clients:

• the coachee

• the organisation they work in and for

• the relationship between them and the organisation.

This led us to design and deliver an open training programme with four modules. The first was a foundation module and the final an advanced supervision module. These are for people who are experienced executive coaches, mentors and consultants.

In addition the participants chose two further modules to be undertaken alongside other helping professionals.

Our second belief is that learning to be a supervisor is best undertaken through cycles of action learning, not by sitting in a classroom. Thus the training involves supervision practice in threes, comprising a supervisor, supervisee and shadow supervisor, who gives feedback to the supervisor, sometimes at the end of the practice session, and sometimes in the middle, in structured 'time-outs'. The trainee supervisors, as well as undertaking the modules, receive 10 hours of supervision on their supervision, from an experienced supervisor, and two tutorials to help them maximise their individual learning programme.

We are constantly learning from each cohort of new trainees about the fascinating craft of supervising coaches. Increasingly we are reminded that at the heart of being a good coach or coaching supervisor is not academic knowledge, nor an armoury of tools and techniques, but a dedication to developing one's human capacity to be fully present for another, acting with what we term 'ruthless compassion'. For it is the ruthless compassion we can bring that ultimately allows the fear and anxiety that pervades so many work situations to be overcome, and for our clients to find new strength to act courageously.

Conclusion

It is important that supervision is not seen as an activity carried out by a supervisor, supposedly with super vision! Rather it should be seen as a joint activity between coach and supervisor that ensures that the quality of practice constantly develops the capacity and capability of the coach and makes sure they are adequately resourced for the work they are undertaking.

Supervision needs to be a place of co-creative and generative thinking where new learning is being forged for the clients, coach, supervisor and for the profession.

A longer version of this paper can be found in 'The Complete Handbook of Coaching' edited by Eileen Cox, Tatiana Bachirova and David Clutterbuck (Sage 2009).

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The holy grail of executive coaching: Discovering what really works

What we know about effectiveness of coaching conversations

Often the most valuable questions in life are both very easy to ask whilst amazingly hard to answer. 'Why did I do that?', 'What did I mean by that?' or 'What am I achieving here?' are some examples. Such questions are oh so easy to ask, as our children demonstrate, whilst almost impossible to answer. In executive coaching examples of these most obvious, essential and, at the same time, largely unanswerable questions are:

• Does our coaching work? Does it satisfy buyers? Does it help clients with their vital aims?

• What aspects of coaching work? What are coaching's 'effective ingredients'?

• Under what circumstances do these aspects of coaching work best?

• Etc.

Thousands of coaches have asked these questions, which are about effectiveness or outcome. They pop up in many places across the coaching literature. In very few places though do we find serious attempts at answering the same questions with anything more than a coach's opinion or a few carefully selected case studies. We reckon that there are probably less than 10 robust quantitative outcome studies in the whole coaching literature. The reasons for this state of affairs are straightforward: a rigorous outcome study is very cumbersome and costly to design and work through. Moreover, studying their own effectiveness with detachment is not the first priority of coaches, who tend to have their hands full trying to win client work and satisfying the demands of their practice.

On the other hand, as long as we don't address these very questions and as long as we don't have clear answers, it seems hard to justify our substantial fees, to unambiguously maintain that coaching conversations are indeed beneficial for the busy executive, or to ward off the very real dangers of executive coaching, such as misjudging the situation, aggravating the status quo or abuse of their influence by coaches (Berglas, 2002).

We know very little about coaching effectiveness

We have found only a small number of quantitative studies into coaching effectiveness. Consequently, they are worth reading through with care and summarising, as we attempt here.

Most empirical research into executive coaching is concerned with the value of coaching from the perspective of the client, with the research taking the form of an extensive evaluation including, on occasion, clients being asked to estimate how much their coaching has contributed to the bottom line of their organisation in financial terms (e.g., McGovern et al., 2001). We know of only six studies that explore

Erik de Haan & Anna Duckworth

with David Birch, Philippa Hardman, Claire Jones

the effectiveness of coaching by looking at effects other than client satisfaction. Two of those studies failed to employ a control group (Olivero et al., 1997, and Thach, 2002). Olivero et al. (1997) studied managers who had taken part in a three day training course, followed by eight weeks of coaching. They found that both the training and the coaching increased productivity considerably, with the bulk of the increase attributable to the coaching. In the case of Thach (2002) the managers underwent a 360° feedback process before and after their coaching. They found an average increase in 'leadership effectiveness', both from others' perspectives and in their own eyes.

