



IJMC

International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching



October 2017

A Reflection on 2012

This year EMCC is celebrating its 25th anniversary. As part of our celebrations we are sending our members a 'gift' on the 25th of every month of the anniversary year.

Recently we contacted the authors who had written articles for our journal during our 20th anniversary year (2012). We asked them if they would be interested in reviewing their article and writing an update for us. We're delighted that several of the authors accepted our invitation and this special edition is a result of their input. You will see as you browse this edition of the journal that some of the authors have taken a reflective approach to their review of their 2012 articles, looking at how things have changed in the last five years and the impact. Others have written a general update whilst a few have taken the opportunity to present new/updated data.

We hope you enjoy this special 25th anniversary edition of the journal.

Regards

Irena Sobolewska
EMCC International Vice-president Operations

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DISTANCE MENTORING

A case study from the Middle East

Published 2012

Carol Whitaker & Dr Kerstin Potter

2017 A Look Back on a Successful Mentoring Programme In Lebanon

WHERE ARE WE ALL NOW?

In this update we'll start with considering some of the changes that have taken place in terms of technology for distance coaching and mentoring, followed with short updates on what has happened to our mentees during the last five years.

Technology for distance mentoring and coaching – in 2012 and today

When the Mowgli organisation set up our mentoring relationships in 2012, they advocated using Skype, and the more technically inclined of the mentees used google docs to share documents with their mentor.

In the intervening five years, much has happened. When googling 'online mentoring platforms' nearly ten million returns appear, and when looking for 'online coaching platforms', there are just over eight million returns. There are of course overlaps between the two, with many platforms featuring in both categories.

Platforms vary from simple sharing of sound and a whiteboard, to increasingly sophisticated ways of using the whiteboard, recording of sessions, storing of past sessions and retrieval systems, to calculating time spent and even sending out and managing invoices.

Some set-ups even carry session outlines and suggested questions to ask. Whiteboards can include various toolsets such as figures and landscapes, to fully 3d set-ups based on games design, where the mentee or coachee and the mentor or coach can create their own avatars that evolve in a landscape of their design.

However sophisticated the platform, we are still in the hands of unreliable or slow internet connections. We find that depending on the part of the world you are trying to connect with, some VoIP providers are more reliable than others, and some connections have the bandwidth to cope with a whiteboard as well. In other places, or at other times of the day, it all ends in frustration.

It's impossible to recommend any of these platforms in particular, as every person has their personal requirements and preferences in look and feel, as well as in the tools made available.

The mentees:

Carol: I am still in touch with my mentee although we finished our formal relationship in Nov 2012. Over the last five years we have been in contact about once or twice a year and this mentoring relationship seems to have much more longevity than my coaching relationships. Maybe it's because mentees can see you as part of their business and an extension of their network. Meetings in the last five years have been mainly virtual and on skype. The Middle East still being a volatile area the service has been intermittent but as this is a long-term relationship there is tolerance on both sides, a lot has happened in technology in the last 5 years as we mention earlier. Calls have been instigated by either of us, and the responsibility to ensure they are focused equally shared by us both. It feels different than the earlier more formal contracted mentoring arrangement through a third party - Mowgli. I feel privileged to be part of her journey and that the learning has been reciprocal.

I think that our sharing of our cultural back grounds at the very beginning helped us to build trust and the mentee has shared many hopes and fears and used the relationship as a sounding board when difficult business issues need a resolution and to help her explore her options. Through the mentoring programme the mentee explored other forms of support and advice and has identified other mentors but this relationship has been valued for its Independence both geographically (not likely to bump into mutual contacts) and culturally. The last year has seen a lot of success for my mentee she has doubled her revenue, made a conscious decision to outsource work and not to employ staff directly, allowing for maximum flexibility.

Kerstin: My mentee moved to Dubai within six months of completing our last mentoring session. He is still there today, and is now involved with his second business venture in the UAE. He says that the mentoring experience had been invaluable, as it introduced an outside look on himself and his business – and he learned the difficult lesson of trying to keep to one venture at a time!



[Click here to link to the original Journal Article in Appendix](#)

Author Biographies

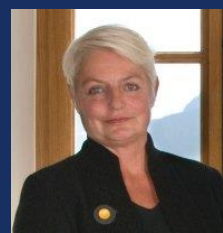


Carol Whitaker

Carol has experience at Board level in a number of industries, an MBA with an early career in HR. The development of potential in the people has always been her passion. She specialises in Executive Coaching, Team/Group Coaching, Supervision and Mentoring Entrepreneurs. She is an Associate Lecturer with Oxford Brookes University and supervises Students doing their MA in Coaching and Mentoring Practice in both the UK and Hong Kong.

She has co-authored with David Clutterbuck & Michelle Lucas a 5*rated book 'Coaching Supervision: A practical guide for Supervisees'. Currently writing the second book on Peer Supervision.

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Published 2012

Dr Angélique du Toit

REFLECTIONS ON COACHING

The Co-construction of Management Knowledge

Introduction

Since the publication of my article in 2012, the coaching profession has continued to change and develop. Organisations have integrated coaching into their leadership and development programmes and coaching has become an expected skill of leadership. Many organisations have trained their own team of internal coaches and limiting the use of external coaches to that of the senior teams. Buyers of coaching are also more sophisticated in selecting external coaches and the selection process often includes participation in an assessment centre to determine the skills and quality of potential coaches.

There remains an unspoken assumption that the power of coaching lies within the models and techniques of coaching. The perception is that armed with the right models, the coach will successfully achieve the desired outcome of the coaching relationship. There is also an increasing expectation that coaching will and should result in measurable improved performance and the achievements of specific goals and objectives. The ultimate outcome being to attain the elusive holy grail of coaching namely the direct correlation between coaching and the bottom line of the organisation.

However, I consider this to be a simplistic view of coaching. The overriding theme of my original article argues for the fact that the coach and the coaching process is for the purpose of facilitating the learning and knowledge creation of the client. In my reflection that follows I will continue to argue anew that this remains the purpose of coaching. The philosophy of co-construction is as relevant to coaching today as it was then.

The Philosophy of Coaching

If co-creation is a fundamental part of coaching, then it is essential that as coaches we engage with philosophy as part of our personal development. It will afford us with a deeper understanding of our coaching practice and greater awareness of the environment in which our clients operate. The principles of philosophy provides us with the language and tools to address the often ethical dilemmas that are not only part of the coaching landscape, but also of environment in which our clients operate. They regularly struggle with tough decisions and ethical challenges (du Toit and Sim, 2010; du Toit, 2014). The purpose of our clients as managers and leaders are to create meaning for their organisations. They also have to make value judgements and act accordingly. As coaches we have the responsibility to support them in these endeavours and knowledge of philosophy will prepare us to do so more effectively.

Furthermore, I suggest the prerequisite of a philosophy of coaching allows us as coaches to transcend the obsession with the latest models and techniques of coaching. Instead, a philosophy of coaching provides a holding space for the application of the appropriate tools and techniques, serving the co-construction or sensemaking of the client. A philosophy of coaching provides the *why* and the tools the *how* (du Toit, 2014). Without the *why* the *how* becomes a blunt instrument and our infatuation with the models means we loose sight of the purpose of coaching, which is to be in service of the coachee.

As I discussed in my article (2012), Cranton (1994) challenges the perception of educators as the disseminators and providers of knowledge. In my opinion the same challenge applies to coaches. Instead the educator or coach should assume the role of provocateur for the purpose of assisting the coachee in their sensemaking process. According to Mezirow (1991), learning is also about transforming of pre-existing knowledge and is part of the journey of sensemaking and adapting our frames of reference.

Sensemaking

I advocate in my article that the cornerstone of adult learning is to understand how we construct meaning. The discourse of sensemaking provides further depth and a holistic approach to the process of meaning construction. Each individual will construct meaning in a way that is relevant to their internal constructs. A further reason why we as coaches need to be vigilant and approach our coaching with self-awareness, consciously selecting the tools that are appropriate to the client and their particular set of circumstances. Karl Weick, psychologist and organisational theorist, is associated with the notion of sensemaking within an organisational setting for the purpose of creating shared understanding.

The principles of sensemaking, as advocated by Weick (1979,1995), equally apply to coaching. It is the process through which the coach co-constructs meaning from the ambiguity within which the coachee finds themselves. Weick (1995) argues that the purpose of sensemaking is to challenge belief systems of individuals, groups and organisations. Equally the purpose of coaching is to support the client in challenging and making sense of their underlying values and beliefs. Sensemaking supported through coaching enables the coachee to recognise different and alternative choices to given situations.

As Weick (1995) suggests, the labels we assign to events may very well assume the status of a truth. However, the purpose of sensemaking is to challenge such labels of beliefs and that is what the coaching space facilitates. Once labelled, the power of beliefs may lead to self-fulfilling prophecies and influence what we choose to pay attention to. Coaching therefore challenges the coachee to think more clearly about the subconscious steps we engage in during sensemaking and to challenge perceived labels of truth. Boje (1995) succinctly captures such potential for multiple interpretations through the introduction of his term "plurivocality".

Weick (1995) argues that we draw on many different vocabularies to support our sensemaking. These vocabularies include those from our cultural ideologies, organisational theories, paradigms associated with our occupations and professions, truths associated with tradition. From a coaching point of view, we draw on the truths reflected by different approaches, tools, techniques and models. However, these vocabularies impose static labels on discourses and practices that are fluid by nature and ever evolving. Instead, reality is in constant movement, flowing like a river and in the words of constructionism, always in a state of *becoming*. The concepts we thus construct in our mind are not representations of the external world. Sensemaking therefore offers the opportunity to deconstruct the stability we impose on both organisations as well as all aspects of the coaching process.

Conceptualisation in Coaching

For the purpose of deepening our philosophical approach to coaching a constructionist perspective of reality allows us to consciously observe the process of conceptualisation. Rudolf Arnheim (1969), a former professor of the psychology of art at Harvard, suggests that all thinking is perceptual in nature. Just as artists think with their senses, so do we as coaches. What we come to understand as reality emerges from our perceptual exploration of our phenomenal world and experiences. Our eyes are always eager to perceive clear pictures, form or shape (Chia, 2000). However, we exclude and ignore the inarticulate forms and perceptions denying the insight they offer. As a coach, we know the latter may be the very aspect worthy of exploring. As Eherenzweig (1965) suggests in order to become sensitized to and register these inarticulate forms, it is necessary to adopt a 'diffused attention'. This will allow us to become aware of the 'otherness' and observe what may otherwise go unnoticed.

Unconscious cognition or scanning allows us to grasp a seemingly unrelated cluster of data (Chia, 2000).

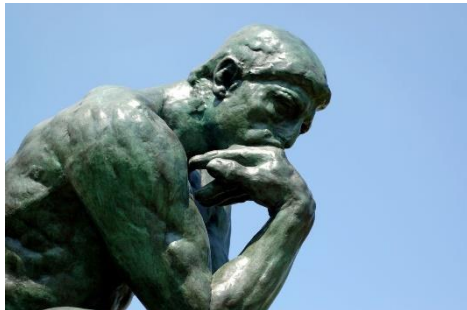
Such cognition also has the ability to hold a multitude of possibilities not available to conscious comprehension. It provides a vision that is sensitive to the background and blurred images surrounding forms that present themselves in clarity. In a coaching context, how and what our clients bring to the coaching space in the form of behaviours, beliefs and expectations represent the clear and observable forms. On the other hand, that which goes unsaid, the nuances and body language that may be incongruent with the observable forms represents the blurred images. It is in the latter where transformation is often to be discovered.

Both forms of comprehension are necessary in creative activity whether of the pure creative form or the more structured creative problem solving. As coaches it allows us to deepen our understanding of our client, their context and content. Chia (2000) also likens this to the form of knowing associated with our peripheral vision. It is through a glance that we are able to hold both form and ambiguity in one visual field. From a constructionist perspective it is the becoming or emerging reality within our conscious awareness.

Thus as coaches we gain wisdom and insight of our client which we would not grasp through the gaze which is piercing, fixing and seeking to objectify what it perceives. The fixed gaze seeks to stop the flow of becoming. Instead it is the glance, which provides the mastery of the craftsmen that allows him to consider all the relevant possibilities. The same applies to coaching and it is the wisdom associated with the systemic eclectic coach as referred to by Clutterbuck and Megginson (2011). They consider this the most liberated approach as the coach has a wide-ranging portfolio that includes knowledge and expertise from many different disciplines. Such a coach uses a non-mechanistic approach, allowing her to become conscious of both the blurred as well as the defined shapes and forms presented by the client.

In Conclusion

The development of a coaching philosophy allows the coach to transcend the pressure to obtain the latest tools and techniques of coaching. It provides a conceptual framework through which the coach is able to reflect upon themselves, their practice, their clients and the context within which they operate. The assumption that the study of philosophy is detached from the daily challenges of organisations is erroneous. Philosophy as the pursuit of knowledge provides us with the framework to expand our own knowledge and understanding of the theory and practice of coaching.



The power of a philosophy of coaching enables the coach to reflect deeply on their personal ontological position in relation to truth and the truth of their coaching practice (du Toit, 2014). Such a philosophy allows the coach to define their own unique position within the coaching dynamic. The master coach learns to include in their practice both the precise and observed forms such as the tools, models and techniques as well as the vague, incoherent and inarticulate forms associated with our intuition, wisdom and artistic interpretations. The challenge for organisations and professional bodies is that the latter cannot be assessed through traditional research and measurement tools. Hence, my argument for creating a philosophy of coaching.

The implication for the profession, both how we teach and practice coaching, is to once again reiterate the theme of my original article and the reflections contained herein, that the coach provides a holding space based on their philosophy of coaching. Such a philosophy will then enable us to draw on the relevant tools and techniques in service of the client. The commitment to a particular philosophical approach will negate the need to chase after every new approach that comes along. Instead, the practice of coaching will reflect congruence and truly meet the unique needs and circumstances of the client.

A further point worthy of reflection is the management of expectations, especially by organisations, who seek to find justification in the outcome of coaching by way of improved performance. If the emphasis and focus is on the input, the output will naturally follow. In the words of Garvey, (2011:77) "Performance is primarily a function of learning and development activity rather than a measurement system." Such a fixation can be extended to the assumption that there is a right and therefore a wrong way to coach. My challenge to us all is to reflect on whose purpose does this serve? The coach, coachee, organisation or justifying the existence of professional bodies. Who is ultimately in a position and with the accompanied wisdom to judge what is the right or wrong approach to coaching.

I reiterate the reflections of Stewart, et al. (2008) who argues for the celebration of diversity to the coaching process, once again emphasising the interactive and co-creative approach to coaching in service of the needs of the client.

About the author



Dr Angélique du Toit is a Visiting Fellow at a number of Universities and the author of a number of books and journal articles related to coaching. The theme of applied research and knowledge transfer has influenced most of the activities within her career. She has also been an international coaching for 20 years and is on the preferred suppliers list as coach for a number of organisations.



[Click here to link to the original Journal Article in Appendix](#)

DID MENTORING GIVE DOCTORS THE HELP THEY WANTED?

A Follow-up Study of a UK Mentoring Service



[Click here to link to the original Journal Article in Appendix](#)

Published 2012

Elisabeth Paice (corresponding author)
Linda Miller, Hina Pattani, Judith Stanton

Abstract

In 2012 the European Journal of Mentoring and Coaching published a study of applications to a UK mentoring service for doctors, looking at the reasons they gave for wanting a mentor. Reasons most commonly cited were Career development, Change or transition at work, Self-doubt as a doctor, and Work/life balance. Five years later, we report a further study from the same service, looking at what changes doctors said they had made as a result of receiving mentoring. The changes most frequently reported related to Personal effectiveness, Career development, Self-Awareness, Work/life balance and Self-confidence as a doctor.

Keywords:

Coaching, Mentoring, physician, doctor

Introduction

A service offering coaching and mentoring for doctors was set up in 2007 as part of a support system for National Health Service (NHS) staff in London, UK. The service offered a course of up to four coaching sessions, each lasting 90 minutes, usually delivered over 6 months to a year. The doctors targeted were mostly doing their postgraduate training (residency) or had completed it within the previous 2 years. The coaches/mentors were senior doctors from outside the mentee's workplace who had been trained in coaching and mentoring and supported with continuing development and supervision. More details about the service are available in a previous paper in this journal (Viney et al, 2012). In that paper we looked at what help applicants to the service said they wanted from coaching and mentoring. The four main themes that emerged were Career development, Change or transition at work, Self-doubt as a doctor, and Work/life balance. Altogether, over 3000 doctors have been mentored through the service. An independent evaluation was carried out by Oxford Brookes University (Bachkirova et al, 2015). This evaluation showed statistically significant improvements in employee engagement, self-efficacy and self-compassion of mentees participating in the scheme.

In the present study we set out to explore how closely the topics doctors said they wanted help with were reflected in the changes they said they made on completion of the mentoring. We decided to do this by looking at a standard question included in the evaluation form that every mentee was asked to complete. This form included the following question:

“What changes have you made as a result of your coaching/mentoring sessions?”

Method

We invited the 15 most experienced mentors on the scheme, those who had conducted at least 150 hours of mentoring within the service and had at least 5 years of practice, to participate in the study. Those who agreed were asked to send us the responses to the question above from 10-20 of their most recent (but otherwise unselected) evaluation forms. In the interests of maintaining confidentiality, we asked that no identifying details about the mentees be provided and that any names or other identifying details within the response be deleted.

The anonymised free text responses were reviewed by three of the authors (EP, HP and LM). Each worked independently looking for the themes that we expected to find from our previous study and also alert to the possibility of additional themes. The method used was thematic analysis. We looked for words that were frequently repeated, and went repeatedly through the text coding it into categories which were then discussed by all four authors and agreed (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). We noted the frequency with which themes recurred. Quotes were selected to illustrate the themes.

Results

Of the 15 mentors approached, two declined on the grounds of being too busy and two did not respond. The eleven mentors who agreed to participate submitted a total of 183 responses, an average of 16.6 responses each (range 10-20).

The main four themes that were identified in the previous study - Career development, Change or transition at work, Self-doubt as a doctor, and Work/life balance - were reflected, with varying frequency, in the responses to the question under study. Additional themes that emerged included Personal effectiveness, Self-awareness, and Wellbeing/positivity. Several mentees said that they were now planning to undertake Mentoring others. Some mentees had made the decision to Access other support such as psychotherapy and counselling.

“What changes have you made as a result of your coaching/mentoring sessions?”

Main themes and their frequency (more than one theme was identified in many responses)

Personal effectiveness	109	60%
Career development	96	52%
Self-awareness	94	51%
Work/life balance	56	31%
Self-confidence as a doctor	45	25%
Well-being/positivity	36	20%
Mentoring others	24	13%
Career change, transition	20	11%
Accessing other support	10	5%
Total responses	183	

Personal effectiveness

Increased Personal effectiveness was the most frequent change the doctors reported as a result of being mentored. This included learning to be more organised, prioritising and focusing, communicating and working better with others, accessing more support from seniors, and developing strategies to approach difficult situations

“Am more organized in terms of keeping an ongoing ‘to do’ list, making action plans, using SMART goals, prioritizing different actions.”

“I am more succinct in my communication with consultant colleagues – and have had positive feedback in this vein.”

“I am less inclined to wish that the people who pose the most difficulty to me at work were different. Now I think about what I might do differently to get the job done.”

“Better supervisory arrangements to feel more supported in my PhD.”

“I have realised that I need to spend more time evaluating and reflecting on difficult situations prior to approaching them where possible.”

Career development

This theme was the commonest reason given by applicants for wanting a mentor, and the second commonest area in which change had been made. Mentees reported making important career choices and plans, overcoming obstacles and achieving goals.

"I have updated my CV and started doing some of the steps we discussed in order to find a new job."

"I have investigated my options and planned further training courses for example a Diploma in dermatology to enhance my further scope of practice."

"On a practical level the sessions really helped me to get my PhD finished, which was hugely important to me."

Self-awareness

Although rarely mentioned as a reason for wanting to have a mentor, comments about having developed increased self-awareness were made by around half the mentees. The mentee often recognised habits and ways of thinking which were counter-productive and had learned ways to mitigate these, moving from self-criticism to self-efficacy.

"Much more aware of my personality and how this will affect discussions/relationships with patients or cause misunderstandings/confusion – has made me more aware of how people may work best, respond to other people."