Peterson (1993) and Ragins et al. (2000) have also found significant effects as a result of executive coaching. The latter study involved a group of 1162 professionals from many organisations and looked at the effect of formal or informal mentoring relationships on a range of work and career attitudes. 44% of the respondents had an informal mentor, 9% a formal mentor as part of a mentoring programme and 47% no mentor (the control group). Their results show that the crucial factor in effectiveness is the client's satisfaction with the mentoring *relationship*. In the absence of that satisfaction, there were no demonstrable differences between professionals who were mentored and those who were not. If satisfaction is present, however, professionals clearly demonstrate more positive attitudes towards themselves (self-confidence), their work, promotion prospects, their organisation and their career, with no significant differences between formal and informal mentoring[1]. Finally, Evers et al. (2006) measured self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectancies, on each of three dimensions. Their study compared a pre-intervention and post-intervention measurement and also involved a control group. Whilst their sample was not very large (30 managers in both the experimental

and the control group) they did find some objective evidence for a positive outcome of the coaching intervention with a significant increment for the coached group over the control group for one of the three dimensions in both self-efficacy beliefs ('setting one's own goals') and outcome expectancies ('acting in a balanced way').

One of the most thorough studies into the effects of executive coaching was undertaken by Smither et al. (2003) who worked with a control group and based their conclusions on a more objective criterion than evaluations by the clients (the criterion adopted by Peterson, 1993, and Ragins et al., 2000), namely evaluations by independent researchers and by the clients' superiors, colleagues and staff (360° feedback). The research was conducted among 1202 senior managers of the same multinational organisation and involved 360° feedback results from two consecutive years. The researchers found that managers who work with an executive coach are significantly more likely than other managers to (1) set specific goals; (2) solicit ideas for improvements from their superiors; and (3) obtain higher ratings from direct-reports and superiors.

In the small but growing body of outcome-research literature on coaching we have found only two articles exploring the question of *what sort* of coaching is effective; in other words, which coaching models, qualities of coaches or coaching behaviours make a difference to clients? Scoular & Linley (2006) have looked at both (1) how a 'goal-setting' intervention at the beginning of the conversation impacts perceived helpfulness; and (2) personality (dis-) similarities between coach and client and their impact on perceived effectiveness. Outcome measurements at 2 and 8 weeks after the session showed no difference between 'goal-setting' and 'no goal-setting'; but

they did demonstrate that when the coach and client differed more on the personality instruments the outcome scores were significantly higher. De Haan et al. (2010) examine how various executive coaching interventions make a difference to clients. 71 coaching clients from as many organisations reported on the various interventions of their coaches, and all strengths of interventions were compared with their evaluations. We found no distinction among specific coach interventions of coaches, leading to the conclusion that helpfulness is much less predicted by technique or approach as it is by factors common to all coaching, such as the relationship, empathic understanding, positive expectations etc.

In summary, we note that outcome research in coaching is still in its infancy and that the holy grail of executive coaching is still elusive. There is no agreed standard like the randomised control trials used in in psychotherapy outcome research (Wampold, 2001). What is also striking is that the first four research papers above (Peterson, 1993; Olivero et al., 1997; McGovern et al, 2001; and Thach, 2002), which do not make use of a control group, find very large effects (generally larger than those found in psychotherapy), whilst the three more rigorous articles discussed next (Ragins et al., 2000; Smither et al., 2003; and Evers et al., 2006) find only small effects, generally smaller than those found in psychotherapy (Wampold, 2001). It seems that if the client alone is the focus

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[1] As the authors themselves concede, they cannot rule out the possibility that the professionals with a more positive mentoring relationship are more satisfied in general, and so more satisfied with themselves, their organisation and their career. As regards the differences between formal and informal mentoring programmes (as between assigned and chosen mentor relationships), it is interesting that Ragins et al. (2001) can demonstrate slightly negative effects for formal mentoring programmes – where the clients are not able to choose their mentor – when (1) the mentor works in the same department as the client and (2) female clients are assigned to a male mentor.

The holy grail of executive coaching: Discovering what really works (cont.)
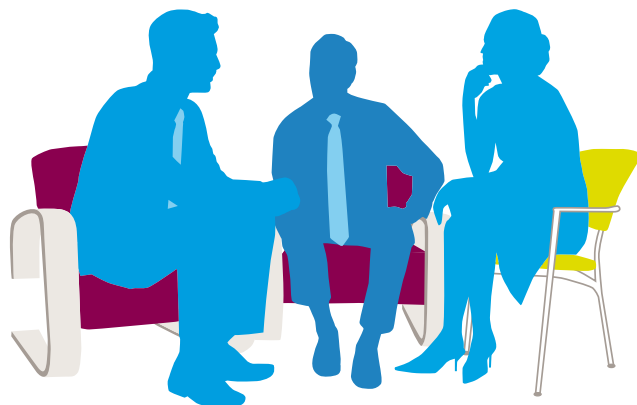
of the study, the outcome tends to be very positive, whereas if one controls for perceptual and research artefacts this effect is much smaller though still positive.

We do have some very firm conclusions in an adjacent field

In the older and larger profession of psychotherapy, these same questions of effectiveness have been around since at least the 1930s (Rosenzweig, 1936) and the debates have been very lively indeed. Also, the funding for research in that profession has been more generous as some very large institutions pay for the bulk of psychotherapy. As a result of this, research findings which seemed initially unclear and contradictory have begun to yield convincing results which are now almost universally shared in the profession (Smith & Glass, 1977).

Put very briefly, the answers to the questions above are as follows:

• Does psychotherapy work? Yes, in fact, it has been demonstrated that the average psychotherapy client is better off than 80% of the people in the control group. (Wampold, 2001).

• What aspects of psychotherapy work? Different interventions, approaches, models and protocols don't make any difference in effectiveness. The aspects

that work are *common* to all approaches, e.g. client context, therapist personality, and the relationship between client and therapist during the session. (Cooper, 2008).

• Under what circumstances do we find differential effects? Not a lot is known yet but there are strong indications that the therapist's *allegiance* to their approach and the client's *expectations* are more important than was previously thought. (Wampold, 2001).

One can always argue that these intriguing and convincing findings from psychotherapy are not relevant for coaches, e.g., because these were all done with professional therapists working with 'identified' patients that have 'presenting conditions' – so quite different people participating in the one-to-one conversations.

However, such crisp findings are hard to come by in our own profession, and judging from the present output there is little chance that we will generate anything of the same sort of statistical power, whilst such power is clearly needed in view of the complexity of the intervention.

A way forward: measuring up the common factors

In our view it is not the best way forward to sit around, wait and wonder until we finally

have scores of rigorous quantitative outcome studies in executive coaching, employing control groups and hard outcome criteria. Rather it seems the best approach now is to trust that coaching outcome research, when it happens, will yield similar patterns if not the very same findings as in psychotherapy: large effectiveness and substantial evidence for the importance of the so-called common factors. The De Haan et al. (2010) article is a first indication that this is probably the case.

If we can trust this, what better approach is there than to see if we can get more of a grip on the relative effectiveness and importance of the various common factors? This is the approach we have undertaken in our in-depth study with 152 professional business clients and 31 experienced coaches. Our main hypothesis was that if we can learn more about the way we are and the things we do in each of our different coaching relationships, we should be able to improve the effectiveness of the outcome for each of our unique and wonderful clients.

Conclusion: some preliminary findings

The results from our quantitative research (Duckworth et al., forthcoming), confirmed that the quality of the coach / client *relationship* is indeed the most important factor in a successful coaching outcome. However, this was only the case if the client's assessment of the relationship is used, since this amazingly bore no resemblance to the coach's rating (again, a similar finding as in psychotherapy: Horvath & Symonds, 1991). Other findings showed that coaching outcomes were significantly more positive for clients who believed that they were being helped to make discoveries, having their thoughts and actions challenged and being supported. In contrast, outcomes were less positive for those who felt they were being provided with information or helped to release emotions and there was no link with positive outcome for

those who believed they were being advised or told what to do. Perhaps surprisingly (ie, in contrast to the findings of Scoular & Linley, 2006), all personality types (characterised using MBTI) seem to benefit equally highly from coaching. Although different personality types value different aspects of coaching, the match of coach and client personalities seems to be unimportant.

Our full findings using the final sample are due to be reported in the Spring (Duckworth et al., 2010) and with the volume of data that we have generated, there may be more illuminating findings in store.

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Making the right connections

Murray Thomas

Murray Thomas, a member of The OCM's Executive Coaching Faculty, explains why making the right connections can make a significant difference to coaching outcomes.

Making connections is a really important part of coaching. It begins with the way in which you and your coachee connect and leads on to how coachees then connect with themselves. It follows with how your coachee connects their learning with what's important to them and how they then apply that learning. It's also about how you, as the coach, make connections for yourself as a result of a coaching assignment.