"I have started to pace myself with projects, addressing my personality shortcomings to avoid failure."

"I think I have developed a much better insight into my work habits, and am much more open to questioning my behaviour and habits."

"I check my assumptions and thinking patterns – am I creating a problem when there is none? A more nuanced awareness of my strengths and limitations has allowed me to know what I can draw on to be effective and moderate the impact of my limitations on others."

Work/life balance

Achieving a better balance between work and personal life was a strong theme in both the application forms and the evaluations. Work/life balance was cited in several responses as a means of avoiding stress or burn-out and maintaining personal relationships.

"Very tangible changes in terms of managing work life balance - essentially re-prioritizing some things and recognizing the importance of career longevity etc."

"I now have most weekends off, I have seen friends I have not seen for a long time. I attend regular yoga and I am dealing better with stress at work."

"Very tangible changes in terms of managing work life balance - essentially re-

Self-confidence

Self-doubt as a doctor was one of the themes applicants to the scheme said they wanted help with. Following mentoring, increased Self-confidence was reported by around 25% of mentees. In some cases improved Self-confidence helped the mentee over a specific career hurdle. In other cases it helped them to recover from a difficult experience. Improved Self-awareness and Personal effectiveness were often linked to improved Self-confidence.

"In my recent role changes it helped me to regain my confidence that I had lost during a difficult period at work."

"I think the sessions gave me confidence to be a bit less self-critical."

"I have developed more confidence in myself, and far greater self-awareness about my strengths and weaknesses. I also feel more confident with decision making now, given the tools I have been introduced to."

Well-being / positivity

Many applicants linked their need for help with their Career development or their Self-doubt as a doctor to the stressful nature of the job and loss of motivation. Following the mentoring sessions there was a strong theme of improved health and happiness and a new-found positivity about the profession and their fit within it. There was a sense in some responses that mentees had learned self-compassion.

"On a day to day level it has changed the way I work. I take a lot more care of myself at work now, something that I really struggled with before. I realize now I have been very unhappy in my training program for the past 2 years and so I have taken the informed and positive step of applying to a different speciality that I now know will provide me with a more sustainable career choice."

"Although it sounds a little over the top I really feel like a totally different person having gone through the mentoring process. I no longer dwell on all the things that I haven't done but think about them as positive choices and I focus on the things that I know I can do well whilst also trying to improve on my weaknesses. I have a much more positive view of myself and my abilities and I am aware of some of my self-limiting thoughts which helps me to control and overcome them."

"...There is a long way to go but I truly feel I am entering a very reflective and thoughtful part of my life that means taking better care of myself."

Mentoring others

Several mentees mentioned that they had adopted tools used by their mentors in the sessions to self-coach themselves. Others mentioned using what they had learned to mentor junior colleagues and some were committed to learning to become mentors themselves.

"As a result of my mentoring sessions I am more able to assist junior colleagues with some of the challenges they face with career choices and related issues. I believe I will be in a position to identify colleagues who may benefit from mentoring sessions in future and am now considering formal training myself in future so that I can conduct such sessions in an official capacity."

Career change, transition

Coping with career change, in terms of changing jobs, being promoted or moving on, was a theme in the application forms and in the evaluations. In some cases the change being considered was more radical, i.e. whether to leave medicine or change specialty. Mentoring seemed to help mentees think through these decisions.

"I have made a positive decision to move away from clinical practice and am currently seeking a career outside the NHS. The mentoring process gave me a supportive framework within which to make this difficult decision and has made me confident to move forward in my career."

"Realised all of my focus was looking in the wrong direction for what was important in the wider context of my life at the moment."

"I have thought and explored a lot of options around my career choices and rather than go in a different direction I have been reassured and found joy in my current pathway."

Accessing other support

The change that some doctors made as a result of the mentoring was to recognise and act on the need for other forms of support, ranging from mindfulness training to psychiatric help.

"I felt able to access some personal therapy to address some of the issues in my personal life and have felt more enabled to take control of my life, whilst equally accepting that some uncertainty is inevitable."

"Daily meditating/mindfulness exercises; has helped with stress, anxiety and sleep problems."

"I went to the GP and got treatment for depression."

Discussion

It was encouraging to find that doctors completing the mentoring programme made positive changes related to what they said they wanted help with. However, we were struck by the frequency with which doctors spoke of achieving positive changes through mentoring which were *not* major themes in the application forms, especially in terms of increased Personal effectiveness and Self-awareness, and how these might relate to changes in the mentees' improved Wellbeing and positivity.

Doctors are notoriously self-critical and hard on themselves, and a lack of self-compassion can undermine well-being and resilience (Ehret et al, 2015). The feeling of a lack self-efficacy together with exhaustion, fatigue and cynicism are frequent features of burn-out (Maslach et al, 2001).

It is well established that doctors are poor at asking for help for themselves (Caan et al, 2002). It may be that the doctors who applied to the mentoring programme felt that it was acceptable to ask for help with Career development, Change or transition at work, Self-doubt as a doctor, and Work/life balance. These themes may have provided an acceptable "ticket of entry" which allowed opportunities for further support.

Much has been written about stress and burnout in doctors, especially during their training or residency years, and blame is often attributed to a working environment in which they may be overworked and under-supported. However, some doctors relish the same environment that others find overwhelming. A 12-year follow-up study of doctors (McManus et al, 2004) showed that the individual's personality, approach to work, and learning style may have more to do with whether they burn out or thrive than the characteristics of the job itself. For example, those doctors with an outgoing agreeable personality were more likely to find their workplace colleagues supportive. Doctors with a disorganised approach to work were more likely to be overwhelmed by the workload. Those with superficial study habits had more difficulty coping than those with a deep learning style. Mentoring may have helped by encouraging mentees to adopt more effective approaches to work and learning in the complex and ever-changing environment in which they were working.

Authors' contributions

JS identified the mentors and commented on themes and final draft. HP and LM identified themes, coded and contributed to the discussion. EP identified themes, coded and drafted the paper.

About the authors

Elisabeth Paice, Linda Miller, Hina Pattani and Judith Stanton are medical doctors, coaches and mentors. All had active roles in the London Deanery Coaching and Mentoring Service, which was established in 2007 and won the National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare Award in 2011 for the best learning and development strategy in the UK. It provided mentoring to over 3000 doctors and other healthcare professionals, and hopefully established a culture of coaching and mentoring within London's healthcare organisations. The corresponding author can be contacted via lispai@gmail.com.

Strengths and limitations

A strength of the study is that while the mentors and mentees were all doctors working within a single NHS system, the mentors were not from the same specialty or workplace, so brought objectivity and confidentiality to the relationship. We selected the most experienced mentors for this study on the grounds they were the most likely to have remained focused on the mentee's agenda.

A weakness of the study is that we were not able to connect the individual applicants in the previous study with the individual responses in this study.

With this methodology we are not able to comment on how important it was for the doctors to be mentored by another doctor. Nor can we comment on whether the changes doctors said they made as a result of mentoring improved their patient care.

Conclusion

We compared what doctors said they wanted from mentoring with what they said they had changed as a result of having been mentored. The study revealed some important differences. Mentoring seems to have given some doctors in this study insight into how their approach to work and learning was impacting on their career and their wellbeing and to have offered ways to change behaviours in a positive way, supporting their sense of self-efficacy and self-compassion. Hopefully such behaviour change also improved the likelihood of the doctors providing compassionate care and reducing the likelihood of burnout.

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APPLYING THE OXYGEN MASK PRINCIPLE TO COACH SUPERVISION

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Value/Originality

An innovative approach to coaching supervision with mature practitioners is described in a phenomenological style. Building on the notion of the coach using their self as the instrument of their client work, the proposition is that the supervision of that work benefits from being highly coach centric. Potential criticisms to the approach are explored and initial responses from the wider supervision community are reported upon.

Keywords

Coaching supervision, coach as instrument, development of mature practitioners

Abstract

A new supervision group comprised of mature practitioners was set up with the primary purpose of exploring how the supervision experience might differ if a more deliberately self-centred perspective was taken. For this particular approach to supervision we use the analogy of the oxygen mask when travelling in a plane. The agreed protocol is to put on your own oxygen mask before attempting to help others. In this group, the working assumption is that focusing on growing the self-awareness of the coach will facilitate how they then work with their clients. This article describes how the group came about, how the group operates and reports back in a phenomenological style the member's experience. As part of all of our development an opportunity arose to present our work at the 7th International Supervision Conference at Oxford Brookes in May 2017. Recognising that the group is early in its evolution, contributions were invited regarding how this particular approach might have implications for the supervision community. In addition questions were invited that the group might consider for its own development. In preparing for the conference, 4 questions were raised for the supervisees to respond to. The supervisees responses to the 4 questions posed, along with key feedback from the audience at the conference, form the basis of this article.

In 2016, a new supervision group comprised of mature practitioners was set up with the primary purpose of exploring how the supervision experience might differ if a more deliberately self-centred perspective was taken. For this particular approach to supervision we use the analogy of the oxygen mask when travelling in a plane. The agreed protocol is to put on your own oxygen mask before attempting to help others. In this group, the working assumption is that focusing on growing the self-awareness of the coach will facilitate how they then work with their clients. This article describes how the group came about, how the group operates and reports back in a phenomenological style the member's experience. As part of all of our development an opportunity arose to present our work at the 7th International Supervision Conference at Oxford Brookes in May 2017. Recognising that the group is early in its evolution, contributions were invited regarding how this particular approach might have implications for the supervision community. In addition questions were invited that the group might consider for its own development. In preparing for the conference, 4 questions were raised for the supervisees to respond to. The supervisees responses to the 4 questions posed, along with key feedback from the audience at the conference, form the basis of this article.

Background

The origin of the idea

The idea for this group came through my own supervision. Contextually it is important to understand that I had selected my supervisor on the basis of their personal development stance to supervision. Stemming from the philosophy of Heidegger (1962) that "who we are, is how we are" I wanted to explore my own authenticity and how that impacted on my coaching and supervision work. Additionally, both myself and my supervisor believe that it is the relationship between coach and client and how we leverage that which brings value, rather than the collection of tools and techniques that we might use with our clients. This is what has become referred to as "coach as instrument" a concept explored by Bachkirova in 2016.

In exploring how I was showing up in my own supervision practice, I noticed a growing frustration, a yearning for more "stretch" in my work. The vast majority of the groups I run are telephone groups aimed at Independent Coaches. Sessions run monthly and offer a flexible membership. Participants enjoy the opportunity to work with a variety of coaches with different perspectives. Having run these groups for a number of years I noticed that whilst each session had its own flavour, I was becoming habituated in how I worked. By contrast I also worked with a number of supervision groups for Internal Coaches. These groups had a fixed membership and I noticed we were able to experiment more because the level of trust and safety had been developed to a deeper level.

Additionally, I had noticed a pattern in many supervision discussions. Whilst the topic most often brought to supervision was related to a moment in a client session, the dialogue typically ended in a recognition that there was some personal "interference" (Gallwey, 2015; Downey, 2003) from the coach playing out in the dynamic with the client. So to quote Stephen Covey why not "start with the end in mind"? If we anticipate that the supervision will end up highlighting a personal development issue, why not start by directly considering what personal development issues clients are prompting in the coach.

How the group was formed

As a result of my supervision discussions I developed the concept of working with a fixed group of supervisees, all of

who were mature in their practice and who also subscribed to the notion of "coach as instrument". I labelled this type of supervision "deliberately "self-centred" (ie. coach centred) supervision". I approached seven people to see if they would be interested in joining the group. All of these coaches had already worked with me in a supervisory capacity. I organised a couple of initial webinars to co-create some of the procedural elements of the new group – for example how long the session might be and how often they would meet. As a result of those conversations 4 people elected to join the group. Prior to the group convening for their first supervision session, a skype call was organised to help people to bond as professionals.

How the group works

There are four supervisees in the group plus the supervisor. The groups are held using webinar technology and therefore the group can see each other through webcams, the sessions are of two hours duration with a short "comfort break" half way through.

The structure of the session time is similar to how my other groups work, a round of arrivals, a mindfulness exercise (the responsibility for which is shared amongst the group) followed by a contracting discussion. We then move to the heart of the session which has been structured deliberately to be "self-centred". The session is wrapped up by a round of what their individual learning has been and what their take-aways are for their coaching practice. To date we have begun the heart of the session with sharing some pre-prepared work. The focus of this prepared activity is always "Who are you, as a coach?". Preparing for this activity encourages reflection and facilitates a heightened self-awareness ahead of time. It is also intended to deepen the group members understanding of how they each like to work. The core of the session is an opportunity for each coach to bring something to explore with the group. Typically in group supervision members are invited to bring a client case to review. Within this group they are asked a specific question "When you think about your client work, what is it telling you about you?". The group discussion is emergent and rich with each supervisee reflecting back what is resonating and what more they see within each other's narrative.

Gathering data for the conference presentation

In order to share with the audience our experiences to date, I posed four questions for my group supervisees to respond to. The questions are listed below with some commentary around their direct quotes.

Question 1:

What attracted participants to join the group?

Given the group was formed through invitation, it feels congruent that the practitioners felt a resonance between their own coaching approach and what I was proposing for the group supervision.

"My MA had led me to explore who I am as a Coach and being my true self. The context for this supervision work that was outlined, 'a deeper dive' and the link with authenticity, felt a great match and opportunity to grow."

"I passionately believe that who you are is how you coach and want to further that knowledge. I had been thinking about extending my supervision work."

"Parallels between the supervisor's curiosity and enthusiasm and a link with my own earlier research (McGivern, 2009) exploring the relationship between coachees lived experiences of supervision and the ongoing learning and development of the coach."

"Reflecting on a journey through a "socialised mind" via a "self-authoring mind" towards a "self-transforming mind" (Kegan & Lahey, 2009) and noticing if this helps me to be more effective with clients."

Additionally, it seems that the innovative nature of the group itself was attractive:

"Love of learning, real learning, when one's mental, emotional, and relational capacities (Torbert, 2004; Loevinger, 1976) are stretched, a promise of vertical learning (Brown, 2013)."

"Continuing on my developmental journey as a Coach – it felt like this would provide the same supportive but challenging (slightly scary!) environment (of reflective practice) I had experienced in my training years."

"Curiosity about what real development looks and feels like and reflecting on adult levels of development and barriers (Kegan, 1982, 1994)"

"Also interested in being involved in something new and different."

Finally, there was a general acknowledgement that having worked with the supervisor before was helpful, for example:

"In a word, Michelle! To delve a bit deeper, what drew me to Michelle is that I know she can work deeply as a supervisor and ask a question that 'turns things around' to help me look

at my coaching relationships in a different way. Equally important was knowing that as well as the depth, there would be lightness and playfulness."

Question 2:

How does their experience differ to participating in other supervision groups?

The most obvious difference which the members of this group noticed was the sense of shared purpose. This was possible because of the fixed membership of the group and the specific intention to work at a deep level of reflection.

"Shared purpose of our work to go to a deeper level together in a safe environment, rather than potentially finding ourselves going there unexpectedly!"

"previous group supervision had mixed membership. With this group, both the consistency of members combined with deeper level exploration has enabled the trust to be built and what I feel is the rapid development of the group relationship. Rather than permanently in 'forming' stage."

In my experience, supervision discussions often start by exploring "what happened" between the coach and client. We then quickly get pulled into a conversation about the choice of tools and techniques. However, this can serve to keep the discussion at a relatively transactional level. One of the members noticed a repetitive quality with her prior supervision in that often in working through a supervision issue she came to the conclusion that familiar patterns were playing out for her. As the client issue was the main focus, the supervision did not help her explore what those patterns really meant for her. By contrast, in this group participants seem to appreciate that it is the coach themselves which is the main focus – not the conclusion of transactional reflections.

“More focus on being resourced to navigate an emergent self-discovery process than being side-tracked about tools and techniques (Perls, et al, 1994,; Perls, 1969; Perls, 1976; Rogers, 2004)”

“The focus here is on me as the coach and what is going on. My experience of other supervision is that me as the coach is often the after-thought, if at all, rather than the main focus.”

At a very practical level, this group worked via webinar, so video was available as well as voice. For those who had previously been supervised on the phone, the ability to see their peers was a welcome addition. Further joining the session from the comfort of their own home, seemed to increase the sense of safety. Another visual benefit came through the use of a playful visual prompt (the Misfits game) which creatively aided self-expression and the resulting visual was memorable.

“I like visuals and previously I had group supervision by phone, now I can see my colleagues! Feels very much more as though we are coming together for the session”

“Previously [my supervision] had a feeling of groundhog day – working on an issue and often noticing familiar themes at the end, which helped to relieve and manage the immediately presenting issue with that particular client, but not really go further.”

“Growing rather than maintenance – less about keeping on track, dealing with a specific client issue and any problems arising; coming from a completely different angle of self-learning, and then the implications; starting with the bigger picture rather than one issue.”

“What’s different to before is that this group is online. In many ways we may feel safer to explore when we are in our personal physical environment, and Michelle helps us to connect both visually and kinaesthetically through shared ‘props’ eg misfits game”

“Also the visuals of the misfits exercise have stayed with me 😊”

Importantly – not all members of the group experienced the group as discernibly different from their prior experiences of supervision. Indeed that was in itself one of their drivers for joining this particular group.

“I was lucky to have been part of a supervisory group run by a humanistic counsellor / coach supervisor, so I have been used to working in depth on myself as part of the process.

Since moving house ... I wanted to retain this kind of deep connection to the work I do.”

Question 3:

What impact has this supervision had on their practice?

This proved an interesting question for the group to answer. Prior to the conference we had only completed two supervision sessions and so it felt “too soon” to assess this. However, with reflection, participants could notice some significant shifts occurring.

There was a sense of heightened self-awareness:

“Greater awareness of how I turn up. Greater awareness and commitment to preparing well and thoroughly, personally to be the best coaching tool that I can be”

“Being reflexive, where I am on the helping continuum moment to moment”

“Being a Coach rather than doing coaching”

“[a reminder that]Coaching can be complex, ambiguous and uncertain, not knowing is OK”

“Reconnecting with my learning path as a Coach, a sense of moving forward rather than stationary, growth rather than maintenance, proactive rather than reactive.”

There has also been some very specific learning:

“During one of our sessions I became more consciously aware of my ‘talent’ to see the best in people. But also to recognise that that there is a shadow to this strength as at times I may expect more from coachees than they are prepared to give”

“It has prompted me to begin another session of psychotherapy, having had one ‘session’ five or so years ago.”

”

“Noticing more keenly the helper, rescuer, pleaser and perfectionist in me and how I may contribute to interference”

“Stepping back from the coal face and the ‘distraction’ of a 4 session assignment, to reconnect with what’s important, at the heart of it.”

“Asking myself: ‘am I missing something or am I looking for something that isn’t there?’

Question 4:

How do we ensure that client's needs are not overlooked?

We posed this question, as it felt like an obvious criticism to our self-centred approach. However, every member of the group held a deep belief that their development as a person was unavoidably linked to their development as a coach.

"Rather than just one client's need being considered, by focusing on me, this then impacts my practice across all of my clients. I am the common theme, so by addressing self, all clients benefit."

"I see that I am part of the coachee's system so any shift in me will bring about a change for the coachee too, ultimately."

"[it makes me think about an] Oxygen mask – knock on effect of being able to attend to others if I have taken care of myself."

"The better place that I am in, the less conscious awareness of me there is. Therefore the coachee client is the agenda and focus in the moment, not me. That has to be better for them."

"Working on [my]congruence, the extent to which I am working with the clients purpose/agenda and not my own or someone else's and still meet expectations"

"On a wider level, it's recognising how strengths can be blind spots, and conversely our so called 'weaknesses' present wonderful opportunities to be human, authentic and model vulnerability."

For some they noticed that it was helpful to quite deliberately look for the relevance to clients, or to seek separate support to do so.

"I can turn things around again at the end of any exploration by asking myself of any personal insight: "And what is that now telling you about your CLIENT(S)?"

"If there is anything in particular I take it to other supervision that I have in place."

"Continuing to share what I am learning about self and relating to other."

Implications for practice in the wider coaching community:

When presented to the conference audience the mood of the session was supportive and engaged. Our approach clearly resonated for some of the audience:

"[a reminder] To be more explicit about "Who you are is how you coach" and that we'll look at this rather than have it evolve"

"[I'm curious about] How to incorporate the centring on who I am as a coach in my group supervision sessions"

"Like the idea of asking "Who are you, as you coach?" and "misfit" exercise (how did you do that virtually?)"

"Power of choosing to focus on a particular aspect of supervision offering"

There was also some challenge as to whether or not what we were engaging in was truly supervision. Indeed, we are conscious that given the group has started from a shared position, this could mean that we are trapped in "group think" (Janis, 1972). We could be colluding that we are doing supervision and keeping our clients in mind, but we may be misguided!

"Is this supervision or is it reflective practice? (note from a clinical background looks like reflective practice)"

"Is this Supervision or just an Action Learning Set?"

"What is allowable in the group eg. Not "practical" matters which might be indicators of more patterns?"

"Where the client was in the conversation?"

Although some of the audience affirmed our position:

"It sure is supervision! And should be at the heart of supervision practice!"

"There is no client! There is just your version of the client, therefore what is this saying about you"

How do we continue to move ourselves onwards into a deeper space?

We invited the conference participants to pose us some questions that would help us develop as a group. There were some thought provoking questions raised listed in Table 1 below, along with our current thinking on how we might work with these ideas:

Table 1: What could we be curious about?

Comment from Conference Workshop	How we might respond
What are you getting comfortable about?	Great question for our annual review
What are your group patterns?	Something for the group to monitor as part of the session wrap up. Perhaps also something that I can take to my supervision and bring back to the group.
Life stages of mature practitioners groups – what characteristics?	Interesting point. There are some models which track coach development, it might be useful for the supervisees to track how they see themselves over time. This might link to question above – and we can consciously track how the group evolves
What about other needs for the coaches? Not just developmental	Yes an omission in our account to date. Another great question for our annual review.

Discussion

My intention when setting up this particular supervision group was simply to see what was possible if we brought together mature practitioners and started the supervision dialogue from a different place. The group is still in its first year of formation and therefore the reported impact must be seen in that context. Nonetheless it seems significant that all those involved speak positively about the richness of this self-centred supervision experience. Particularly, the sense of trust and cohesion in the group has been swift.

When bringing our work to the attention of the wider community – we were interested to hear their reaction. One of the concerns we anticipated hearing from those outside the group related to how the needs of the client would get met. We had covered this in the presentation – arguing that by focusing on the coach there is an impact for all the clients the coach works with. However, the comment “Where is the client in the conversation?” was interesting, as, it was clearly an indication of underlying doubt for some. In order to understand the value in this self-centred supervision, perhaps one first has to engage with the notion of coach as instrument.

There is no shortage of models, theories and techniques to learn in the field of coaching. Indeed the constant reminder of how much more is available to learn can be a source of anxiety for coaches early on in their journey. It is common to see this play out in supervision – with supervisee’s asking “What else could I do?”. However, the longer our experience the more we come to experience for ourselves that whilst the models, tools and techniques are helpful, it is the quality of the relationship (de Haan, 2008) we have with our clients that is the difference, that makes the difference. If we are to enter that relationship effectively, we need to have a deep understanding of how we are impacting on the relationship

dynamics. As Bluckert (2006) identified “Being able to connect with more aspects of yourself and to bring them authentically into the coaching relationship can make a profound difference to the quality and depth of your work.” The stage of maturity of the coaches in this group is significant, each of them have been working as a coach for between 8 and 23 years. All of these supervisee’s philosophies are congruent with the relational nature of coaching, and they most likely would not have joined the group otherwise. Once we consciously rely on ourselves as the instrument for our work, it is easier to understand why it is important to keep this instrument in tune.

In addition, the practitioners involved were not only experienced practitioners they were also experienced supervisees. For our deliberately self-centred supervision work, a different kind of preparation is required. Some self-supervision must already have occurred for the supervisees to move the enquiry from “what happened” to “what does what happened say about me”. As the supervisor, I have noticed that while the conversation has been thought provoking it has not had a therapeutic tone. Rather it seems to generate a genuine curiosity which leads to deep exploration of areas not yet discovered. Importantly the lack of prior exploration seems not to be due to defence mechanisms being in place, rather the process encourages new connections to be made in their conscious understanding. I suspect that taking this more introspective approach with novice practitioners could lead to confusion – perhaps giving the impression that they were engaging in therapy more than coaching supervision. However, that would be an interesting assumption to test.

The potential for blurring of the line between coaching supervision and therapy is an interesting one. Perhaps this speaks to the differences between coaching and other helping professions. As a psychotherapist or counsellor in training, you are expected to engage in dedicated therapy yourself. Conversely as a coach in training, whilst you will practice coaching with your peers and no doubt do some self-work in the process – there is no requirement to put particular effort into introspection and heightened self-knowledge. It seems to be assumed that it is either already there, will be developed along the way ... or perhaps because coaches are supposed to be non-directive it simply doesn't matter? None of these are perspectives I would subscribe to.

Guy Claxton spoke at the same conference, talking about at least three levels of learning and used the analogy of a river. Firstly, noticing what is skimming across the surface. In the context of coaching supervision, this could symbolise the coaching moment chosen for supervision work. Secondly, being curious about what is happening just beneath the surface. This could relate to the coach's habitual responses of which they are sometimes unaware. The coaching supervision discussion brings attention to which of those habits may have influenced what happened in the moment. Thirdly exploring what lies in the river bed beneath. It is this deeper, darker level on the river bed which both contributes to the currents above and yet is also shaped by the movement of the river. In the context of coaching supervision, what is deep down on the river bed relates to an individual's underpinning beliefs, values and attitudes and how this manifests in their coaching work. It would be my position that only by working to understand these will we be able to build an individual's "learning power" Claxton (2002) and thereby transform their coaching work through supervision.

This leads to the question of what impact this configuration of supervision has had on their coaching work. The participant's answers to Question 3 illustrate that already they have a sense of deepening self-awareness and they are making links back to their client work. Since the conference, one of the participants has noticed that by focusing on self in our supervision she has become braver. When faced with a question around how fixed the boundary is between coaching and therapy (Rogers 2004; Maxwell, 2009) we did not get distracted by theoretical debates. Our supervision made it more possible to explore how she experienced the keeping of this boundary when working with a client who shared their early life trauma. In focusing on the question "What is your client work telling you about you?" it deepened her confidence and her level of self-trust. She saw more clearly the potential for fluidity and for bringing her own 'not knowing' proactively into the dialogue. With the permission of her client she was able to work on and beyond the 'argued' for boundary, producing real shared learning and a big shift for her client.

This speaks to the core of how this particular group of coaches are working together in supervision, the experience allows them to be on the receiving end of what they hope to provide for their clients:

"Connecting more meaningfully with what unconditional positive regard and being non-judgmental actually feels like; humility (Rogers, 1961)"

It will be interesting to track over time what happens to how they articulate their work and whether this leads to a greater complexity in their coaching assignments.

Conclusion

Our intention with this article was to articulate our experience of "self-centred supervision" and share our journey with the wider community. We wanted to prompt consideration of how coaching supervision might be experienced differently if we started in a different place. A place that genuinely helps us practice what we preach, making sure that if we aim to "encourage critical thought in others we must engage in it ourselves" (Berlak & Berlak, 1987). We approached this work with a curiosity about how we might make the experience of supervision for coaches mature in their practice, more challenging in this respect. That curiosity has been rewarded by a strong bond between the group, an acceleration of self-awareness and noticeably positive impacts on client work.

The value in this deliberately self-centred approach endorses work from the Gestalt tradition. Namely that it is the quality of the coach's presence and relationship, rather than the technique or tool used, which really counts. (Jacobs, 1989; Yontef, 1993, 1995; Yontef & Jacobs, 2000). Moreover, it is possible to explore more keenly what this actually means for practitioners when we put attention to the self in the supervision experience simply by shifting the supervision question brought for exploration. This self-centred approach to supervision is not an indulgence, neither is it a substitute for therapy. Just like the oxygen mask it is a proactive and deliberate strategy for our survival. It helps us get oxygen into the heart of understanding who we are. When we understand that, I believe we see more clearly and more consciously who we are when we coach. In turn this allows us to truly be of service to our clients.

We would invite other coaching supervision groups who share this personal developmental approach to connect with us so that we might learn together. We would be interested to share approaches to the work and perhaps collaborate to explore some of the questions posed by the conference audience regarding how these types of groups will mature.

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About the Author



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[Click here to link to the original Journal Article in Appendix](#)

REFLECTIONS ON THE SIREN CALL OF THE POWERFUL QUESTION

From the Transactional to the Holistic

Lou Raye Nichol, Brian Nichol, and Rick Rocchetti

"That's a good question."

Don't we all love to hear a client say that? So affirming! We are doing a good job.

In "The Siren Call of the Powerful Question"¹ we argued that the question receives undue attention in coaching. Questions are tangible - the most immediately obvious contribution by the coach to the conversation. Some in the coaching world have been seduced into believing that questions, and especially "powerful questions", are the essence of coaching.² Instead, we argued, the power of questions is derivative. Our questions rely on a foundation of three elements for their relevance and effectiveness. We described these elements as "*the hard work of mastering a purposeful coaching process, developing all the skills of coaching, and managing their (the coach's) own reactivity*". (2012)

In the five years since "The Siren Call" was written we have come to see these elements – skills, process and self-management – to be markers for understanding the whole coaching conversation, what keeps it on track, and what is happening when it goes astray. In this paper we will explore how the three elements provide this foundation and how the third element, self-management, is pivotal and can support or sideline the best of skills and process. But beyond that, when we shift to an even larger perspective – the use of self – our attention moves from the individual parts to the whole of the relationship between coach and client. In this space, coaching can have its greatest impact. As our approach becomes more holistic, questions occupy a smaller piece of the picture.

¹ The original authors of The Siren Call of the Powerful Question have been joined by Rick Rocchetti in producing these reflections and extensions of the ideas we discussed in that paper.

² Questions have been characterized as "single most important skill in coaching" (Stoltzfus, 2008) and "the essence of great coaching" (Grall, 2012). Three books (Stoltzfus, 2008, Reardon, 2010, Belf, 2011) are dedicated to coaching questions and include lists of examples. Stoltzfus lists over 1000. A Google search on "coaching questions" returns articles like "10 Coaching Questions That Work In Any Conversation" by Keith Rosen or "10 Of My All Time Best Coaching Questions & Why" – The Launchpad, The Coaching Tools Company.

* For the full description of ICF competencies see: <http://www.coachfederation.org/icfcredentials/core-competencies/>

The three elements in practice

The International Coach Federation (Table 1. 2012) core competencies provide a detailed description of best practices in coaching. Looking at them, we can see that they can be categorized into the broad outlines of these three elements. Competencies 5, 6, 7 – active listening, asking questions, and direct communication – have to do with coaching skills. Competencies 2, 8,9,10, and 11 fall into the process category. These competencies describe a sequence of steps that help to move the client forward. We set the agreement, work towards new awareness, and from that design actions, set goals and plans, and manage progress and accountability. The self-management competencies - 1, 3 and 4 – involve our adherence to ethical standards, establishing trust and intimacy, and our coaching presence.

The elements of this framework are interrelated and depend on one another. Initially, we need the skills of coaching. Skills are foundational; if we do not have them, we cannot coach. Next, we need a process to provide structure for direction and purpose. The process distinguishes coaching from an intimate and skilled conversation between friends. It distinguishes coaching from a business meeting where achieving new awareness is less present and the focus is on “What is the goal and what needs to be done to reach it?”

Skills and process are the readily understood, practical elements that are the basic fare of coach training programs. They lay the groundwork for coaching, but they are not sufficient in themselves. Self-management, or the lack of it, can make or break a coaching conversation. Skills and process can be taught. Self-management is a more elusive challenge. It is not easily taught, but something we learn through our own agency. While a lot of this learning comes from experience, it can be supported by therapy and personal development programs such those run by the Institute of Group Analysis and the Tavistock Institute in Great Britain and the National Training Laboratories in the United States. Nichol (1997) describes how consultants, trainers and coaches can proactively use Group Analytic training as a resource.

Self-management in practice

Self-management can perhaps be best understood by its absence. So for instance, in new coaches, understandably performance anxiety is a major factor. One way this manifests itself is in the coach’s concern to find a “solution” to the client’s “problem” (and in a 15 minute practice coaching session!). As a result, they fail to track with the client and push for action steps before the client is ready. For example, a client wants to stop a particular behavior she sees as problematic, but perversely finds rewarding as well. After a short exploration, the coach asks “*What steps can you take to change this behavior?*” With prompting from his mentor, the coach shifts his approach and continues to explore. From this change of tack the client realizes that the behavior gets in the way of connection with her family. Once this is surfaced, the coach’s question becomes “*What can you do to create more connection with your family?*” The client then has a desired state to move towards rather than something negative to move from. She shifts from thinking about tweaking her calendar to what she wants for herself and her family.

In other cases new coaches may become alarmed if the client raises a deeper issue or shows emotion. The coach may, out of anxiety, apologize or take the conversation to a place that feels safer. In debriefs if this happens, the word “unqualified” often comes up. In either case anxiety keeps the coach from tolerating the discomfort of not knowing and from staying with the client.

The need to develop the capacity for self-management does not end with training; it continues throughout our careers. At any time, a coach can be caught by a particular anxiety or in a pattern of reactivity.

For example, one of the authors, as part of his ICF certification process, submitted recordings of his coaching to his mentor coach for review. She regarded his work as excellent - with one notable exception. In this case, his coaching regressed. He asked mostly closed ended questions, and on occasion, leading ones. He uncharacteristically focused on the problem and what needed to be done rather than on the client and developing her capacity to deal with the situation she presented.

Table 1

International Coach Federation Core Competencies*

A. Setting the Foundation

1. Meeting Ethical Guidelines and Professional Standards
2. Establishing the Coaching Agreement

B. Co-creating the Relationship

3. Establishing Trust and Intimacy with the Client
4. Coaching Presence

C. Communicating Effectively

5. Active Listening
6. Powerful Questioning
7. Direct Communication

D. Facilitating Learning and Results

8. Creating Awareness
9. Designing Actions
10. Planning and Goal Setting
11. Managing Progress and Accountability

So what was going on here? As it happened the client was about to go to a conference and was very anxious about career implications associated with showing up well. In the agreement setting phase, the client settled on asking for tips and tricks for managing several events where, as the client speculated, good performance would be critical and at the same time difficult to achieve. The coach described his reaction:

"I took on her anxiety. We had had a long-term coaching relationship, and I cared for her, and the situation was urgent. I wanted her to succeed and felt pressure about delivering tips and tricks as opposed to assisting her in finding her own answers. I fell into tactical problem solving, advising and fell out of coaching".

In another one of the author's experiences, a client abruptly dropped coaching. The essential feature of the coaching was that the client's history was uncannily similar to the coach's. The coach had an overriding sense that she knew what was going on for the client, which had proved to be true on a number of occasions.

This coach reported:

"The fact was I got cocky and lost touch with who the client was. The last time we met, I said something that could have left her feeling misunderstood – something that reflected where I was in my history more than where she was in hers. I have found that working with someone on issues that I know a lot about (or think I do) is the most difficult coaching. It is so easy to key off my own knowledge and experience more than theirs."

In both these instances, reactivity contaminated our coaching. In the best of worlds, we would want to prevent this from happening. But we are human, and in our humanity we can get sidelined. Realistically, sometimes the best we can do is catch ourselves at it and self-correct. Our coaching presence rests on good management of self and the confidence it instills in us. With it we are more reliable and in touch with the client's needs and consequently more able to establish trust and intimacy.

From Self-Management to the Use of Self

Developing our skills, refining our process, and managing our "self" will take us to a good level of competency. We are on the road to mastering the technicalities of coaching. Beyond that we enter the art of coaching. Here the three elements become subsumed into the larger world of "Use of Self", which brings a holistic approach to the relationship between the coach and the client and encompasses our humanity.

Use of Self begins with self-awareness and intentionality; the coach is continually working to deepen levels of awareness and choice. It centres on how we are present in ourselves, and how we attend to that self and its process. Seashore and Patwell (2006) define "Use of Self" as *"all about you, learning about yourself in action"*. It *"focuses on understanding our own beliefs, assumptions own process and, finally, how the coach practices self-management and contains his/her own reactivity, perceptions and actions and how they impact our interactions with others"*.

A way to think about it is, *"How aware am I of who I am, what I am doing and the impact it may be having in this coaching relationship at any moment? How does my awareness of who I am help me understand what is happening for the client?"* From this perspective, the self becomes more than something to manage. It becomes a powerful instrument that informs our interactions with clients.

To illustrate: The coach becomes uncomfortable because the client consistently defers to him. She readily accepts his questions and comments, and does not push back. The coach pointed out what he was seeing and said, *"You seem to put me one-up and you one-down"*. According to the client this immediately struck a chord. It was some of the most significant feedback she had ever received. This was how she related to people she perceived to be in positions of authority. And she did not like it. From this began an extended effort on her part to understand and change her behaviour.

In another case, the coach noticed during a 360 debrief session, that on top of being skeptical of the information, the client also was dismissive of him. The coach shared this perception with his client – that both the message and the messenger were being rejected. He wondered if this happened with his direct reports? If so, where did that leave them? Was there anything that they could do to influence him if he did not agree with their perspective? The client was taken aback; he looked shaken. That would, he said, be his worst nightmare, but he recognized himself in what the coach said. He changed his posture and became engaged in a rich discussion of the feedback and his presence as a manager.

Frisch (2008) describes a response such as this as: “a coach’s thought or feeling reaction to a client that the coach is both aware of and will use, either directly or indirectly, in service of the coaching”. Nichol and Nichol (2011) talk in terms of coaches paying attention to our “head, heart, and guts”.³ Responses to the client from all three of these sources provide useful information – about the client and/or the coach. The client may be eliciting a reaction from us that is typical of those that he or she engenders in others. Or we may be reacting to something in the client that has touched one of our own triggers. Discerning the origins of our reactions enables us to separate our experience from those of the client and be clearer about whose purpose we are serving.

Friedman (2007), in his discussions of leadership, carries this a step further and looks at how the use of self can be transformational. True leadership, he argues, requires leaders to be “selfish”, to have a well-defined sense of self that allows them to relate to and differentiate themselves from the emotional field that surrounds them. This enables them to exist in that field and at the same time avoid being sucked into its anxiety. It enables them to break through the emotional barriers that lock people into over-reliance on existing data and subsequently into limited beliefs and actions. In this picture, instead of looking for answers to unquestioned questions, the leader focuses on shifting the paradigm. All this relies on the ability of leaders to self-differentiate, and this requires self-awareness and courage.

Coaching is an act of leadership. Coaches help clients work through anxiety, confusion, and uncertainty. If we bring a more conscious, intentional, non-reactive and non-anxious presence to the relationship, we provide perspective, which can enable clients to shift their paradigms. We can help them see beyond their story (the data in Friedman’s terms) and their beliefs about it. We can help them question their questions and find solutions that are deeply satisfying, not just a quick fix. To do this we have to enter the client’s world, and simultaneously keep ourselves separate from it.

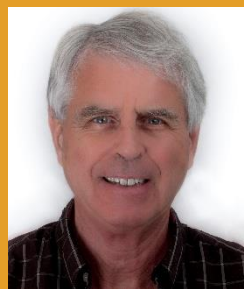
By maintaining this reflective space, preferably with the support of a mentor/supervisor, we can improve our capacity to differentiate ourselves, catch our reactivity, and approach the client from a place of centeredness. We can react negatively to the client and maintain respect. We can react positively and maintain distance. Once we turn our attention to the relationship and embrace coaching through the lens of the use of self, we begin to see that focus on questions confines us to a transactional understanding of what we are doing. When we move to this more holistic perspective, the question takes its rightful place within it as an important coaching skill. The siren call is no longer so seductive.

About the authors



Lou Raye Nichol PCC

Lou Raye Nichol, PCC, co-founded and directed the Business Coach Institute and the North Carolina State University Business Coaching Certificate Program. She and her husband, Brian Nichol, authored THE ESSENTIALS OF BUSINESS COACHING, which serves as the textbook for the NCSU program. She retired from teaching and full time coaching in 2013, but still works with returning clients and non-profit leaders. She mentors students on the NCSU program and coaches seeking ACC and PCC certifications. In retirement she has returned to her first career as a pottery artist and works with a highly specialized glazing technique called carbon trapping.



Brian Nichol, Ph.D.