My recent experiences with one particular client, Justin Van der Pant, a senior General Manager within the John Lewis Partnership, demonstrated the significance of making the right connections. I would like to share my observations on how we connected, together with some reflections from Justin on the experience.

How did I and my coachee connect?

When we were at the contracting stage, I was struck by Justin's openness to change and his strong motivation to perform to the best of his ability. Both these ingredients are hugely advantageous to one's capacity to learn. Justin was both curious and in a positive emotional state, both elements highlighted by Lucas (2001) as good indicators of a readiness to learn. He was also relaxed and easy in conversation, with a ready sense of humour – appropriately self-deprecating – and a wit that showed good insight into both himself and others. I sensed that our connection was going to lead to a positive and enjoyable coaching relationship. And so it proved to be.

How much of this was good fortune or how much due to both of us recognising and valuing the benefit of creating good rapport, I am not sure. What I do know is it's a two way process – a coach can't create that connection by themselves. However, a coach can and should help set the conditions for positive rapport to occur by looking for signs of a connection and by seeking to nurture and build upon it.

We were also connected by a clear common purpose in the objective of our coaching assignment and by the understanding of the roles that we each occupied. That connection was underpinned by a desire for a successful outcome – from Justin in wanting to make the most of a development opportunity, from the organisation in getting the most from a valued leader and from myself in wanting to meet the needs of both. The value of a successful outcome was important both in personal and commercial terms and was understood by all parties.

Justin says "*Murray and I connected right from the start of our relationship. We had a common understanding of large companies, operations and shared a determination to make a difference in the most pragmatic way possible; one which wasn't built just on hypothesis. In addition, and really importantly, we got on well and respected each other.*"
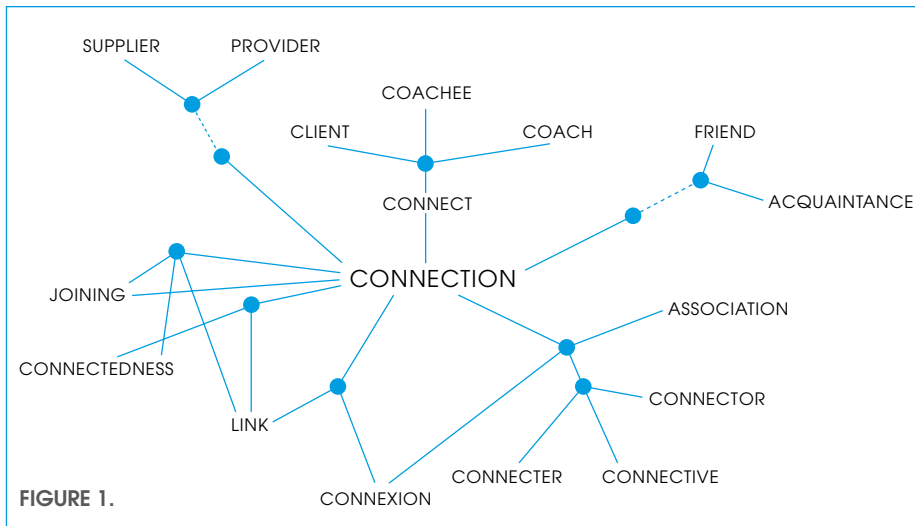
How did my coachee connect with himself?

It would be highly arrogant to suggest that individuals are not properly connected with themselves until a coach comes along and helps them to connect up – like some mental magician. My belief is that invariably the connections are already there but individuals sometimes find it difficult to recognise that by themselves. In Justin's case, a key issue was his belief that he wasn't as sufficiently empathetic as he would like to be nor, indeed, as others might want him to be. His initial description of himself in this respect was in terms of something that was absent or missing from his management repertoire – of a disconnection with others. In part this was due to his strong orientation to focus on the task and on achieving results which sometimes led him to miss signals on how others around him

may be thinking and feeling. However, when we explored this aspect of Justin in relation to the rest of what he knew of himself, and some data from recent psychometrics, we found that we could trace a variety of other links that made us think differently. Amongst these were Justin's good level of insight, both about himself and other people. This ability was possibly stronger on reflection than occurring in the moment, but it was nevertheless a positive attribute. In addition, Justin possessed a healthy level of curiosity, which often led him to ask whether he was missing something when he didn't share someone else's perception.

Thinking about these aspects of himself helped Justin recognise that he had more capacity to be empathetic than he might otherwise have supposed and that perhaps the issue was more around how he chose to demonstrate empathy. This reframing of the issue was significant in two ways. Firstly, it enabled Justin to focus less on just the basis of perception, both his and other people's, and reflect more on what he could access of his present self that might be helpful in showing a different aspect of himself. Secondly, the process of enquiry and exploration supported a change in reflective learning which provided a good means of enabling the coaching dialogue to make progress on other issues that Justin wanted to address.

"*One of the joys of working with a coach is having the time to explore areas which you otherwise take for granted. Murray questioned me on a number of these and explored more deeply where he didn't believe my responses were congruent with the evidence from psychometric tests or from what he knew about me and my values. Murray presented these discrepancies in an open and non-confrontational way and combined this approach with useful reflective exercises, which helped to give me a much better sense of perspective on my insight and empathy.*"

FIGURE 1.

How did my coachee then make the connection to what he was doing?

This new sense enabled Justin to see that he had existing capabilities that he could leverage differently and create a different outcome. The connections were already there, they just needed to be recognised and deployed. We discussed what Justin could do with this insight and he elected to try a coaching style of approach with one of his team with whom he felt he struggled to be empathetic. We spoke of the power of questions and I offered the concept of Heron's intervention types (2003) to categorise the different styles of approach, from directive to facilitative, to help Justin consider what sort of questions might be helpful. He made more of a conscious effort to leave his "baggage" at the door and to work from the perspective of his colleague – to share his insights to better read their position and to use his curiosity to prompt questions that helped them work out their own solutions.

The outcome was seemingly highly successful in terms of how he described the response of his team member and he, therefore, adopted a similar approach with the rest of his team to good effect. My sense was that Justin had developed significantly in how he managed his interactions with others. Specifically the

way he used his confidence in his insight to engage with others through positive enquiry to counter his earlier preference to concentrate on task to the extent that he felt less empathetic. Coaching had helped Justin to trust his intuition and gave him the means of being more observant around his behaviour, especially during critical contacts, and to respond to others in ways which demonstrated that he was more mindful of their position.

"Being more confident in my insight of others has allowed me to be more open and connect at a deeper level. Using my curious nature, and asking more questions, has helped my coaching style and has led to better engagement from my team, peers and manager. Listening to others verbalise their thoughts and encouraging them to do so has led to a greater sense of empowerment and ownership – a win-win outcome for both me and those I seek to influence!"

What did I connect to?

As Justin's coach I was concerned to ensure that I maintained a connection with him that allowed me to both support and challenge him. Support him through deploying the usual approaches of collaborative coaching, and challenge him to think a little harder and deeper

than he might otherwise have done, and to confront inconsistencies that he might not have noticed or recognised. However, this description of our connection only covers primarily the mechanics of the coaching process. It says nothing about connection coaches continue to make for themselves and about themselves in terms of who they are and what they do.

So in coaching Justin, I learnt that my effectiveness is inextricably linked to my ability to connect with my coachee and that although this can't be forced, it can be optimised. That this sense of connection can be a great source of motivation and aid to my ability to focus on my coachee's needs and to help them get the best outcome, which ultimately delvers the best outcome for the client. Finally, that the satisfaction I derive from these connections continues to play a large part in sustaining me in my purpose as a coach – to paraphrase Timothy Leary "Turn on, tune in – get connected!"

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Murray Thomas, Executive Coach, The OCM

Contact: murray@theocm.co.uk

Integrating coaching into organisational culture: An international perspective

What does coaching mean in Oxfam?

Organisational mission statements can often be so broad and all encompassing that they seem almost meaningless. At Oxfam GB however the statement 'Working With Others To Overcome Poverty and Suffering' provides the compelling vision for the organisation's work in developing a coaching culture.

Introducing the concept of a coaching culture within Oxfam was not a difficult 'sell'. The organisational values of Empowerment, Inclusiveness and Accountability, speak directly to a coaching approach;

- **Empowering** people by supporting them to think for themselves.

- Developing understanding and **inclusion** through effective listening.

- Enabling **accountability** through skilled enquiry and a developing sense of personal responsibility.

When this is linked with the commitment throughout the organisation to 'work with others' there is a powerful case for a coaching approach to be the default approach in how people in the organisation interact with each other and with external stakeholders.

Over the last two years, Oxfam GB has been actively working towards developing a culture of coaching across the organisation. The goal of this work originally was to develop coaching as a way of working amongst employees, enabling Oxfam to develop the potential and raise the performance, motivation, and confidence of staff.

Oxfam works in over 70 countries, with many staff working in remote and often inaccessible areas. Personal development and support for many staff is difficult.