Brian’s work spans private industry, university teaching, and independent consulting. He is co-founder and retired director of the North Carolina State University Business Coaching Certificate Program and co-author of THE ESSENTIALS OF BUSINESS COACHING. He has coached executives, business owners, management teams, and HRD professionals. Brian holds a Ph.D. in organizational psychology and has taught graduate courses in Organization Development and Human Resource Development at the University of Manchester in England and North Carolina State University. He has taken up a second career in his retirement as an award winning photographer.

³ Our gut reactions play a central role here. If we disregard them, they continue to operate sub rosa. When unexamined, a negative gut reaction to a client can team up with the head and we form critical judgments and ©EMCC 2017

consequently lose the capacity to empathize. Conversely, with a positive gut reaction, the heart may over and we lose distance and the capacity to challenge.



Rick Rocchetti

Rick Rocchetti is an independent consultant whose work focuses on leadership development, executive coaching, strategy, culture and teams. Rick has designed and led complex change programs for over 30 years and has been coaching for over 25 years. His work has included positions of responsibility in local government, corporate, small business and non-profit settings. He recently has completed his Business Coaching Certificate program and is PCC Pending. He has written and published articles on leadership, leader development, culture and coaching. He is a member of the NTL (National Training Laboratories) Institute for Applied Behavioral Sciences.

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[Click here to link to the original Journal Article in Appendix](#)

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A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO COACHING IN ORGANISATIONS – A Case Study A Reflective Review – 5 Years on

Abstract

The original article, published in 2012, discussed a research project which investigated the potential for a leadership coaching culture to improve employee engagement and performance. The research was primarily based on data obtained from a UK financial organisation with supporting data from other sources such as employees of other organisations participating in leadership coaching programmes and independent coaching professionals. The research objectives were to consider the value of coaching as an effective means of enhancing employee engagement and performance whilst identifying key factors to building a management coaching capability that enhances organisational coaching effectiveness. This follow-up article reflects on the author's experiences as a consultant coach, specifically in relation to organisational coaching, during the past five years and compares and contrasts new and emerging trends with the original research.

Keywords

Coaching, engagement, performance, leadership

Original Case Study Research Project

The original article (Turner, 2012) was based on a single case study research project that investigated the ways a leadership coaching culture can impact on organisational effectiveness. The research was primarily based on data obtained from a UK financial organisation with supporting data from other sources such as employees of organisations participating in leadership coaching programmes and independent coaching professionals.

The central research objective was to consider the value of coaching as an effective means of enhancing employee engagement and performance, whilst identifying key factors to building a management coaching capability that enhances organisational coaching effectiveness. The kernel of the research quest was to better understand the nature of coaching within an organisation so as to identify and explore any characteristics necessary for coaching to achieve a favourable impact on organisational culture and performance.

Comparative Research Data Evaluation

In 2012 coaching was seen to have outstripped mentoring in terms of being the most popular leadership development focus by which to motivate and empower workforces to perform better. This trend appears to have continued, certainly within the realms of the author's consultancy experience, and this is supported by comparing the number of search 'hits' via the search engine Google since 2012 (Google Trends, 2012; 2017), which shows the current number of searches for 'coaching' to be running at ten times the number of searches for 'mentoring', compared to less than nine times as much, in 2012.

Coaching in organisations has also increased in popularity over recent years and now attracts a broad spectrum of interests in commerce, business and academic circles. Many interested parties seek to explore the strategic application of coaching in macro as well as micro terms, thus linking to organisational culture and leadership style and by the nature of the changes required to respond to social and economic conditions.

The emergence of organisational coaching (Hamlin, Ellinger and Beattie 2008) identified in earlier years has continued, becoming further embedded within organisational learning and development programmes. A comparison of two well respected surveys on learning and development in UK organisations shows an increasing trend for coaching programmes. Almost three-quarters of organisations (and 89% of public sector organisations) now offer coaching (and/or mentoring) to employees with this usage level predicted to increase by a further 13% (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2010; 2015).

The author's experience of working in organisations as a consultant indicates that the way in which both coaching and mentoring are perceived and experienced is becoming less distinct, with the difference in perception between the two disciplines even less distinct when the coaching or mentoring development intervention is delivered by line management, rather than an external coach. The author, as expressed in his earlier case study research, remains a keen advocate of helping the organisation's leadership team to think through and define what coaching and mentoring means to their organisation and how this aligns to the desired culture and behavioural sets. This approach helps to ensure a consistent and strategic organisational-wide development intervention.

Original Case Study (2012) Findings

The key findings of the original research are listed below. For more detailed information please refer to the original article.

- a) The key benefits to individual employees from coaching strongly relate to those factors that are widely considered to drive employee engagement.
- b) Coaching has the potential to positively impact on employee engagement.
- c) Management coaching behaviour is strongly impacted by organisational strategies including ongoing support structures and processes.
- d) The role of a manager as a coach may benefit from a balanced approach between directive and non-directive behaviours so as to blend managerial inputs with coaching inputs and achieve an optimum leadership coaching style.
- e) The primary competency of an effective line manager coach is relationship building ability.
- f) A performance focused relationship driven coaching style can directly and significantly impact favourably on the bottom line through increased sales, improved customer service and improved productivity, as well as achieving other less tangible benefits.
- g) Managers are unlikely to coach their staff on a regular basis unless their organisation has in place a structured management process for coaching approaches and sessions, even then some managers will seek to avoid coaching their staff.
- h) A majority of employees participating in the research case study believed that coaching improved both their performance and job satisfaction, sometimes to a significant extent, by achieving more of their potential.
- i) The key challenges to the success of an organisational coaching programme often relate to the development of other factors apart from coaching skills, including 'hard' factors such as a communication strategy and 'soft' factors such as the attitude and emotional awareness of the management team. These factors should be considered in advance of the coaching activity and included in any related project plans.
- j) Organisations that wish to introduce and maintain a performance coaching management style within a developing leadership coaching culture will benefit from adopting a flexible yet coordinated strategic approach, considering organisational factors apart from the development of skills, through the progression of a coaching programme and related supportive elements.

In summary, the research study indicated that employee engagement and performance will benefit from an organisational coaching programme underpinned by a network of factors focused on supporting coaching activity. These factors relate to a *culture* built on common shared values, high performance, trust, openness, support, mutual respect and inclusiveness; *leadership* that role models the coaching culture through all levels of a management team that is *skilled* in coaching technique and relationship management; a *learning environment* that provides an appropriate setting for coaching activity, and *HR processes* that develop, monitor, and reward coaching behaviours.

Based on this learning the author defined *organisational coaching* as a 'multi-level leadership strategy supported by systematic, results-focused performance management, aligned HR processes and relationship driven leadership coaching behaviours designed to achieve an engaged, committed workforce and a high performance culture'.

Reflective Evaluative Review of Original Case Study (2012) Findings

Since 2012 the author has worked extensively in both commercial and academic sectors, thus enabling on-the-ground practitioner and academic perspectives. Academic appointments have added value to the business consultancy offering, through access to the latest evidence based knowledge. The potential for learning has encouraged the author to contribute to business management thought leadership via peer reviewed academic articles and also through articles, blogs and podcasts for consultancy firms as well as book publications.

In the commercial sector consultancy assignments and projects have involved the author working with over 50 companies, including large national, multi-national and SME UK based companies, as well as overseas based companies, including commercial operations in Australia, India, France, Spain and Sweden. These clients span several markets and sectors including retail, consumer products and FMCG, aerospace, pharmaceutical, manufacturing, IT, logistics and transport, mining, building products and construction, social housing, professional and financial services. This extensive, diverse and cross-sector client portfolio has enabled the author to practically test academic theory and develop new pragmatic business oriented approaches.

Reflecting on the original case study research through a consultancy lens, the author now has additional and hopefully deeper insights, for example, a firmer and stronger belief in the critical significance of leadership, purpose and values in driving organizational behaviour. In the case study, these strategic elements were proven to help create the organizational culture surrounding and impacting upon the coaching activity.

The key practical and pragmatic insights from the findings of the case study research were taken forward by the author into a post research consultancy career and further developed throughout the past five years. These latest insights focus on the importance of:

- a consistent and persistent approach to leadership development within a cultural change programme, whereas a more popular approach is to 'tick-box' leadership development and behaviour and deliver in short spurts of activity without creating a 'golden thread' of leadership focus;
- robust and rigorous analytical assessment across the organisation at the beginning of the cultural journey to understand the 'As Is' position and enable a focused 'To Be' strategy and aligned measurable change indicators to be created and monitored;
- leaders and their leadership teams taking ownership and responsibility for the required change and 'buying-in' to actively role modelling the appropriate leadership behaviours. This often requires strong leadership and visible support from CEOs as the C-suite executives and their senior management reports are often the most resistant to change;
- personality and its impact on executive leadership behaviour, specifically the value of evidence-based psychoanalytical assessments in raising self-awareness and creating an understanding of the need to adapt and change;
- individual, team and organisational resilience, to ensure adaptability, positivity and a 'can-do' mentality to the ever increasing levels of external environmental changes;
- organisational change and development programmes being enabled at two levels, macro via a strategic transformational change process and supporting micro processes, which link to the strategic framework and manage, deliver and monitor the required outcomes;
- the development of an *ambietic* coaching philosophy (Turner, 2012) which recognises the impact of the organisational environment and that participative leadership behaviour is optimised by enabling leaders to develop their leadership style, within a framework of flexible control processes; balancing empowerment with control;
- an increased appreciation of the performance relationship between personality, leadership behaviour, employee engagement, employee performance and culture; and the potential to facilitate change.

The aforementioned areas are not a comprehensive picture of the author's insights gained during the past five years, but represent key aspects of facilitating successful cultural change through leadership teams.

Conclusions

The original case study provided evidence of relationship links between organisational culture, leadership behaviour, employee engagement and performance. The Cultural Change Levers model (Turner, 2011) recognised that a change momentum was created when leaders adopted aligned leadership coaching behaviours and through this favourably impacted upon employee performance in a direct manner through a causal relationship to specific role objectives, as well as showing a strong predictor of increased employee engagement.

This organisational cultural change 'code breaker' was expressed by the author as follows:

- **Organisational Culture** is a facilitator of **Leadership Behaviour**
- **Leadership Behaviour** drives improved **Employee Performance** and is a predictor of **Employee Engagement**
- **Employee Engagement** is a predictor of high **Employee Performance**
- **Employee Performance** sustains and develops the **Organisational Culture**

In concluding this reflective review the author finds that, based on commercial consultancy experience, the original evidence-based organisational change 'code breaker' formula is still relevant and appropriate as a strategic framework for culture change programmes. The author has now gained greater insights around the drivers of leadership behaviour and, as well as still supporting a focus on the strategic areas of vision, mission and values, now more fully recognises the importance of a core purpose (Turner, 2017).

Additionally, of key importance to successful delivery of this approach this review identifies a critical need for strategic leaders to be aware, adaptable and resilient in equal measure. There is an increasing demand for leaders and employees to be ever more resilient and this is now a 'hot' topic for discussion within most boardrooms (DeltaV Partners, 2017). It is predicted that the concept and application of personality and, particularly, resilience, whether in relation to individual, team or organisational levels, will become an increasing feature in leadership development and organisational change management over the next five years.

About the author

Paul has worked for several universities and is currently associated with the University of Wolverhampton Business School, based in his town of birth. He gained his PhD in leadership and organisational coaching with Birmingham City University, where he was appointed an Honorary Research Fellow. He has received UK and international recognition for his HR leadership work in the corporate sector and he now runs his own leadership development and performance coaching consultancy, as well as being retained by other leading consultancies, operating in both business and sports sectors. Paul may be contacted via paul@paulturnerhr.co.uk or www.paulturnerhr.co.uk



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Distance Mentoring: a case study from the Middle East.

Carol Whitaker, Whitaker Consulting, UK

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Abstract

This article describes how mentoring from a distance has helped two young Lebanese entrepreneurs move their businesses forward. In the two case studies we discuss the mentoring training we went through and how we, from a practical viewpoint, approached these mentoring assignments in terms of the time spent, the issues covered and the results obtained. As we are both business coaches, we discuss the often debated differences between coaching and mentoring in the practical context of these two case studies.

Keywords

distance mentoring, mentoring & coaching: similarities and differences, the Middle East

This is a story about the practical issues and results of two distance mentoring interventions carried out with Lebanese entrepreneurs from June 2010 to June 2011.

We, the authors, had met fleetingly at EMCC conferences, but accidentally found out days before leaving for Beirut that we had both signed up with the charitable organisation Mowgli (www.mowgli.org.uk) to carry out pro bono mentoring assignments. Each of us had decided to participate at very short notice and we only had a few days to prepare for the trip and kick-off meeting.

What was the background and reason that brought the two of us to volunteer as mentors?

Carol was born and brought up in the UK, and all her work experience has been for UK based companies, where she specialised in Human Resources. She has Board level experience both as an Executive and an Non-Executive Director (NED). Her last corporate role was as HR Director for the NEC in Birmingham, a conference and exhibition organiser. She has a postgraduate (PG) diploma in Coaching and Mentoring and a PG Certificate in Coaching Supervision from Oxford Brookes University. She started mentoring corporately when working with high potential executives, and has recently worked in Dubai for the World Trade Centre and Abu Dhabi for the

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Government. Carol was encouraged to take on this mentoring assignment by her husband, who had visited Lebanon when he worked for Oxfam in the 90's.

Kerstin was born in Sweden and currently lives in Switzerland. She coaches across Europe and the US. She is a scientist by training and has 25 years management experience in multinationals, SMEs and in various start-ups across Europe. Her last corporate role was as Director for Executive Development at Cass Business School in London, where she professionally became involved with people centred issues. She holds a coaching PG Certificate from HEC in Paris. She was keen to take on this mentoring opportunity in Lebanon firstly because she cares deeply about entrepreneurs and secondly because her British father-in-law told her how he accidentally found himself in Baalbek during the Second World War and how beautiful and peaceful it was. Ever since, she has wished to visit Lebanon.

Who were our mentees?

Carol's mentee was in her mid-thirties. She was part of the Christian community in Lebanon and had been educated in Beirut within the French system up to university level. She then decided to complete her education in the UK, where she acquired a Master's Degree at Reading University. After graduating, she worked in a Market Research organisation based in Beirut for five years. Three years ago she set up her own independent Market Research Agency and has clients in Europe and the Middle East.

Kerstin's mentee was in his early thirties. He was born and had his first schooling in Qatar and then spent his teens in New Zealand. His last corporate role was in a web based travel business based in Venice, Italy. He then moved to Beirut, where his family roots are, and where he is involved in setting up four different web based businesses.

How was the mentoring intervention organised?

The Mowgli charity had brought together a group of six mentors to be matched with six Lebanese mentees. Four mentors were from the UK, one from Lebanon and Kerstin from Switzerland. There were two men and four women and out of the six, three were certified coaches. One mentor had already been involved in a Mowgli mentoring program. What we all had in common was quite extensive business experience across a wide variety of sectors and industries

The mentors met at Beirut airport in and were then driven across the mountain range into the Bekaa Valley, which made clear to us the incredible contrasts in the country:

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leaving Beirut, with new glass clad high rise buildings next to older houses pockmarked with bullet holes from the civil war and the last Israeli war, and then coming into the lush Bekaa valley, where vegetables, fruit, flowers and vines are growing. The Bekaa Valley is also the stronghold of Hezbollah and their flags fly from every major building and every village. As soon as we left Beirut, we encountered military checkpoints every few kilometres, including in the valley itself.

4 Day Programme

For four days we stayed in a lodge in the centre of the valley, surrounded by gardens and fields. The first day centred on us mentors getting to know each other and raising self-awareness by carrying out various exercises on communication, building empathy, rapport and trust. The strength of the programme lay however in the fact that as soon as a concept had been introduced, it was immediately tried out in coaching / mentoring conversations in pairs, and supervised by the two Mowgli facilitators. In addition, these conversations were observed by the other mentors and were followed by a general discussion about what had happened during the interaction. This led us very quickly to trust each other and getting to know each other very well, even to such an extent that when the mentees joined us on the second evening, they thought that we had all been working together for a very long time indeed and that we had been involved in previous mentoring assignments together.

During the second day we explored entrepreneurship and what it entails. We talked about the business culture and structures in Lebanon. Our Lebanese colleague was particularly helpful in describing the markets, the culture and the intricacies of doing business in the Middle East. We also discussed frameworks for mentoring conversations and explored what it means to be an entrepreneur, including the potential for feelings of loneliness and how interactions with the close family can become difficult.

Meeting the mentees

At the end of day 2 we met the six mentees for the first time over dinner and started the process of getting to know each other. At this stage we did not know who we would be mentoring and day 3 was spent working with the mentees agreeing a framework for the mentoring, and sharing backgrounds and experiences. For each exercise we were paired up with a different mentee. Much of the mentoring was carried out walking in the lush gardens around the lodge as the mentees talked about their vision of their businesses and their personal hopes and fears. Walking beside them was a powerful

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metaphor for the mentoring relationship and we felt that we were accompanying them on their journey. The lack of direct eye contact also seemed to help all of us open up and really dig deep. Many mentees said that this was the first time they had talked out loud and openly about their ideas and dreams. For a significant part of the conversation we used the framework of the Hero's Journey (Campbell, 1993) which helped to understand how complex that journey was likely to be and that there was going to be barriers and setbacks, but also that the journey is about living your dream.

The basic concept throughout the introduction of mentors and mentees to each other was that of sharing and exchanging background, values and ideas. Every session was a dialogue where the mentee talked about her-/himself and the mentor about her-/himself.

Matching process

During that third day the facilitators observed all the pairs, studying their interactions and body language to help with the matching process. Although they had CVs and biographies for all, the chemistry between mentor and mentee was an important factor to ensure a good working partnership over the following 12 months. Both mentors and mentees were able confidentially to say if they thought there was anyone in the group that they would find it difficult to work with for whatever reason. The final matches were announced just before supper so that the matched pairs could sit next to each other and start building their partnerships. There was a fantastic buzz of conversation over dinner.

Day 4, the final day, we worked intensively with our allocated mentees on their business plans and a comprehensive SWOT analysis. We also discussed their personal needs at a deeper level and the challenges of mentoring at a distance. We contracted how we would work together over the following 12 months, especially the of confidentiality and respecting each other's time commitments. The mentees made a public declaration of their commitment to the partnership.

Contact pattern and main issues discussed.

Mowgli suggested a framework for interactions, and in their experience interactions usually are much closer at the beginning of the engagement (i.e. once a week) than later on. However, nothing was set in stone and we were very much left to discuss with our mentee what would work best for us.

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Both our mentees started off the programme with frequent Skype calls of about an hour on a weekly basis, but this progressed to fortnightly and then monthly conversations after the first month or so. We were both lucky in that our mentees were able to travel to Europe from time to time and we had a couple of face-to-face meetings as well as Skype conversations.

The main issues that our two mentees discussed with us over the 12 months were remarkably similar: the need for time for reflection, developing their strategy, and work / life balance. We also discussed setting goals, prioritising and how to delegate. Delegating is a problem for most people and for entrepreneurs in particular. However, in this context the emphasis was on how to manage family and friends, who were also business partners or employees.

To help explore the multi-cultural as well as an inter-generational aspect to both our mentoring partnerships, we used a tool, the Cross-Cultural Kaleidoscope, developed by Plaister-Ten (2010). This tool provided a number of headings under which to consider and discuss cultural stories. These „stories“ fell into the categories of history/arts, economic, political, education, legal, religious/spiritual, community/family, geography/climate as manifested by cultural behaviour, habits and norms and was informed by cultural theory. After trying out this tool, we would not recommend introducing it until trust has been established, as it digs quite deep into people’s backgrounds and beliefs.

What were the results?

At the 12 month point we reviewed the results from the partnerships. Again, there were many similarities in what our mentees achieved, but obviously there were differences in their trajectory. Carol’s mentee had issues around more effective delegation, as she was using mostly freelancers and interns. Obtaining the right quality of work and managing her own time were major challenges. She did achieve some real steps forward: she found that she was able to build in some free time for relaxation and sport. She was also able to negotiate with her London based client to obtain a more global brief, permitting her to expand her business beyond the Middle East. In addition, she has gained several new clients in the area and, on a practical level, moved offices with enough room to expand and accommodate new employees in the future.

Kerstin’s mentee has managed to consolidate several of his businesses, thus making them easier to manage, and he has found a new partner in Italy and a number of subcontractors in Indonesia. He also appears to increasingly value the power of

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empathy and is working hard at trying to understand how his colleagues look at the business and their work.