If everyday interactions with managers and colleagues can be a coaching interaction however, then support and development is integrated into daily work and communications.

What are the key elements in developing a coaching approach in Oxfam?

The approach taken to this culture change initiative has been to develop coaching skills and environments that enable coaching conversations and encourage people to think and act in a way that empowers themselves and others.

This has been done through:

- Teams developing a coaching approach in the way they work with each other and stakeholders.

- Managers working with external and internal coaches and understanding the power that a coaching approach can have.

- Managers training as internal coaches and working with coachees, in addition to working with their own teams in a coaching way.

- External coaches being explicit with their coachees and enabling the coachees to adopt coaching approaches with their own teams.

- Team members, managers, internal and external coaches explicitly role-modelling coaching behaviours and approaches in their work.

- Coaching being woven into organisational processes, for example, the way performance reviews are undertaken, recruiting for coaching skills, ensuring coaching skills are addressed in Learning and Development plans.

- Coaching skills are developed through specific coaching skills programmes.

- Coaching skills are developed through ensuring that learning interventions use coaching approaches as part of the programme design e.g. the use of Action Learning Sets, peer mentoring etc.

- Incorporating coaching approaches into the day-to-day work of the organisation e.g. the way we run meetings, projects and large group processes.

The key elements of Oxfam's coaching framework are represented in **Figure 1.**

What impact is it having?

The examples below show how work in three of these areas have had an impact on Oxfam staff and the work the organisation does in its international programmes.

Internal coaches: The Workplace Coaches Programme
This programme provides leadership development opportunities for senior Oxfam managers who train to become accredited coaches within Oxfam. The coaches work with Oxfam's field-based Programme Managers around the world.

This programme contributes to developing a coaching culture through:
- Providing formal coaching to Programme Managers who work in remote locations with few other opportunities for focused management learning.

- Providing development opportunities for those training to be coaches as they hone this key leadership skill.

- Enabling the coaches to work with their own teams using coaching approaches, and role-modelling coaching behaviours.

Workplace Coaches speak of the impact of the coach-training programme on them, their teams and the organisation:
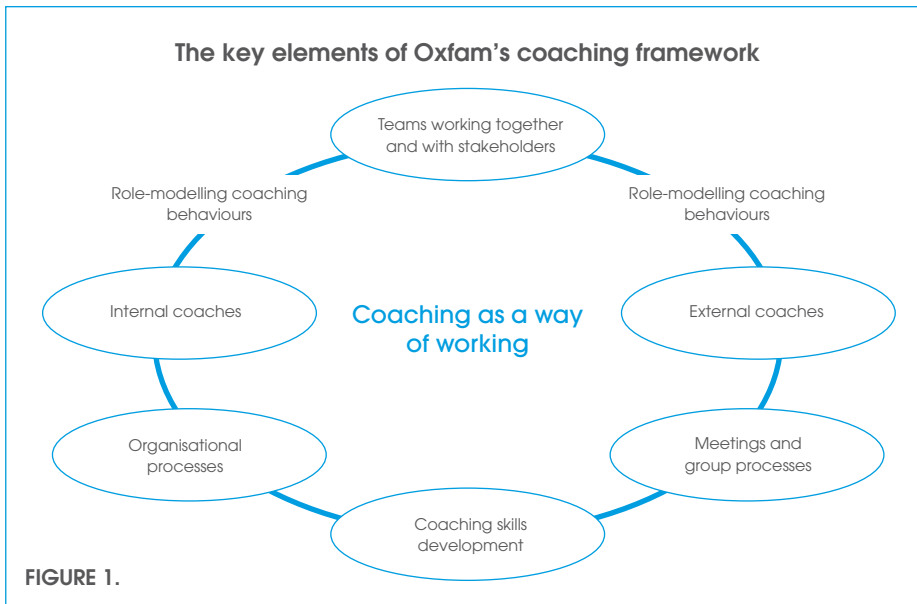
Liz Lambert

The key elements of Oxfam's coaching framework

FIGURE 1.

"*I am more committed to the organisation. I am giving back through taking on other coachees. I am a better manager and leader for the organisation.*" Coach

"*I feel a need to give back to the organisation for the self-awareness this learning and development processes created in me. It has made me feel valued by the organisation.*" Coach

Both the coaching training and the subsequent coaching and coaching supervision takes place via teleconferencing. The programme is entirely carbon neutral.

Initially the main challenge resulted from formal coaching being an unfamiliar concept in many parts of the world. A programme is now in place to familiarise coachees before they start working with their coach.