However, we believe that the biggest change that both of our mentees would say they have experienced is that they have grown in self-confidence. At the official end of the mentoring Kerstin's mentee said: "I now know that I can be an entrepreneur and I trust myself to be an entrepreneur." In terms of tangible results, the six entrepreneurs between them created 19 new jobs. As there is no control group without mentors, it is of course impossible to make any judgement as to the impact of mentors on this major achievement.

Distance mentoring and the use of Skype

Working at a distance requires preparation and planning. We believe that it is important to agree how you are going to work together. We decided to use Skype without the video to save band width, and we sometime even felt that the visual image was distracting and we often used sound only by choice. You need to be able to develop your skills in listening, to understand intonations, to be able to tune in and really hear what is happening for your mentee. In our experience, one hour's discussion on Skype is ample. Any more gets tiring and doesn't seem to add anything to the interaction. We occasionally tried Skype-ing using mobile „phones, but the technology is still not good enough...

Having an agenda before each session was important, even if it was just 24 hours beforehand, as this helped the mentee to focus and decide how they best could use the time available. At the beginning of each session we reviewed what had happened since the previous meeting.

There is an important point about celebrating: your mentee is out there on their own and they are very often moving on to the next thing before having reflected on the learning from their last success, so a mentor can help with consolidating that learning and celebrating it. It also helps to build resilience, because things don't always go smoothly and you need to build up the areas that are going well. However, in maintaining that relationship and rapport, we need to remember that we should give our mentees the benefit of our challenge and we need to be quite robust at times.

If you are curious and really interested in their business, asking questions, trying to understand what is going on, what a different generation is trying to accomplish, then you maintain your interest and passion, without being judgemental. As a mentor you have to be very careful not to have your own agenda and although you are asked for

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your expertise, not to give too much advice. However, there are situations when a factual answer (if you have it) is helpful and time saving.

The place of supervision

The majority of the mentors hadn't carried out any mentoring before and were unfamiliar with coaching methods. We had peer conference calls roughly every three months, just to check in: how is it going, are there any issues? We were told that if there were major issues, then we could have a confidential discussion with one of the Mowgli facilitators. However, an organisation like Mowgli, which is a charity, has limited funds and the mentors were expected to be fairly self-reliant. We think that it is crucial that you are aware of where you can find support in any mentoring program that you are setting up or being part of. It can be a challenging journey.

The difference between coaching and mentoring

Having read de Haan's and colleagues' research paper (2011) on the attitudes and thoughts of coachees, we thought that it would be interesting to ask two of the same questions of the six mentees in the group. We initiated the use of a survey monkey questionnaire so that the mentees' answers were anonymous. For the first question we picked: "Why are you embarking on coaching/mentoring?". They (De Haan et al., 2011) gave their coachees 5 possible answers to choose from, and we added the 6th to cover the particular context of mentoring:

- 1) I wanted to learn something new
- 2) I wanted to strengthen myself, become more resilient
- 3) I wanted to change my behaviour, my approach
- 4) I wanted to stop doing certain things
- 5) I wanted to reflect on my way of doing things
- 6) I needed help with particular business issues

The coachees top three answers were No 2) 3) and 5). Interestingly, these were exactly the same top three picked by the mentees. This surprised us, as we would have expected the mentees to choose more „down to earth“ reasons like 1) or 6).

The second question we picked was: "What was the attitude of your coach/mentor?"

The possible responses were:

- 1) Directing, providing guidance / advice

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- 2) Informing, providing information / knowledge
- 3) Challenging or increasing (self-)understanding, exploring preconceptions
- 4) Discovering, understanding by self-exploration
- 5) Supporting or building self-confidence and self-esteem
- 6) Releasing or exploring emotions causing internal barriers

The majority of coachees in the study of De Haan and colleagues (2011) picked No 5), whereas the majority of our mentees picked No 1). This demonstrated the value mentees put on advice, something that coachees are encouraged not to do. Our results have no statistical validity. However, we thought it an interesting exercise and did demonstrate the similarities and differences as perceived by coaches and mentees.

Conclusion

Personally, mentoring meant putting on a slightly different hat from our coaching hat, using the same skills but with a different focus. To us, a big difference between coaching and mentoring is that you feel that you become a part of their company – you have an investment in their dreams. It is also a much longer term relationship. We worked with our mentees for over 12 months and are both carrying on the relationship, although with longer intervals between the conversations. We also feel that you can allow a mentoring relationship to grow into friendship, which is generally not acceptable in coaching.

Finally, we found that in mentoring there is very much a sense of „give and take“. Both our mentees are wishing to help us in our businesses: Carol’s mentee has helped her with market research issues, and Kerstin’s mentee is keen to help her with the web based aspects of her company.

We both feel privileged to have had the opportunity to get to know two young people based in a very different region of the world to ours, and we have learned much from their enthusiasm and drive and have broadened our outlook and understanding of another culture.

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Coaching: Facilitating the Co-Construction of Management Knowledge

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Abstract

This paper seeks to deepen our understanding of coaching by drawing on the literature of adult transformative learning. There is significant overlap between what is perceived as adult transformative learning and coaching, the purpose to construct new meaning or a different understanding of existing knowledge. The paper therefore seeks to build on existing knowledge and understanding of coaching by exploring the literature of adult transformative learning. This link has been tenuous hitherto despite the similarity between the two discourses and would be of benefit to both the researcher and practitioner of coaching.

Key Words

Coaching, adult learning theory, management education, sense making, constructionism

Introduction

Although there is an extensive body of literature on adult transformative learning and an exponential growth in management coaching, the collective contribution of these discourses to management learning has hitherto only tentatively been considered. However, they are both concerned with the creation of knowledge and meaning. This paper challenges some of the entrenched assumptions of the learning journey and suggests that knowledge is the product of co-construction between the facilitator of learning, ie tutor, coach, mentor, etc. and management learner.

This paper views adult learning from the perspective of transformative learning theory, which perceives learning as relational. Irrespective of the approach taken to adult learning it is considered complex and multidimensional, involving an understanding of meaning and self-knowledge gained through critical reflection (Mezirow, 1991; Cranton, 1994; Dirkx, 2001). This paper argues that this is equally true of coaching. As suggested, there has been limited links made between coaching and learning (Cox,

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2006; du Toit, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2010; Kemp, 2008). In order to demonstrate the relationship between adult learning and coaching, I first offer a conceptual discussion of both constructs. I will then investigate what these constructs have in common as well as the contribution the emerging profession of coaching makes to management learning.

Adult Learning

A literature review on adult, work-based learning conducted by Fenwick (2008) suggests that there has been an exponential growth of diversity of approaches and perspectives over recent years. A common theme would suggest that workplace learning is defined, 'as a process of development, movement and change in knowledge and practices.' (Fenwick, 2008). As stated, adult learning is seen as complex and multidimensional, involving an understanding of meaning and self-knowledge gained through critical reflection. One of the strong proponents of the co-constructive and collaborative nature of learning between teacher and student was Vygotsky (1978) who argues that the learning environment plays a significant role in the facilitation thereof. Continuing with the constructionist philosophy, Mezirow (1991) suggests that learning is not only about adding more knowledge, but that it includes the transformation of pre-existing knowledge. Robotham (2004) concurs and suggests that learning also includes the application of knowledge. He goes on to emphasise that it is not the quantitative measurement of what the learner knows that is important, but what the learner is able to do as a result of that knowledge. There has also been an interest in recent years in learning being perceived as a social process which takes place in the interaction between people, resulting in the constructionist view of learning (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1985, 1991, 1994). Gray (2001) acquiesces with the sentiment that work-based adult learning encompasses more than the mere acquisition of skills, but includes the ability to reflect on experience. The recognition of how adult learners create meaning out of their experiences and the dynamics involved in adapting these meanings have been significant in the framework for adult learning according to Mezirow (1991).

Cranton (1994) challenges the perceived position of power held by the educator and the view that they are the providers and disseminators of knowledge. Instead the alternative constructionist perspective perceives the role of the educator as responding to the individual needs of the learner. The express purpose of learning then becomes the process of releasing potential. Thus, according to Cranton (1994) the educator assumes the role of facilitator of learning, providing support and encouragement. He goes on to include the role of provocateur which encourages the critical thinking

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referred to earlier, challenging assumptions and norms and stimulating thinking. One can draw parallels between the role of the coach and that of the educator as facilitator and partner in the learning journey and therefore the co-construction of knowledge with the learner. The coach also facilitates the learning of the coachee and co-constructs either new knowledge or a different perspective of existing knowledge with the coachee.

The fundamental cornerstone of transformative learning is to understand how individuals construct meaning and in turn how such meaning will influence expectations of future events. Mezirow (1991) therefore propose that it is through the process of creating meaning and changing of existing assumptions that transformative learning takes place, giving a different meaning to previous (or new) experiences. It is this process which Mezirow (1991) suggests develops autonomous thinking and the ability to learn within the learner. The outcome of such critical reflection and meaning making is therefore seen as emancipation from perceived limited options which may have acted as a constraining force on the learner. The result of which is often perceived in changes of behaviours. Proponents of transformative learning suggest that the depth of such learning is only achieved through critical self-reflection rather than through the acquisition of technical knowledge. Furthermore, the ability to think critically also extends to include an understanding of the relativity of knowledge.

Coaching

As an emerging construct, coaching has its roots in numerous disciplines which include education, psychology, sports coaching and organisational development (Garvey et al., 2009). The growth of coaching within organisations has been exponential over the past ten years. The underlying assumption is that the development of the individual will contribute to the development of the organisation. Furthermore, organisations are also increasingly creating internal coaching capacity through the development of internal coaches for the purpose of creating a coaching culture at all levels of the organisation. However, as an emerging discourse there is not a clearly defined body of knowledge nor an underpinning philosophy as to what constitutes coaching. Instead, different discourses discuss coaching from their particular perspective, i.e. psychology, management and leadership and sports psychology but no one view which integrates all of these successfully. It is evident from the disparate range of literature that coaching means different things to different people. The coaching intervention is determined by the preference of the coach for a particular style, their personal experience, education and biases. The result is as Whybrow (2008) points out, no

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standardised approach to coaching. Despite the diversity, there are common themes or unifying philosophies which can be identified such as a commitment for the growth of people, assuming responsibility for choice and nurturing latent talent. Coaching allows the client to explore, discover and clarify issues specific and relevant to their development. Furthermore, Gibb (2008) points out, "There is much in effective executive coaching that is about addressing core beliefs about self and abilities, and experimenting with new ways of being." Stewart, et al. (2008) celebrate the diversity of approaches and argue that the dynamic and interactive nature of coaching requires a flexible theoretical methodology allowing the coach to respond in a way best suited to the different needs of different clients. Communication is a key ingredient of coaching and Garvey et al. (2009) consider the non-linear coaching conversation to result in deep-seated transformation. Neale *et al.* (2009) go further and suggest that coaching is one of the most powerful ways of communicating and argue that when used affectively it raises self-awareness.

For the purpose of providing clarity, Cope (2004) places the coaching models and techniques in one of two camps, namely transference on the one end of the continuum. It is based on the assumption of coaching being a process of transference of knowledge, meaning and understanding and therefore not coachee led. On the other end of the continuum is the assumption that coaching is a process of discovery, helping the client to help themselves. This continuum is equally applicable to the debate of learning which describes the different approaches to learning and the creation of knowledge, the focus of this paper. Cope (2004) argues that the coach does not impart any wisdom or knowledge, but instead facilitates the release of the potential within the coachee. De Haan and Burger (2005) suggest coaching provides the vehicle through which an individual is able to reflect on their own actions thereby identifying alternative ways of being and behaving. The power of reflection is recognised by adult and transformative learning as one of the key components in the development of the learner.

The quality of the relationship between the coach and coachee is seen as fundamental in a successful outcome. The purpose of the dyadic relationship is seen as developing the personal potential and performance of the client (Stober, 2008; Witherspoon and White, 1996). Southern (2007) goes so far as to suggest that the relationship is a prerequisite in creating the conditions for transformative learning. Whitworth et al. (1998) describe the coaching relationship as being unique and suggest that an absence of judgement of the coachee is necessary on the part of the coach. Unlike

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other methods of intervention, coaching resists the temptation to tell people what to do. In an attempt to identify the special nature of the relationship, O'Neill (2000) argues that the principle of presence is one of the most important tools of the coach. Others concur (Brockbank and McGill, 2006; Whybrow, 2008; Kauffman, 2008) and add that the way in which the coach 'shows up' in the coaching relationship will determine the perceived value of coaching. Silsbee (2008) goes on to suggest that the importance of presence is arguably a key requirement in the ability of the coach to cultivate real and lasting change for the client. He also proposes that coaching directs attention to learning over time and the iterative process provides opportunities for practice and reflection. The equal status of the coachee and coach engaged in the co-construction of meaning further challenges the perceived role of superiority by either the manager as learner or the educator as creator of knowledge. Instead, it is an equal partnership in which the one is incapable of creating meaning without the other.

Implications for Management Learning

In both coaching and adult learning, the co-constructive relationship between the educator and learner is perceived as one of the key aspects of transformation on the part of the learner. The transforming of the worldview of the individual is associated with the ability to reflect on the assumptions and beliefs held. As suggested by Tennant (2005) for personal change to occur, it is necessary for the individual to engage in exploration of self, achieved through the use of reflection and contemplation. In the literature of adult learning, Mezirow (1991) refers to it as critical self-reflection which is also described as "soul work" by Dirkx (2007). Moore (2005) points out that transformative learning requires the learner to be able to reflectively transform attitudes, opinions, beliefs and emotional reactions which constitute their meaning scheme. However, reflection needs a companion to share it with, someone who can act as a mirror to reflect their thoughts back to them. Instead it is a social affair that requires interaction, debate, and being exposed to alternative views. In the case of coaching it deliberately provides specific time out from daily activities for guided thinking and reflection which is facilitated by the coach. The value and quality of the reflection is attributed to the collective and co-constructive companionship offered by the coach.

The ability for deep reflection is attributed to the power of the coaching conversation and underpinned by an assumption that it is impossible for the individual to achieve this in isolation. In both transformative adult learning and coaching reflection and its output is seen as the product of co-construction. The coaching conversation enables the

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coachee to become aware of their values, beliefs and attitude which drive their actions and behaviours. Furthermore, it encourages the coachee to question and reflect on their identity. According to Rogers (1980) the greater the self-awareness an individual has the greater the chance that they will be able to make more informed choices. A shared assumption identified in transformative learning and coaching is that it creates a shift which is both attitudinal as well as emotional.

Unlike the traditional hierarchical model of the relationship between the learner and educator, the coach is not seen as an expert of the content and does not offer solutions. Instead their expertise lies in the process which supports the learner to take ownership for their own development. This is also a major theme of transformative learning and Mezirow (1991) proposes that this inner journey of transformation requires a helper (i.e., educator, teacher, coach, counsellor, facilitator or co-creator) who can support the individual in identifying what is relevant to them at a given moment in time. Furthermore, the suspension of closure on the part of both parties allows for the exploration of assumptions which eventually lead to transformative learning. As Gunnlaugson (2007) describes it, suspension has the ability to slow down the stream of consciousness which allows for reflection. Such communication transcends discursive reason and facilitates meta-awareness within the learner. Inspired by the work of Bohm (1996), Gunnlaugson (2007) puts forward a model of co-creative dialogue which he describes as generative dialogue and which he perceives as a catalyst for transformative learning. It outlines the movement from “conventional conversation (talking nice) to debate (talking tough) through to reflective enquiry (reflective dialogue) toward forms of co-creative engagement in the final field of generative dialogue.” It is in the final field that he suggests the learner is able to explore in safety the assumptions they hold. It is during the final stage, which he terms “presencing”, where the individual becomes aware of the possibilities of new knowledge unfolding. The same applies to coaching and as Wilson (2007) succinctly puts it, coaching is in essence self-directed learning which is achieved through the art of questioning, directing the attention of the individual inwards and which is also true of transformative learning. The change or transformation referred to above is according to transformative learning preceded by critical reflection and Mezirow (1991) concludes that transformation as the ability to think critically.

Of significance in both coaching and transformative learning is the need for the learner or coachee to assume responsibility for their own learning. In coaching the agenda, focus and pace of the coaching sessions are dictated by the coachee. One could argue

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that reflective coaching creates the independent learner which is one of the key aspects of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1981; Conle, 2001). The key message is that the skilled learner plays an active role in their own learning and they do not assume the role of passive learner associated with a hierarchical model of learning.

The language used by transformative learning scholars is that of co-construction and they propose that transformative learning does not happen in isolation and is indeed a social affair that requires interaction, debate and an exposure to alternative realities as presented by others. The literature on adult learning argues strongly that learning does not take place in isolation, but that it requires the interaction with others, in particular between the educator and learner. As suggested in the discussions of coaching, the personal insight gained is as a result of a partnership with the coach. Furthermore, the coaching environment creates the conditions through which the coachee is able to interact in a way which brings about the insights which lead to the creation of new knowledge.

The principles of co-construction suggest that when people talk and engage with each other relationally, the world gets constructed. Knowledge is not seen as having an independent existence, instead it is constructed through communal and participative relationships such as those identified in coaching and transformative learning. There is much reference made to the coaching conversation in the literature. However, what is apparent from the above is that the coaching conversation is more akin to what Bohm (1992) and others identified as dialogue. Garvey et al. (2009) suggest that it is through the power of dialogue that attitudes and performance are changed and shaped. In fact, Bohm (1992) proposes that for dialogue to occur it is necessary for participants to suspend their assumptions, requiring a sense of a shared quest for deeper insight and clarity. Equally, the coach is required to suspend their own assumptions for the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of the world of the coachee. Furthermore, the coach challenges the coachee to do the same in order to gain a deeper insight to a particular situation or circumstances. This reflects the co-constructive relationship identified in both coaching as well as transformative learning. Transformative learning is identified as the ability to deconstruct or make sense of existing knowledge for the purpose of constructing different or new knowledge and understanding. The suggestion that dialogue is a powerful way of making collective sense of our experiences is supported by Dixon (1999) who argues that it is through dialogue that we are able to reveal our meaning structures to ourselves and others.

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The conclusion I draw from the above discussions is that there is significant overlap between coaching and learning and that coaching has a powerful contribution to make in the generation of management knowledge and learning and vice versa. Much of what is described in the literature on adult transformative learning is true of coaching. The two discourses may therefore enrich understanding of their respective practices and underpinning theoretical concepts. This would be true for both researchers and practitioners of these disciplines as the theoretical underpinnings would be extended and the practitioner would gain additional tools and techniques with which to enhance their practice. I would go further and suggest that coaching has not taken place unless learning has resulted from the coaching intervention. ,..

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Why do Doctors want a Mentor? A Study of Applications to a UK Mentoring Service

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Abstract

In 2008 London Deanery set up a formal service offering doctors a mentor from outside their workplace. The aim of the study was to find out who applied, why and what they were looking for in a mentor. Conducting a thematic analysis of the application forms we found that the main reasons for wanting a mentor were career development, change and transition, self-doubt, work/life balance, career in difficulty and leadership. Applicants expected their mentor to offer help, an outside perspective, and experience.

Keywords

Coaching, mentoring, physician, doctor

Background

Mentoring for doctors: The benefits of mentoring in releasing potential and enhancing careers in medicine have been reported in several studies (Ramanan et al. 2006; Steven et al., 2008) and several government reports have called for it to be more widely available (Temple, 2010; Deech, 2010; Boorman, 2010). The importance of making sure doctors have the skills to be mentors has also been stressed (Ramani et al., 2006). Mentors provide doctors with a safe opportunity for reflection, by listening, supporting, exploring, challenging, and helping the mentee to focus on their goals (Connor et al., 2000). Mentoring has been defined as an interpersonal relationship in which a senior or more experienced person helps a junior or inexperienced person to succeed in the organisation (Clutterbuck, 1992). Mentoring is not without risks however, especially if the mentor is in a close working relationship with the mentee; has a vested interest in their success within the organisation; is untrained; or is working without an ethical framework (Eby et al., 2000).