Oxfam's Programme Management Coach
Marcus Thompson is Oxfam's Programme Management Coach. He studied for his Advanced Diploma in Coaching and Mentoring with The OCM and finds their blended approach enables him to use a flexible style in the varied country contexts in which he works.

He works primarily with new Country Directors. Country Director is a pivotal but isolated role and focused support within their first few months in the role has proved to be invaluable. Marcus trained with The OCM and has, what many people consider to be the coolest coaching job in the world. He adopts an accompaniment approach, working alongside the Country Director for two weeks, with a return visit three months later, with ongoing telephone support.

Their managers speak of the impact that they have seen coaching have on the coachees:

"*(Name) looks different once Marcus has been. I can't believe the visible change I've seen in them. (Name) works in a very challenging environment, this kind of support is vital to our work.*" Coachee

Teams working together and with stakeholders

Developing team ways of working in Sri Lanka
Through developing coaching skills the Oxfam team in Sri Lanka wanted to introduce a culture of coaching and use these skills to develop more equitable relationships with local organisations with whom they

work in partnership. In addition, the team wanted to increase their own capabilities and confidence to enable them to make more valuable contributions to the development and implementation of Oxfam's strategy for overcoming poverty in Sri Lanka.

"*To change the culture within an organisation does not happen overnight but I do feel that we have made very significant progress and there is a great understanding of coaching and its benefits throughout the structure.*" Deputy Country Director

Developing this culture involves a combination of staff being coached, coaching skills development for teams, teams being coached, programme staff delivering coaching training for each other and partners, aligning ways of working with organisational processes including performance management, recruitment, project planning, using facilitative / coaching-based processes for day-to-day processes.

Developing approaches to lobbying Government
Similar work has also taken place in countries where Oxfam works with governments to influence policies that affect people living in poverty.

In one country, the integrated approach to developing a coaching culture within the Oxfam team included:
- Coaching skills development programme with the whole country team.

- Whole-team agreements and commitments to adopting a coaching approach including how performance appraisals, one-to-one meetings and team meetings are conducted.

- Team coaching with the senior management team.

Integrating coaching into organisational culture: An international perspective (cont.)

- Individual coaching for managers in the team.

This led to coaching approaches being used in the lobbying and campaigning work the team is involved in.

It also had an impact on the interactions with communities working to overcome poverty:

"Once a month we chair a meeting with 12 different rural organisations. They are all of very different political positions and technical expertise – there was often a lot of conflict. They would look to us to provide a solution, when we did that one group would see us as being on their 'side' and the other group would see us as unsupportive of their views. We've begun to use a coaching approach in this meeting. Now we ask questions and encourage the group to come up with their own solution to the differences. Our role has changed so that now we help the group to think of options for solutions and then summarise and hold the group accountable for its decisions, rather than coming up with solutions for them. They now make better decisions with little conflict." Programme Manager

Meetings and group processes

Coaching approaches are being increasingly used to facilitate day-to-day work around the organisation.

Many teams and groups have committed to working with each other in meetings and day-to-day work in ways which promote listening, encourage enquiry and support feedback. One of these group processes is team coaching.

Team coaching

Oxfam worked with The OCM to develop a structure and approach for team coaching.

Team coaching is in place across Oxfam. It is used to:

- Provide support for teams committed to developing the way they work together for increased effectiveness.

- Provide management development opportunities for senior teams.

- Provide conflict resolution support teams in crisis.

Team coaching involves regular ongoing coaching support for teams over an agreed period of time.

The teams involved have reported the following improvements in the way they work:

- Increased levels of understanding and communication amongst the team.

- Increased collaboration.

- Reduced conflict.

- Improved decision making.

- Improved relationships across different functional teams.

- Increased focus on beneficiaries and national staff development.

- An increase in shared problem solving.

"We have got to know each other's strengths and ways of working. We have created safe spaces for discussing the problems we have had in ways of working, and been able for the most part to unravel issues which were difficult to work on. We have had more meetings to discuss work jointly and for the most part we work together to share a sense of problems and solutions. We are now working hard at our own projects with a sense of common purpose. We don't have to consult one another on every detail any

more because there is a common understanding and perhaps this takes away the everyday sense of being knitted together. We have though grown up as a team and as a set of people." Country Director

Summary

This is a flavour of just some of the work that Oxfam staff have been doing to integrate coaching as a way of working.