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The London Deanery service: The London Deanery is the National Health Service organisation responsible for co-ordinating the postgraduate education of over 10,000 doctors across London. In 2008 it launched a mentoring service, offering applicants a choice of mentors from outside the workplace (Bhatti & Viney, 2010; Viney & McKimm, 2010). The mentors were selected senior doctors who already had educational roles, who had been trained and would be remunerated for the mentor role. The service was advertised via emails to tutors, educational supervisors and training programme directors. Trainees (residents), newly appointed general practitioners (GPs) and consultants, and those undertaking new leadership roles were targeted and the service was offered free of charge. As the service built up over three years, capacity was increased to meet demand by training new mentors, and when demand declined below capacity, another advertising campaign was launched .

In order to make sure we had the right mentors to meet the needs and expectations of applicants, we asked applicants to say why they were applying and what they expected from their mentor. We expected to find this information useful also in managing inappropriate or unrealistic expectations. We were especially keen to know whether applicants would be disappointed not to have a mentor from their workplace or in their own specialty.

Methodology

We reviewed the first 850 application forms, which were received over three years. The only way of applying was on-line and applications were not accepted if they were not completed.

The demographics of the applicants in the sample were: female (N=543, 64%), white (N=442, 52%), aged 40 or under (N=644, 76%), as expected in a group that including a high proportion (N=339, 47%) of trainees. The range of specialties was broad and the sample included 33 (4%) dentists.

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Table 1
Career level of applicants

	Number	%
Trainees	399	47
Staff grade/associate specialists	96	11
New GPs and consultants (first 2 years)	199	24
More senior GPs and consultants (>2 years)	121	14
Other	25	3
Uninterpretable	10	1
Total	850	100

Applicants were invited to apply via an on-line form on the website. This form included the questions “Please indicate briefly why you are interested in joining the scheme as a Mentee, and state how this relates to your own personal development plans.” And “Please briefly describe why you would like a coach/mentor and the type of support you would expect to receive from him/her.”

The anonymised free text sections were reviewed by two researchers (EP and TS). Each worked independently looking for the themes that we expected to find from our knowledge of the field and also alert to the possibility of unsuspected themes. The method used was thematic analysis. We looked for words that were frequently repeated, and went repeatedly through the text ‘cutting and sorting’ it into categories which were then discussed by all three authors and agreed (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). We took a quantitative approach to the occurrence of themes within applicant groups. The quotes were selected as examples of the themes that had emerged.

Results

Reasons for Wanting a Mentor

The main four themes in response to the question “Please indicate briefly why you are interested in joining the scheme as a Mentee, and state how this relates to your own personal development plans.” identified in the responses were career development, change or transition at work, self-doubt as a doctor, and work/life balance. Two less

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common but important themes were career in difficulty and new leadership role. The frequency with which these themes were mentioned is set out in Table 2 and the themes are described more fully below.

Table 2
Reasons for wanting a mentor (multiple reasons possible)

	Number	%
Career development	786	92
Change or transition	325	38
Self-doubt	223	26
Work/life balance	200	24
Career in difficulty	170	20
Leadership	102	12

Career development

Most respondents wanted to discuss their career, its progress and what their next steps should be. This was often in the context of options that had to be weighed up, an opportunity to be grasped, or an obstacle to be overcome. Choosing a specialty and career hurdles such as examinations and interviews were an issue for trainees. Getting onto the specialist register and out of a dead-end job was a concern of staff and associate specialist grades. New general practitioners (GPs) and consultants spoke of developing their special interests and more senior doctors also had choices to make. Applicants spoke of being at a crossroads in their career and seeking a mentor to act as a sounding board to help them decide which way to go.

'I am at the point in my training where I have to decide what path I want my career to take. I am finding this decision very challenging and I've been struggling with it for some time. I'd like a mentor as an objective sounding board so I can work through my options. Conversations with consultants in my field always end up with advice rather than what I actually need.' (Trainee)

'I feel the need for ongoing advice and support in my career development, in my trust there is no such provision except for new trainees. I am aware of the need

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to develop further skills e.g. in management, research. I am also considering a career abroad.' (Trainee)

'I am currently at a crossroads in my career. There are many aspects of modern general practice that interest me both clinically and from a political/managerial perspective. I have many ideas regarding possible options for the future and would like the opportunity to discuss these in a non-judgemental forum.' (New GP)

'I want to improve my ability to act as a medical educator in challenging times; I think it would be helpful in being able to prioritise and understand where to focus my energies and developmental journey; I think it is an essential part of my professional development as an educator taking on a management role.' (GP in post > 2 years)

Change or transition

This was a major issue for doctors approaching the end of their training or starting as GPs or consultants. A recurring theme was the transition from being a well-supported trainee to becoming a GP or consultant with more responsibility and unfamiliar non-clinical roles. Changes in the NHS were seen as threats or opportunities.

'I find the thought of completing my [training] both exciting and daunting! I am excited about working in different practices and exploring other clinical roles, however, I also feel quite nervous about how I will cope with job uncertainty, marketing myself and staying clinically up to date. I also feel slightly uneasy about losing my trainer - not having someone to bounce clinical ideas off (although I'm aware this probably isn't the role of a mentor).' (Trainee)

'I find the current uncertainty in the profession's future, and specifically for newly qualified doctors, unsettling. I also think it could also be time of great opportunity. I would like to have a mentor with whom I could foster a relationship that would enable to consider my own personal development in the context of the changes in General Practice. I would hope to be inspired by my mentor.' (New GP)

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'Have found transition from [trainee] to consultant a big change (mostly with regards to non clinical work). Would like advice on how to work most effectively and career planning for the future.' (New consultant)

Work/life balance

This was the only theme with a significant gender difference. Women were more likely than men to mention this as a reason for wanting mentoring, (147 out of 543 women (27%) vs 53 out of 307 men (17%)). In most cases, work/life balance was mentioned in conjunction with other themes.

'I am hoping to talk through career options and discuss the difficulties I am having in deciding on a specialty. With a family, I have to consider my work/life balance and am hoping to discover and talk through possible work options. Effectively I am at a career cross-roads and wish for guidance regarding my future choices.' (Trainee)

'I have just returned from my second maternity leave... I am training part-time in General Practice and have just under three months left. I want to continue working part time when I have completed my training but am experiencing some crisis of confidence and am unsure how best to do this for myself and my family.' (Trainee)

'Find it hard to keep coming back following long breaks (maternity leave). It seems like people seem more and more disheartened and the NHS is more difficult to work in. I would like advice with regard to managing the stress, improving my confidence, juggling work with a family and help developing a portfolio career...' (Part-time consultant)

'Career is changing with a lot of opportunities. However also have to balance work/home have 3 kids and a husband who is often away travelling. Work full time more or less. Would love some input into making career decisions and support if do take on new challenges.' (GP >2 years)

Self-doubt

Many applicants expressed a desire for mentoring to help with anxieties about loss of professional self-confidence and some had doubts about their suitability for their

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specialty, or for medicine as a career. Interestingly, there was no significant correlation between self-doubt and the demographic profile of the respondents.

'I have recently been questioning primarily my commitment to the speciality I have chosen and perhaps even to continuing a career in medicine, and I have begun to consider a change in direction, however, this is a daunting prospect.' (Trainee)

'At the moment, I feel as if I am at another crossroads in my career, the first one having been at the end of my anaesthetic rotation. I have never really had much confidence in myself as a doctor although the people around me, mainly supervisors and colleagues, seem to have greater confidence in my abilities. I do not think I have achieved my full potential as a doctor and especially in the last year, this has led to great unhappiness.' (Trainee)

'I am a junior partner and I find my job quite stressful at times and often question my abilities/whether I am making the right clinical decisions etc. Unfortunately we (myself and colleagues) have no time for one another at work and I often feel quite professionally isolated. I have had a recent legal claim made against me by a patient which has greatly knocked my confidence.' (New GP)

'Although I regularly attend conferences and meetings to keep my CPD up to date I do not feel that I am developing in my role as a consultant/ specialist. I feel I have lost old skills (primarily general medicine) and not sufficiently gained new ones, which leaves me feeling unfulfilled and unconfident.' (Consultant > 2 years)

Career in difficulty

One in five applicants seemed to be experiencing significant career difficulties. These included repeated failure of an exam, inability to get a suitable post or onto a training scheme, health issues, conflicts with colleagues, negative assessments and disciplinary issues.

'I am having difficulty obtaining [an exam]. This has left me feeling stressed and not sleeping, even though the next attempt is not until September. I have taken and failed it 4 times before but don't know where I'm going wrong. It is making

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me question my career choice and my abilities. I'd like some advice on staying calm and an objective person to talk to about my fears.' (Trainee)

'Have recently had issues with communication with peers and patients, and also an internal hearing of poor practice. Discussed with deanery and agreed that an impartial mentor in the deanery would be advisable.' (Trainee)

'I have had to seek help from a mentor as part of an agreement with my performers committee...' (GP > 2 years)

Leadership or management

This was an issue for applicants because such responsibilities had already been undertaken, or because they felt the need to develop such skills in the interests of their careers, or because they saw leadership as an opportunity to make a difference. They saw mentoring as a way of getting support that was not otherwise available.

'My new job involves a level of leadership and project working that I am not accustomed to; the fact that the entire service is new means that there is a lack of structures, formal or informal, that I can call on for support in my role. In addition my role here, beyond that of providing direct clinical care, is rather ill-defined: I feel a looming weight of responsibility without necessarily having the wherewithal to meet it. I worry that this combination of new responsibilities, and a lack of support structures, carries with it the risk of early burn-out, and I would value the external support that a mentor might provide to give me some perspective and help me to clarify my priorities for development.' (New GP)

'Being a new Consultant has been very exciting and stimulating yet exhausting. I have strong visions for the type of department I want to lead and have found implementing change a real challenge. I would like to be able to inspire my juniors to raise their standards and practice excellence in clinical medicine. The balance of management, leadership, teaching and training and clinical care remains a tricky balance especially with increasingly limited resources and increased patient demand. I believe a mentor would be able to support me to achieve this.' (New consultant)

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'I have taking on huge new responsibilities in the workplace and am having to establish new work relationships with colleagues who were previously peers and are now employees. I also have personal development needs with regards to the management of a practice and staff while maintaining clinical skills.'
(Senior GP)

Reasons for applying, by career level

Table 3

Reasons for wanting a mentor, by career level

		Trainees	Staff grade/ associate specialist	<2 years post training	>2 years post training	Other	Significance
Career development	number	377	91	182	107	20	
	%	94	95	91	88	80	p=.019
Change or transition	number	123	13	124	49	13	
	%	31	14	62	40	52	p<.001*
Self-doubt	number	112	25	48	32	4	
	%	28	26	24	26	16	p=.644
Work/life balance	number	113	9	49	24	4	
	%	28	9	25	20	16	p=.002*
Career difficulty	number	79	25	15	38	11	
	%	20	26	8	31	44	p<.001*
Leadership role	number	29	6	44	23	0	
	%	7	6	22	19	0	p<.001*

*Pearson Chi-square sig. p<.01

The reasons for interest in being mentored were similar across the career levels, but there were some significant differences as set out in Table 3. Career development was the major issue for all career levels, only slightly less so for established GPs and consultants than for trainees. Change or transition was a major issue for applicants who were new GPs and consultants, less of a concern for staff grades and associate

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specialists. Self-doubt seemed to affect applicants equally across the board. Work/life balance was less of an issue for staff grades and associate specialists than for other groups. Career difficulty was most likely to be the reason for applying for established GPs and consultants and 'Other' applicants, and in some cases had led to their application being encouraged by outside organisations. Support for a leadership role was most likely to be an issue for GPs and consultants.

What Applicants Expected of a Mentor

The themes that emerged in the answers to the question "*Please briefly describe why you would like a coach/mentor and the type of support you would expect to receive from him/her.*" were that applicants wanted a mentor who would offer help and guidance, be external to the applicant's working environment (which was seen as conferring both objectivity and confidentiality), and be experienced.

Table 4

What applicants expected of their mentor (multiple themes possible)

	Number	%
Help or guidance	481	57
External perspective	204	24
Experience	184	21

Help or guidance

The sort of help applicants expected was mainly encouragement, motivation or career guidance. In some cases the expectation of help went beyond these to more technical and practical assistance such as cv writing or coaching for exams. Mostly, the expectations were reasonable and fitted well with what we were planning to provide.

'I feel very much lost in the world of postgraduate medicine, and although I have ambitions and goals, I feel that they are not directed and I feel overwhelmed regarding how to achieve them. I am looking for some guidance and direction more than anything and the benefit of wisdom and experience from my Mentor...' (Trainee)

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'I would hope to be able to discuss my situation in depth, and look at other avenues I haven't previously considered. I would benefit from guidance and assistance in making decisions about my career. I would expect that my mentor would be in a position where they are able to offer impartial advice and guidance and help me move forwards as I feel quite stuck at the moment. (Trainee)

'I would like the Mentor to direct me to ways to develop my understanding of the way general practices are run and funded. I would also like guidance as to how contracts/tenders are formed and enlighten me to aspects of running a general practice as a partner/principal - not on just being a salaried GP.' (Trainee)

'Help in avoiding burn-out.' (GP)

External perspective

The mentor being outside the applicant's workplace, and sometimes their specialty, was a feature of the service, and was welcomed by applicants. Being external was assumed to ensure that the mentor would be objective, unbiased, impartial and independent of the employer's agenda. It was also clear that applicants wanted confidentiality and saw an external mentor as ensuring this - an important consideration since some applicants wanted to discuss career difficulty, loss of confidence or doubts about their career choice, issues that they might not want to come to the attention of their work colleagues or supervisor.

'I would like someone external to my work to be able to talk to about career issues who would be non-judgmental and non-biased...' (Trainee)

'I would like to try whether mentoring would help me finding a clear career aim and taking necessary steps to get there. I am interested how advice given by a person outside my circle of family/friends feels. I would expect strict confidentiality, a neutral approach and the ability to listen to my perspective and give personal advice.' (Trainee)

'I'd like someone to help me work out what I want to achieve or focus on over the next 5-10 years. In particular, should I concentrate on clinical work, which I

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love the most (at least for now), or will I become bored as I have done in the past? Should I plan to get more involved in teaching or management (or possibly research again), or is it too early in my career? Everyone I talk to about this has their own opinion, so someone who has no investment in what I do who can help me work out what I want would be very useful.' (Consultant)

Experience

Applicants expected to have a mentor who was more senior and therefore more knowledgeable than themselves. Several mentioned the desirability of having a mentor who had been through what they were going through, whether it was exams, juggling the demands of home and hospital, or facing a disciplinary hearing. Some wanted a mentor experienced in their own specialty, others looked for experience in dealing with local politics, or familiar with the local scene.

'I would like to be able to speak to someone who maybe has experienced wanting to leave medicine...' (Trainee)

'I would appreciate guidance from a senior clinician with a background in Anaesthetics or Intensive Care. I feel that my early career lacked direction, and now I need to define more precise career goals and then determine how I might achieve them. I think that I would benefit from the advice of another person that has greater experience in my chosen specialties.' (Trainee)

'As a newly qualified GP, I am keen to learn from a more experienced GP in all matters relating to clinical practice, work-life balance, personal development and managing the ever increasing demands of being a GP. It would be great to have the support of such an individual.' (New GP)

'I would like an experienced mentor with good leadership and presentation skills. Someone who has experience in policy making and is at the top of their profession. Someone from a surgical background would be desirable but not necessary.' (New consultant)

Discussion

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The reasons given by applicants for wanting to have a mentor were mainly related to their careers rather than their personal lives.. A desire to tackle more personal issues came through within the themes of work/life balance and self-doubt. The need for help with career development is emphasized by a study of Taylor et al. (2008) that showed that only 25% of doctors who qualified in 1977 expected 30 years later to continue working in the same way until they retire. The rest were looking for change and development, and many expressed a desire for a mentor to help them achieve this. The themes identified in our study fit with those listed by Clutterbuck (2009) as the benefits to mentees in general.

This study showed that there was an appetite among doctors to have a mentor from outside their workplace. Most studies of mentoring focus on workplace-based relationships (Smith et al., 2005). However, if the mentor and mentee are working colleagues there is always the risk that the mentor will have a vested interest in the career decisions of the mentee. Their own reputation may be on the line if the mentee fails to perform, or they may resent a move to another department (Eby, 2000). In this study, we found that having a mentor who was distanced from the workplace was mentioned as an advantage by 24% of applicants. This was a formal service, involving matching a previously unknown coach/mentor to the applicant. Other studies have suggested that informal work-based mentoring is more successful, though women and ethnic minorities may not have as much access to these arrangements as white men (Chao et al, 1992; Cox & Nkomo, 1991; Dreher & Ash, 1990; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Nemanick, 2000). We showed that our service attracted representative numbers of women and ethnic minorities..

Strengths and Limitations

The strength of the study is that it involved large numbers of doctors, a group whose coaching/mentoring requirements have not been the subject of any large-scale study before. Using open questions allowed participants to mention all those issues that came to their mind. It does however mean that some issues they might have mentioned if prompted were not included.

The study suffers from being retrospective, drawing on data that had already been collected. A prospective evaluation of the effectiveness of the service is currently being carried out.

Conclusions

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We have shown that a formal, external mentoring service for doctors attracts applicants from all career levels who want help in realising their potential and enhancing their careers. Many want help with dealing with change or transition in their careers, coping with career setbacks or loss of confidence, or trying to achieve a good work/life balance. Some want support in taking on leadership challenges. While they expect their mentor to provide help and guidance from a position of experience, they do not necessarily want a mentor in their own field. In fact, they see advantages in having a mentor sufficiently far removed to offer secure confidentiality and objectivity. Anyone considering providing a mentoring service for doctors should recognise that the demand will come from a wide pool, including many whose careers are flourishing and who have been selected for leadership roles.

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Competing interests

RV leads the coaching and mentoring service concerned and TS and EP are mentors for the service.

Authors' contributions

RV provided the original idea, TS contributed to coding the responses, EP carried out the analysis and all authors contributed to the writing.

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Dr. Rebecca Viney founded and leads the London Deanery Coaching and Mentoring Service, which won the National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare Award in 2011 for the best learning and development strategy. Professors Elisabeth Paice and Tom Sensky are faculty and active mentors on the service.

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Exploring the Double-value of Supervision: A developmental Perspective for internal Coaches

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Abstract

The research set out to explore the potential for group coaching supervision to add value to both internal coaches and the organisation they work for. The article explores the value derived by the internal coaches. Although working with a small sample, the findings indicate that coaching supervision generated a positive impact on the coach's development. Recommendations for practice and for further research are included.

Keywords

Internal coach, supervision, coach development

Introduction

Typically the reported benefits of supervision relate to the coach rather than what value has been added for an organisation. However, there is a relative scarcity of evidence on the developmental impact of supervision for the internal coach. This research provides a case study opportunity to test the value of supervision to both the internal coaches and their organisation, hence the title "The exploration of "double value" of group coaching supervision". The study set out to explore three questions:

- What impact does group supervision have on internal coach development?
- How can a supervisor capture organisational themes when working in group supervision?
- If and when organisational themes are captured, are they of use to the client organisation?

This article is concerned only with the first of these three questions. The remaining two questions consider what value might be derived for the organisation and are the subject of a separate article that is planned to be published in a later edition of the International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching.

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Literature Review

When considering supervision for coaches (whether internal or not), there seems to be a well-accepted “trilogy” of its purpose. These three main reasons are described as

1. “normative” (where we are concerned with ethical issues and quality assuring practice)
2. “formative” (where we are concerned with supporting the supervisee’s development and learning) and
3. “restorative” (where we are concerned with managing the supervisees resources if and when their clients issues impact upon them personally).

Different authors use different labels which reflect their different origins and perspectives. However, they all recognise the need to support the supervisee’s development. As Kadushin (1976 as cited in Hawkins & Smith, 2006) refers to its “educative” purpose and comments from the world of Social Work. Procter (1988) refers to its “formative” purpose which originates from the world of counselling. Finally Hawkins & Smith (2006) comment from a coaching perspective and label it “developmental”.

Many practitioners would subscribe to the developmental nature of supervision – for example Arney (2006) notes that “more and more coaches are viewing supervision as essential to their practice Believing it developed their coaching capability and assured the quality of their work.....”

There are several authors who identify a positive influence of supervision on coach development. A study by Butwell (2006) explored how 8 internal coaches, new to supervision, perceived the value of group supervision. They came together 5 times for half a day over a 14 month period. The session included a “showcase” of a coaching tool plus one volunteer brought a case for discussion. Butwell reports a number of positive experiences including applying insights from others cases, to their client work. It also raised awareness about models presented, although not with sufficient understanding to use them. Finally, she noted that it helped the coaches recognise and deal with client boundaries.

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This last point seems particularly pertinent for the internal coach. Typically the internal coach also has a “day job” and therefore has to deal with multiple relationships within the business.

The work of McGivern (2009) also identifies the developmental impact of supervision although she reports on 6 experienced and “freelance” executive coaches rather than internal coaches. Her study reports on the culmination of their supervision experiences. It is not clear though whether their experiences derived from individual or group supervision. Nevertheless, one of her four main findings related to how supervision “improved their practice”. The coaches inferred that supervision’s “bespoke nature offers the best continuous education for the coach”.

The literature also suggests that developing as a reflective practitioner is another consequence of coaching supervision. McGivern (2009) identifies the theme “taking a look in and through the mirror” which serves to raise self-awareness and promote on-going professional development. She describes the opportunity through supervision for meta-reflection and exploring differing perspectives.

Supervision as an enabler for reflection is also reported in an Australian study by Armstrong and Geddes (2009). They comment on the on-going supervision groups with their trainees suggesting that “coaching supervision is not only a place to reflect, it teaches them *how* to reflect, therefore honing their reflective practice”. This suggests that group supervision can enable coaches to utilise reflection outside of the formal group supervision setting itself.

Some more specific developmental findings are identified in a Case Study on Deloitte. Champion (2011) comments that as a result of supervision, internal coaches report “a huge amount of learning and development”. Specifically, Champion identifies that they learned how to prepare for and engage with supervision and how to engage in reflective practice. They developed a greater awareness of the choices they make during a client session; were able to use supervision to link theory to practice. They also widened their perspective through sharing resources such as articles and by witnessing a range of effective coaching approaches used by their peers

In summary therefore, there is a growing body of evidence for the developmental benefits of supervision, including honing reflective practice, learning coaching techniques and sharing resources amongst peer groups. However, these studies do

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not help us understand what is changing in the way coaches develop their craft. Maxwell (2010) has identified 4 different types of internal coaches. Her matrix, replicated in Figure 1, identifies two dimensions. The first looks at the focus for the coaching – i.e. whether it is concerned with “short-term” or “long-term” issues. The second dimension considers whether the coaching work is being done at a “surface” or “deep” level. This model has been used in the case study as a framework for gathering participant’s self-reflection on how their work has shifted over the period of the research.

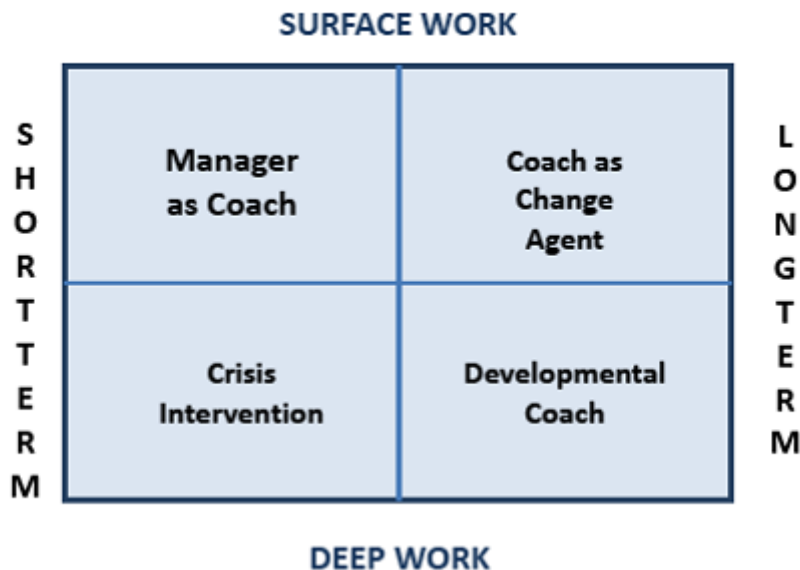


Figure 1. Maxwell (2011) different Types of Internal Coach

Hawkins & Smith (2006) have considered how the coach’s developmental journey unfolds. They offer a 4-stage development model mapping the broadening perspective of the coach. When considering the orientation of the material a coach brings to supervision it is often possible to determine an underpinning question to their issue. This in turn can give some cues as to what their developmental stage might be as outlined in Table 1. This framework is also used in the study to map the participant’s development journey. Of course this model is not intended to be linear and therefore any one “assessment” can only be seen in relation to that particular client: coach relationship at a point in time.

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Table 1.

Hawkins & Smith (2006) Stages of Development and indicative questions underpinning their reflections

Hawkin's Stage	Label	The question the coach is most concerned with
Stage 1	Self-centred	"Can I make this work?"
Stage 2	Client centred	"Can I help this client make it?"
Stage 3	Process centred	"How are we relating together?"
Stage 4	Process in context centred	"How do all the processes interconnect?"

Methodology

The Case Study Organisation

The study involved working with a team of internal coaches engaged in a major strategic change programme called 'LEAP!'. The client organisation is a long-established footwear retailer. Neither the coaches nor the organisation had any experience of coaching supervision and so it provided a "greenfield site" for a case study.

Initially, there were seven participants. This included, the LEAP! Change Programme Co-ordinator (CPC), three Area Sales Managers (ASM) and three Senior Change Leads (SCL). By the end of the programme only 4 participants remained, the 3 ASMs had dis-engaged from the research. One ASM dropped out after the first workshop due to additional workload. The second ASM disengaged after workshop 3 when he was promoted to a different Region not involved with LEAP! The third ASM resigned from the business due to family health problems also after workshop 3.

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The Group Supervision Activity

The study included a series of five group coaching supervision workshops which were facilitated by the author of this article. Each workshop lasted half a day, typically this time allowed for 4 of the 7 participants to bring a case for review. The first workshop was predominantly a contracting session and the last workshop a review session. Workshops 2, 3 and 4 were therefore the core of the group supervision experience.

In order to structure the participants contribution to the cases brought for supervision, four techniques were offered to the group. The presenting coach chose which approach most appealed to them given the nature of the issue brought for discussion. The four techniques are detailed in Appendix 1.

Research Methods

A mixture of research methods were used in this research.

1. On-line questionnaires completed by participants.

The primary vehicle for testing the impact of group supervision on participant's self-perception was established through a "before and after" on-line questionnaire. It was completed in advance of the first contracting session and again after the fifth and final workshop. Nine of the questions posed are provided in Appendix 2. Most required free form text responses to ensure a minimum of bias from the researcher. One question was quantitative in nature, another three questions were multiple choice.

Two questions were added to the "after" version of the questionnaire, in order to incorporate Maxwell's model of internal coaching (see questions # 7 and # 8). This enabled participants to use the model to track any changes to the way they were working.

There was a further questionnaire (also on-line) which was sent to participants after each workshop – its primary purpose was to gather feedback on the workshop experience. However, Question 3 was "How will our discussion influence your coaching conversations in future?" Responses to this particular question served to supplement the data from the before and after survey.

All of this data was analysed by question with the narrative responses being reviewed for themes, comments are used verbatim in the Findings section.

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2. Contemporaneous Supervisor Notes

During the workshops, I as the supervisor and researcher captured the order in which participants worked on their cases, the content of the case brought to supervision, the technique chosen to explore their cases, and the roles the non-presenting coaches played (for example some were peer questioners, some worked as observers).

3. Stakeholder Interviews

At the end of the series of workshops, I held a semi-structured interview with two organisational stakeholders, the Change Programme Co-Ordinator and the HR Director. Each interview took between 45 minutes and an hour, and was in two parts. In the first 15 – 20 minutes the researcher asked two questions prompting feedback relating to coach development.

What impact do you think the workshop has had on the participants?
What have you noticed about them? What specific examples can you offer?

The second part of the interview shared the preliminary findings of the research and invited their comment. Analysis of this part of the interview will be reported in a separate article.

Ethical Issues

This piece of research was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of Oxford Brookes University, and was supervised by one of their Academic Tutors. All of the participants were given full information about the study before they agreed to participate and signed a consent form. They were assured of confidentiality that data would be aggregated and as far as possible presented in a non-attributable basis. Because of the small number of people involved and because the results would ultimately be presented back to organisational stakeholders, the researcher shared the preliminary report with participants. They were invited to make amendments or deletions to any of the quotes if they believed they could be personally identified from the report. No amendments were requested.

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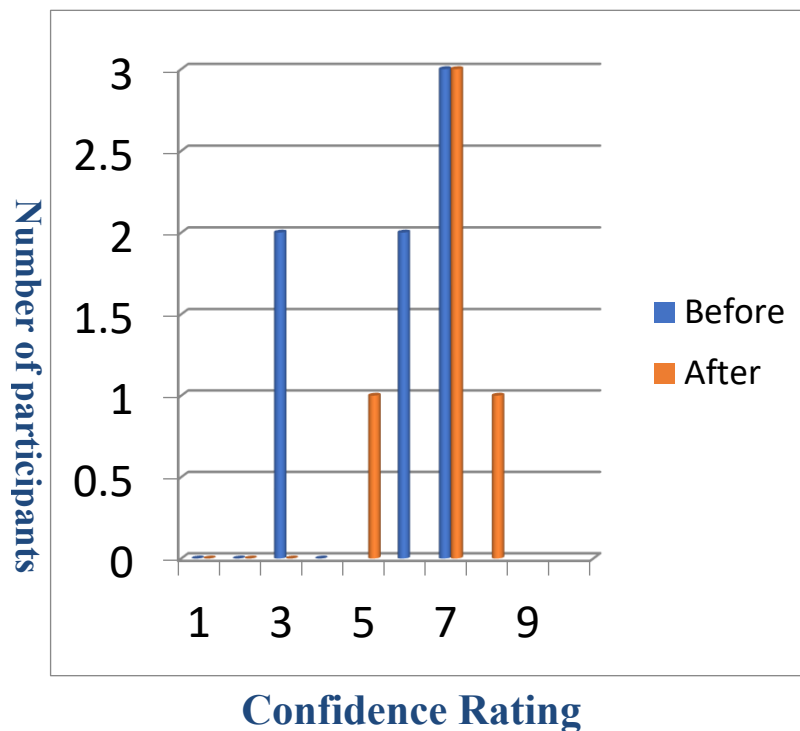
Findings

What Impact does Group Supervision have on Coach Development?

1. Coach Self-report : before and after survey

Responses from the “before and after” supervision survey were compared and the three primary findings that attest to an impact on coach development were as follows.

The first “shift” evidenced was an increasing sense of confidence that the participants were having “proper” coaching conversations. Of the 7 participants that completed this question before the workshops the average rating was 5.6/10; of the 5 participants that completed this question at the end of the workshops the average rating was 6.8/10. See Figure 2 below. This would indicate a slight rise in the level of coach confidence over the period of participating in the group supervision workshops.



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Figure 2. Comparison of participants self-rating before (n=7) and after

Secondly, using Maxwell's (2011) model of internal coaching as a framework, participants were asked to report on how their style of coaching had changed since the start of the programme. Figure 3 shows the overall proportion of time the participants recorded as working in each of the four quadrants "before" and "after" the research intervention.

As the comparison chart shows, they believed they were doing slightly less "surface work" (79% dropped to 71%) . the same amount of "deep work" (41% both before and after). However, the biggest shift was in moving from short term perspective (67% dropped to 40%) in favour of the long term perspective (53% rose to 72%)

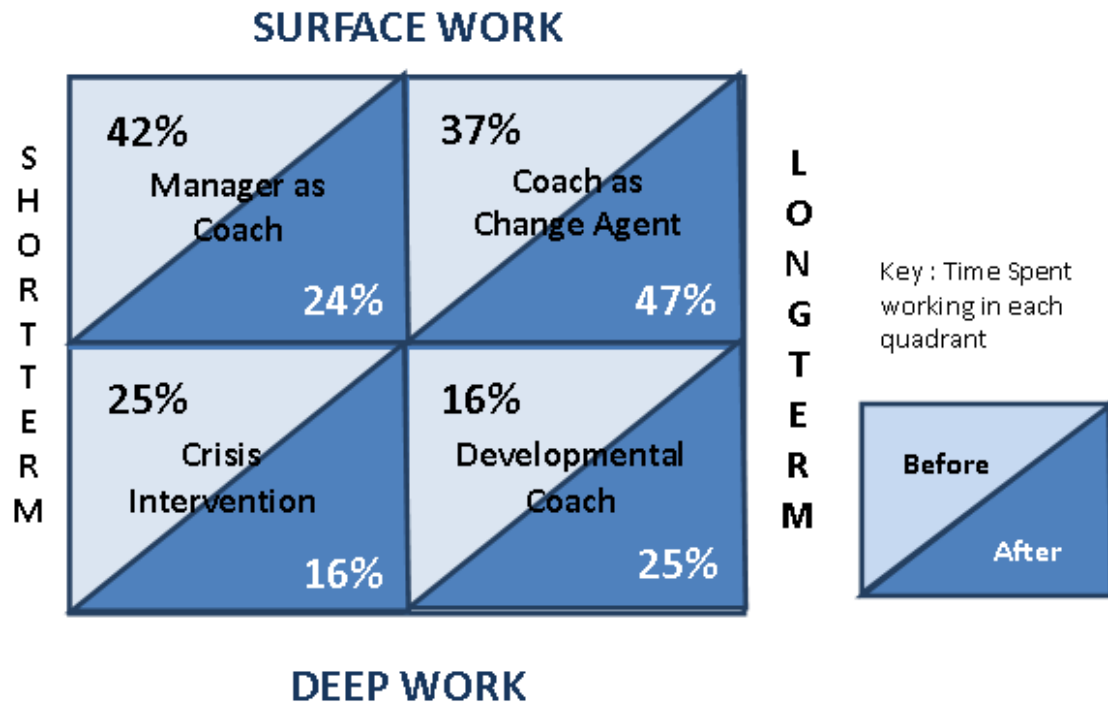


Figure 3. Using Maxwell's model to map shifts in perception about the type of coaching work delivered at the start of the programme compared to the end of the programme

Responses to Question 4 suggest that they were becoming more deliberate in allocating time for reflecting on their coaching work and more keen to reflect immediately after their coaching conversations. Table 2 provides some examples of their comments.

Table 2

Example comments on Q4 of before and after on line survey

How and when do you reflect on your conversations?

Some example "before" comments

Some example "after" comments

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“I don’t reflect on them often enough”

“I try to reflect after each session, also at the end of every week I go through more generic conversations”

“due to the current pace of the business, at times it can be some hours after a conversation before I reflect on the content”

“Now at the end of the conversation or at the end of the visit in the car”

“When travelling in the car I go over conversations I’ve had to assess how they’ve gone and the outcomes”

I reflect after the conversation, I will take notes of my thoughts when possible”

“Whilst driving and in my daily journal”

Straight afterwards if possible, if not in the car on my way home

2. Coach Self-report: post workshop feedback

The post workshop feedback questionnaire included the question “How will this affect your coaching conversations of the future?” Their comments were organised according to Hawkins' (2006) 4-stage model. Typically their comments relate to Stages 1 and 2 of Coach development, although there are a couple of comments that begin to suggest some Stage 3 level thinking (see Table 3)

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Table 3

Responses to Q3 of post workshop questionnaire and how they relate to Hawkins Developmental Stages.

Stage 1 : How am I doing?	<i>They help me to consider alternative solutions or methods which I possibly would not have thought about before” [WS2-1] “Influenced my discussion with my line manager around my development areas [WS2-4]</i>
Stage 2 : Can I help this client?	<i>I will stop and think if I am the right person to have the conversation in the first place [WS2-3] It also clarifies how my 'case study' individuals are feeling and highlights many points about them that I hadn't recognised (emotion, workload, pressure form above etc) [WS4-1]</i>
Stage 3 : How are we relating ?	<i>I will think about the different approaches I can take to help them move their thinking forward [WS3 – 5] I am trying to show the change I want rather than just talk about it [WS3-2]</i>
Stage 4 : How do processes interconnect?	No examples.

3. Supervisor Observations.

During the workshop, the researcher acted as the supervisor and tracked the nature of the issues that the coaches brought for supervision, Table 4 below maps these cases to Hawkins' (2006) hierarchy of coach development.

Table 4

Number of supervision cases according to Hawkins (2006) Developmental Stages

	Workshop 1	Workshop 2	Workshop 3	Workshop 4
Stage 1		2	2	1
Stage 2	2	2	1	1
Stage 3				1

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Stage 4

1

Consistent with the coaches' comments in the post-workshop feedback, most of the cases related to Stages 1 & 2 of the model.

Example 1 below provides a case which was brought in Workshop 2 and illustrates Hawkins Stage 1 of Coach development. Here the underlying question is about his performance as a coach. The coach appears to completely miss the question of whether his coaching style worked for the "client" despite some behavioural clues to the contrary.

Example 1: Excerpt of case from Workshop 2 illustrative of Stage 1 Development

I was coaching a Store Manager to help him understand why the current performance was perceived as a problem, my own manager was also in attendance. The Store Manager began to "well up" as we were talking it through. Afterwards my manager gave me feedback that I'd been too direct and too involved in the detail – but my Store Managers know me and know my style. How can I get my manager to understand that what I'm doing works?

However, in the final workshop one case related to Stage 3 and a further case related to Hawkins Stage 4. Example 2 provides an example which indicates how the coach is becoming interested in how the system is operating and how things are interconnected which is illustrative of Stage 4 development.

Example 2 : Excerpt of case from Workshop 2 illustrative of Stage 1 Development

It's such a mix – I'm doing some great work with some Area Store Managers who really "get" it and who are able to create the right tone in Stores. And then there is one who's really frustrating, he seems to be working to his own agenda and no matter what they commit to in a session they never deliver on it. When I'm working with his Store Managers I can see the knock on effect he's having, they're confused because they're in the middle of mixed messages. If I try to support the Store Managers directly, then I'm not actually helping because it's this "maverick" ASM that is at the root of the problem – but when I work with him nothing seems to "stick". And why do I feel this "my problem" – he's not my direct report and no-one else is tackling his difficult behaviour...

4. Anecdotal evidence from Interviews with key Stakeholders:

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The Change Programme Co-ordinator (CPC) reported a positive shift in her own coaching capabilities as well as those of the Senior Change Leads (SCL) reporting to her. There was anecdotal evidence to back this up. According to the CPC, people in the business had, unprompted, commented on the shift in their style. One SCL in particular had a reputation for being “very tell” and was now taking a much more considered approach. Another Senior Change Lead was ranked the highest of all the applicants at an assessment centre on her coaching ability, people continue to talk about her as a role model for good coaching skills.

The Group HRD also commented on the positive accounts of the Assessment centre performance. He also attributed much of the shift in the participants’ self-perceptions, to the depth of the skills and maturity of thought processes he now saw demonstrated by the CPC.

Finally, an unexpected finding was that in Workshop 4 participants reported using the group supervision techniques with their own change teams.

Discussion

The research question looked at the impact of supervision on Coach development. Subjective data from the participants themselves provide an indication of a positive impact, including

- an increase in confidence that they were truly having coaching conversations
- a move towards working on longer term issues
- a greater determination to reflect more immediately after the coaching conversation takes place

The content analysis of what the participants brought to supervision revealed some “glimmers” of advancing maturity in their reflections on their coaching work. Participants started bringing issues which were indicative of Hawkins’ Stage 1 and 2 thinking. However, by the end this was supplemented with issues indicative of Stage 3 and 4 thinking. This seems significant given they had only participated in 3 group supervision sessions.

Workshop participants using the supervision techniques with their own teams may help to explain the speed of their development. Having created a community of practice,

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they were engaging in peer supervision between workshops. This coupled with a growing “keenness” to reflect on their work perhaps means they were more able to “self-supervise” on transactional matters. This would have freed up their curiosity for issues other than those directly related to “self”. Such an apparently genuine interest in self-understanding and in understanding others would place them in “The Questioner” stage of cognitive-development as defined by Bachkirova & Cox (2007).

In addition, the interviews with organisational stakeholders revealed some more objective evidence. Observations in the wider organisation and the account of an exemplary performance at an assessment centre all attest to improved coaching skills over the period of the research.

Limitations of the Research

Although there is evidence that Group Supervision aided the coach development, generalisation of these findings should be made with caution given the small sample size. Also the evidence is primarily subjective self-report. Whilst there is some supporting anecdotal evidence, it may have been helpful to also survey the Store Managers who received coaching from the participants.