Many important lessons have been learnt so far. We now have an even greater insight into how people learn and interact positively within and across national cultures. We have an applied and tested understanding of how we align organisational values with our behaviour towards each other and our external stakeholders. We better understand how we can weave strands of thinking and behaviour into the fabric of an organisation in order to increase effectiveness.

From my perspective, the most fascinating aspect of this work, is that by choosing to develop coaching behaviour and approaches we are equipping ourselves with the self-insight and skills to shape and develop Oxfam's culture even further. The culture we want to develop, in itself enables us to continue to develop and grow in other ways.

Contacts

Liz Lambert is the Head of Learning & Organisational Development at Oxfam GB.

Liz achieved her Advanced Diploma in Coaching and Mentoring with The OCM.

If you are interested in working with Oxfam as a coach on a voluntary basis please contact: learn@oxfam.org.uk.

Book Review: BY HELENE COOPER

Coaching and Mentoring: Practical conversations to improve learning: 2nd Edition Eric Parsloe & Melville Leedham

In the current environment where new coaching books are published with ever increasing frequency, what does, "Coaching and Mentoring: Practical conversations to improve learning", bring into the arena?

Eric Parsloe, chairman of The OCM (formerly The Oxford School of Coaching and Mentoring) and one of the founders of the European Mentoring Coaching Council, is well known for coining the phrase: "Coaching is simple, but just because it's simple, it doesn't mean it's easy". His view is that coaching is, in essence, only a conversation. However, for that conversation to be effective, transformational even, it needs to be handled with great skill and this skill needs to be applied consistently. The book sets out to challenge the reader to do just that.

Simple in its approach, jargon-free and easy to read, the book also includes case studies, as well as offering a range of self-assessments, designed to raise self-awareness, highlighting areas of strengths and development the reader can chose to use to monitor changes over time.

Those starting as coaches, mentors or coach-mentors, will find a thorough introduction, not just to what coaching is, but also how it fits within the range of other approaches: existentialism, ontological coaching and psychology to name but a few.

Those familiar with the authors and their approach, will recognise themes, and will be challenged to deepen their thinking, look at their practice afresh, and be invited to step up and consistently perform at the top of their game. The reflection on the increasing relevance of on-going learning in our society both as individuals and in organisations, provides much food for thought for new and experienced coaches alike.

Although the focus of the book is primarily around business coaching, it also looks at the ways in which coaching and mentoring are now brought into different contexts such as life coaching and coaching in the community. Reflecting on the increasingly blurring boundaries between them, the authors set out to determine what defines business coaching.

The tools and techniques presented have been selected by the authors and reflect their preferences based on their practice and experience. Others such as Neuro Linguistic Programming are mentioned, but the reader is invited to find out more for himself / herself, from his / her own opinion and build and adapt his / her personalised toolkit.

Looking at the content in more detail, the book essentially covers four areas;

1. **The context in which coaching and mentoring operates**
   In an uncertain market, where the rate of change is ever increasing, those successful in business continuously adapt to meet the new challenges they encounter. The authors reflect on the role of coach-mentoring in delivering: just-in-time learning; empowerment and on-going development of employees' adaptability.

2. **Content of a coaching-mentoring conversation**
   The authors clearly take the view that the essence of a coach-mentoring relationship is to deliver change. As a result, they place learning at its centre and state the key role a coach-mentor plays in facilitating learning. The essential elements that transform an organisation into a learning organisation are also discussed.

3. **Key skills required to be effective**
   Emphasis is placed on three key skills required of a consistently effective coach-mentor: listening, questioning and giving and receiving feedback. A chapter is dedicated to each one of them and looks at what can stand in the way of their skilful practice. For example, the authors discuss the role of Transactional Analysis (TA) in feedback, in particular the need for an adult / adult relationship to facilitate learning and ask how that approach can work when the coach-mentor is also the manager.

4. **A reflection around the current status of coaching and what the future might hold**
   The last chapter focuses on the emergence of the potential need to define coaching as a profession. It explores the role of the various bodies such as the European Mentoring and Coach Council (EMCC), International Coaching Federation (ICF) and Association for Coaching (AC) in defining the playing field and pays particular attention to the debate around: a common code of ethics, recognised accreditation and the role of ongoing CPD and supervision.

Eric Parsloe and Melville Leedham have managed to carve a niche for this book. Those starting in the business will find practical tools and approaches, self-assessments to extend their self-awareness, avenues for reflection that will help them find their 'coaching signature'. Those who have been in the profession for some time will be challenged to check the effectiveness of their practice and look at the evolution of their profession and the role they wish to play within it.

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