Conclusion

Whilst recognising the small scale nature of the research intervention, there is favourable evidence that group Coaching Supervision can positively impact on internal coach development. This manifested in an increasing confidence, greater maturity of thought in the cases brought to supervision, more deliberate reflection and a desire to use supervision techniques in their own community of practice.

Recommendations

Implications for Practice

The participants connected with group supervision activities with relative ease. This suggests that Coach Supervisors looking to extend their supervision business with organisations, may also want to consider working with “Change Agents” as well as those neatly labelled “internal coach”.

Recommendations for Research

Given the relatively small sample size and the relatively short time frame there is clearly an opportunity for longitudinal studies of the developmental impact of

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supervision on more and larger groups of internal coaches. This participant group was new to coaching, however, in a slightly more experienced group it might be possible to track development against an established competency framework.

This particular case study organisation was from the private sector, has a good reputation for developing its people and has a culture which encourages openness and continual improvement. It would be interesting to see the impact of group supervision with internal coaches within different industry segments and different cultures.

Finally, if repeating this study with internal coaches and an external supervisor, consideration should be given to whether independent use of the supervision techniques will cause an unmanaged risk in the business. It is recommended that future supervisor/researchers contract more clearly that these techniques are only for use by a trained supervisor or a coach who has on-going supervision relationship.

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Appendix 1

Four Techniques used to Structure Group Supervision Discussions

Line of Enquiry: After the case has been presented, each participant offers a question that has arisen for him/her hearing the case. The presenting coach then chooses which question to work with and a discussion then ensues.

Keep it Real: In listening to the case presented each participant considers what is resonating with him/her and then shares that experience “warts and all”. What is shared could be prompted by similar content or indeed a similar reaction to that which the coach describes.

Affirmations & Alternatives: upon hearing the case each participant is invited to offer feedback on both what they “liked” in the coach’s approach and what they might have “done differently” had they been in the other coaches shoes. What is important here is that the affirmation and alternatives are given in equal measure

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The Seven-Eyed model: Whilst listening to the case each participant is allocated one or more of the “eyes” in Hawkins (2006) Seven Eyed Model to pay attention to. After the case is presented each participant offers their observations that come from their particular lens and the presenting coach is invited to comment on how this shifts their thinking (or not). The supervisor offers a final perspective if anything appears to have been missed.

Appendix 2

Before & After Online Survey for Participants (After version)

This was produced on Survey Monkey and sent online – it was explained that confidentiality would be maintained with results provided on an aggregated and non-attributed basis. It was sent via e-mail along with a copy of the Maxwell (2011) model for ease of reference.

#	Question	Format
1	If you were to describe yourself as a coach, what are the first three words that come to mind?	3 x Free text boxes
2	How confident are you that your coaching conversations are truly “coaching” conversations?	Rating system 1 – 10 where 1 = “no confidence” and 10 = “totally confident”
3	Now that you have attended the Group Coaching Supervision Workshops, what would you say the main benefits were of participating?	Free text box
4	How and when do you reflect upon your coaching conversations?	Free text box
5	What would you do if you became aware of a conflict of interest during a coaching conversation?	Free text box
6	If you were to find that a coaching conversation had an impact on you personally, who would you go to for support?	Multiple choice (choose as many as apply): Line Manager A colleague/peer The HR /L&D Department A professional Coach Family or friends

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- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 7 | When you started LEAP! What proportion of your time did you spend doing each of the following types of coaching? (must add up to 100%) | Number required for each of the following categories
Manager as coach
Coach as Change Agent
Developmental Coach
Crisis Intervention e.g.
Counselling |
| 8 | Now we are at the end of the Group Coaching Supervision sessions, what proportion of your time do you spend doing each of the following types of coaching? (must add up to 100%) | Number required for each of the following categories
Manager as coach
Coach as Change Agent
Developmental Coach
Crisis Intervention e.g.
Counselling |
| 9 | Is there anything else you would like to comment on now that we have finished the Group Coaching Supervision workshops? | Free text box |
-

About the author

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The Siren Call of the Powerful Question

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Abstract

The article reflects on the compelling attraction of powerful questions for coaches. The notion that questions are powerful in themselves and can be borrowed from lists of examples is a fallacy. Questions gain their power in the context of the coach's connection to the client's reality. They depend on foundational work that includes a process that gives structure and direction to questions, other coaching skills, particularly listening that give depth to questions and self-management that keeps the focus on the client's concerns. "Powerful" may indeed be less important than "effective" as a goal of questioning.

Keywords

coaching skills, powerful questions, training coaches, coaching technique, use of self

A student coach returned to class full of excitement after her first session with her mentor coach. "She asks such powerful questions!" she said. Other members leaned forward with great expectation, "What were they?" At first she could not remember, but after some thought came up with one or two – something like "Where do you see yourself taking your coaching?" The group leaned back, disappointed. The questions were quite ordinary; in fact they seemed weak.

These student coaches were not unusual in their eagerness to learn technique. Powerful questions are a siren call seducing coaches with the promise of great influence. Preoccupation with questions is a common phenomenon, particularly with coaches in early career. It is as if they could ask powerful questions, they would have arrived as a coach. Although the details of the International Coach Federation (ICF 2012) competency, "powerful questioning", are laid out in the context of the total process, its use of the term itself lends credence to the idea that the power of coaching resides in questions. This is reinforced in popular coaching literature where powerful questions have been characterized as the "single most important skill in coaching" (Stoltzfus, 2008) and "the essence of great coaching" (Grall, 2012). Three recent books (Stoltzfus, 2008, Reardon, 2010, Belf, 2011) are dedicated to coaching questions and

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include lists of examples. Stoltzfus (2008) lists over 1000. An internet search on “powerful questions coaching” returns several pages of documents providing lists for the coach. Whitworth et al. (1998) devote nine pages to powerful questions.

Here is a small sample:

What if that doesn’t work?

What do you think is best?

What seems to confuse you?

How does that fit into your values?

What are your other options?

How do you want it to be?

What else?

If you had free choice in the matter what would you do?

Lists such as this may be useful to get trainee coaches started; but, they cannot provide questions that have a consistent, universal power. Any of those questions could become ineffective with overuse or misjudgment. There is, however, some basis for the preoccupation with questions. They can cut right through to the central issue. They can bring about a leap in awareness. They can provoke, challenge and energize the client. They can dispel confusion. These are all qualities that we want for our coaching. But how do we do it? What is it that makes a question powerful?

The Nature of Questions

Our starting point is to adopt a sociological perspective (Berger, 1963) and the assumption that the client’s experience of the world is different to that of the coach. This has important implications for coaching. It gives meaning to such concepts as the client’s independence and agency, active listening and empathizing, client motivation, and the individual’s potential to construct his or her social reality. This way of thinking encourages a client-centered approach. We enter into their worlds with sensitivity so that we develop a better appreciation of the whole person. From this position we are more able to avoid imposing our ideas or developing plans and actions that are not grounded in the “who” of the client with all the attendant risk to motivation and the client’s sense of autonomy.

Within this context we understand that questions originate in the mind of the coach and are prone to carrying implicit assumptions or theories about the client’s situation. Such theories may be shared by the client, or may be new to the client. For example, “What

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are your next steps?” is grounded in a planning model that is likely to be commonplace to both. “What is the fear that is stopping you?” may introduce a new framework – that impasses result from unconscious wishes counterbalanced by unconscious fears (Stock-Whitaker, 2001). With either question, we interject our own world view. This world is embedded in the question and, therefore, not readily available for inspection. Add to this the fact that questions are a powerful tool for directing a discussion. Skillful interviewers in television or radio clearly illustrate how questions can influence both what a person talks about and how the conversation proceeds. If we are not cognizant of the influence we wield with our questions, our world can take over.

Powerful Coaching not Powerful Questions

Questions are seductive. A large part of their appeal lies in the fact that they are a tangible activity. The coach is demonstrably “doing something” and presumably something of value, which can be rewarding to the coach not yet confident in the inherent power of coaching. This sense of an active contribution puts questions into the foreground, and powerful questions are the gold standard. However, the power does not reside in the question itself. It lies elsewhere.

That elsewhere is in the more intangible, background activities that on the surface may seem unrelated to the questions themselves. It rests within the relationship with the client and the unfolding understanding of the client’s concerns. As coaches become more experienced, they realize that a more comprehensive approach is called for. This approach relies on the hard work of mastering a purposeful coaching process¹, developing all the skills of coaching, and managing their own reactivity (O’Neill, 2007). Our questions depend on these three elements for their relevance and effectiveness.

¹ We describe coaching as a contracted, strategic planning process that helps clients attain desired outcomes that align with their strengths, values and motivations. The model provides a framework of contracting, discovery, vision, goal-setting and planning, action and review to guide the coach (Nichol & Nichol, 2011).

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Coaching aims to help clients realize their ambitions in alignment with the essence of who they are. A purposeful process creates an environment for purposeful questions that facilitate this enterprise. It gives structure and direction without which the conversation becomes more like one between two friends – satisfying to be sure, but not necessarily enabling change. The process provides a framework in which the client establishes intentions, articulates desired outcomes, develops plans, and establishes a system of accountability. It forms a structure for questions that challenge the client to grow in awareness of possibilities, obstacles, desires and motivation.

Within this framework we use our coaching skills, of which questioning is one. The other skills, attending, listening, and empathetic understanding, fall into a hierarchical order that form the foundation for good questions (Figure 1). If we do not attend, if we are distracted by our own concerns, it is difficult for us to listen. If we do not listen, we cannot gain an empathetic understanding of the person. Without an empathetic understanding, we do not enter the client's world. Without this grounding, questions risk being more relevant to our world than the client's and our attention is more focused on ourselves and our performance.



Figure 1. The Hierarchical Relationship of Coaching Skills

A different mind-set is called for. Questions are a manifestation of other work. It is not the question, but the listening that is powerful. Listening provides us with the content of our questioning. If our listening is shallow, or our attention on ourselves, our questions will reflect this. If, on the other hand we listen to all aspects of what the person is

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communicating – unconscious meaning, energy, assumptions, language, values – our questions are more likely to be based in the essence of the client’s experience. It is from the power of our listening that our questions derive their force.

Having said that, it is difficult for a poorly crafted question to be powerful. Technique is not the key to the power of a question, but it can make for a good one. There is a body of knowledge on asking effective questions that are clear and concise and that move clients forward. Two of many resources are the Coach U training handbook (Coach U, 2005) and Nichol & Nichol (2011). Table 1 outlines a set of guidelines to help newer coaches sharpen their questioning skills,

Poor questions also arise from insecurity and reactivity. No matter what our level of experience, our needs, feelings, and impulses are always present and can undermine our best efforts. Clients often bring difficult problems or distressing experiences to coaching, which can raise our anxiety. If that anxiety is not contained, we may shift the conversation to a more comfortable place where we feel in control.

Our listening can get hijacked by an impulse to “help”. Questions can be driven by our reactive desire to “fix” things. For instance, a client wants to work on negative self-talk and admits to deep feelings of inadequacy. Alarmed by these feelings, the coach directs the conversation instead toward ways to make the client feel better. Or, the client is at an impasse and can see no way forward. The coach, equally stumped, avoids the discomfort of “not knowing” with “What can be done about it?” Anxiety – especially the coach’s – may be reduced, but the coach loses sight of the client’s ultimate desires, and questions miss the mark.

All this requires self-management, perhaps the most difficult task we coaches face. When we manage ourselves effectively, we learn our patterns of reactivity (O’Neill, 2007), catch ourselves when we slip into a reactive state, and self-correct. We notice our gut reactions, our opinions and judgments and their impact on our coaching, and we make decisions about how to deal with them. This awareness increases the likelihood that questions are not misdirected by reactivity (Nichol & Nichol, 2011)

Ultimately, the task is to enter clients’ worlds and hold conversations that align with their ambitions. These three elements – a purposeful process, powerful listening, and self-management – support our questions with structure, understanding and a minimum of confusion with our own needs and wishes. The power of coaching in this manner transcends the question themselves.

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Indeed, powerful questions may be an inappropriate term for what we do as coaches. It summons up an image of a journalist trying to throw a politician off guard to discover the truth or of a macho coach in a combative corporate culture. But is most coaching like this? Rather than powerful, are not effective questions the goal? This change of perspective serves both our clients and ourselves. It leads us to appreciate that much good coaching happens without special drama. Profound insight is not a requirement. Inspiration comes in small doses as well as revelations. Indeed, if we seek to inspire rather than to understand, it is unlikely to happen. If we try to ask a powerful question, we probably won't.

Within this framework, we are no longer distracted by the sirens, but become the helmsmen, using the rudder and the sails to work in harmony with the force that drives coaching – the client. Our questions flow from our listening and the quality of our relationship. Sometimes they may cause the client to inspect assumptions, create a leap in awareness, dispel confusion and bring new energy. They may however, simply shift the perspective by a margin. The cumulative effect can be powerful.

Table 1. Some Guidelines for Effective Questions

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Process:

- Set a clear agreement with clients about achievable goals for the session and check periodically that you are on track. This gives direction and purpose to your questions.
- Have clients identify desired outcomes (the vision) for their coaching projects before you ask about action steps. This brings relevance to questions.

Skills:

- Listen for and ask questions about the “who” (the person) as well as the “what” (the goals). It is the person who makes the difference in what the goals are and whether they are achieved.
- Be succinct and ask one question at a time. Stacking questions can dilute their impact and confuse clients. If you find yourself asking a string of questions, call a timeout to get yourself clear.
- Use open and closed questions with intent. Both have their place. Open questions encourage exploration, but they can carry assumptions – e.g. “What have you learned?” Closed questions carry fewer assumptions and clarify understanding. Avoid the common error of asking closed questions when your intent is to explore: “Do you have any thoughts about...?”
- Avoid “why”. Such questions can lead to explanation rather than exploration, and may carry a persecutory tone. Translate the “why” into “what” and “how”.
- If you have a suggestion to make, make it. Don’t couch it as a question - “Have you thought about.....?” This is indirect and leading.
- Ask questions that move the client forward. Questions like “What have you tried so far?” are often used to launch the conversation. By doing this you start at the tactical level, and you take clients into what they already know. How much stronger to ask a strategic question: “What do you want to achieve ultimately?” or to leave things open with “Where would you like to start?”

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Self-Management:

- Notice your gut reactions. What do you do when you feel anxious? Often the reaction is move to action steps to gain a sense of control and reduce anxiety. Strive to stay client- centered and strategic. Ask “What do you want?” rather than “What can you do about it?”
- Do you have a favorite question? Inspect it carefully. Much-used questions like “What have you tried so far?” may serve you more than the client. At the least they may not be spontaneous or appropriate. Focus on listening, and respond to what you hear.

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A Strategic Approach to Coaching in Organisations: A Case Study

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Abstract

This article discusses a research project, which investigated the potential for a leadership coaching culture to improve employee commitment and performance. The research was primarily based on data obtained from a UK financial organisation with supporting data from other sources such as employees of other organisations participating in leadership coaching programmes and independent coaching professionals. The research objectives were to consider the value of coaching as an effective means of enhancing employee commitment and performance whilst identifying key factors to building a management coaching capability that enhances organisational coaching effectiveness.

Key words

leadership, coaching, commitment, performance

Research Background/Objectives

This article is based on a single case study research project, which investigated ways a leadership coaching culture can impact on organisational effectiveness. The research was primarily based on data obtained from a UK financial organisation with supporting data from other sources such as employees of organisations participating in leadership coaching programmes and independent coaching professionals. The central research objective was to consider the value of coaching as an effective means of enhancing employee commitment and performance whilst identifying key factors to building a management coaching capability that enhanced organisational coaching effectiveness.

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Research Context

As organisations have found themselves looking to do more with less so coaching has moved centre stage as one response to the challenge of getting the most out of an organisation's most valuable resource, their employees. Coaching is seen in some commercial quarters as a way of releasing individual potential to effect changes in the workplace through empowering and motivating employees. The potential of coaching in the workplace to improve employee performance has therefore generated increasing interest in recent years, not just in terms of behavioural change but for other reasons such as employee performance development. The interest generated by coaching has far outstripped the interest in mentoring in recent years, for example, as evidenced by much higher number of searches for 'coaching' compared to 'mentoring' via the search engine Google since 2003 (Google Trends, 2012). Coaching in organisations has also increased in popularity over recent years and now attracts a broad spectrum of people in commerce, business and academic circles. Many interested parties seek to explore the strategic application of coaching in macro as well as micro terms, thus linking to organisational culture and leadership style and by the nature of the changes required to respond to changing social and economic conditions.

Organisational coaching could be viewed as a corporate strategy designed to maximise the potential of a workforce. This stance could be seen to be part of the search for a successful management formula for business success, which has led to management theory being part of a major academic industry. Re-engineering, total quality, downsizing, management by walking around; centralisation and decentralisation have all been fashionable as change trailblazers in academic and corporate circles before slipping into mid-life obscurity (Micklethwaite and Wooldridge, 1996). An example is books, which identify best principles adopted by successful companies with a theme of excellence. Even by the time some of these books are read in large numbers, many of the companies begin to lose their winning-edge as profits begin to slide. Some would argue that many approaches developed by certain business gurus are insubstantial as these rely very little, if at all, on robust evidence-based research. Organisational coaching, as a relatively recent arrival, is still arguably in its ascendancy. How long the progressive curve lasts, will depend on the quality of the evidence-based research

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available to sustain the increasing corporate spend on coaching strategies and related management development.

The kernel of the research quest was to better understand the nature of coaching within an organisation so as to identify and explore any characteristics necessary for coaching to achieve a favourable impact on organisational culture and performance.

Between 1937 and the 1960s literature on workplace coaching mainly involved descriptive reports of managers coaching employees and from this point more rigorous work started to emerge. The first peer-reviewed paper was published in 1937 (Gorby, and there was very little research (93 papers) until 2000 onwards when the level of peer reviewed and doctoral research increased with 425 papers or PhD dissertations published up to May 2009. PhD research accounted for 61 of these papers. Evidence based studies are therefore increasing at a substantial rate (Grant, 2009). This situation has created a growing requirement for evaluation of coaching interventions within a workplace environment to support existing research (Blessing White, 2009). The contextual nature of the research project relates to organisational coaching as a corporate strategy designed to maximise the potential of the workforce. The theoretical base of coaching is linked to other personal development interventions and comparative research has helped to define coaching both specifically and contextually (Walker, 2004).

Coaching, in the modern sense of the word, is often perceived to occupy a position within the participative area of the leadership behaviour spectrum (Whitmore, 1999; Clutterbuck and Megginson, 2005). The development of coaching coincided with one view that organisations benefit from a parallel leadership strategy, comprising of transactional behaviour to structure and control, which is often seen as managing; and transformational behaviour to motivate and influence, which is often discussed in terms of leading (Kotter, 1990; Bass and Avolio, 1994). A balanced leadership approach, including behaviour that adapts to situations (Blanchard, Carlos and Randolph, 1996) places emphasis on interpersonal relationship and social skills, and a manager's emotional capacity (Goleman, 1998). An imbalance between materialistic (transactional) and social (transformational) factors can impact negatively on

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organisational change programmes (Beer and Nohria, 2000). Organisations often struggle to simultaneously balance the two approaches. Organisations and managers wishing to move from a predominantly authoritarian 'command and control' management approach to a participative management style to reflect the changing environment and socio-demographic changes, have sought to utilise coaching as a means to increase employee performance and productivity (Downey, 2003).

The emergence of organisational coaching (Hamlin, Ellinger and Beattie 2008) perhaps reflects this trend. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) surveys over recent years have identified coaching and mentoring becoming increasingly popular in the UK and moving to be second to in-house development programmes in terms of the most effective learning and talent development programmes in 2010. Evaluation of coaching was identified as on the increase with 36% of organisations evaluating yet only 44% of these evaluation approaches related to business measures (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2010).

Research Methodology and Key Constraints

Due to the complexity of the research environment and subject it was determined that there was no optimum single methodology for collecting the research data. The 9Factors™ Employee Commitment Survey Methodology, a registered trade mark of Hemsley Fraser (Cartwright, 1999; Hemsley Fraser Group Ltd, 2000) was used as a large scale survey within a mixed methodological approach.

The 9Factors™ Employee Commitment Survey supported by a series of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and discussion groups to ascertain individual observations; was considered to provide the most favourable method. A multiple methodological approach utilising data gathered from survey questionnaires, interviews and discussion groups was designed to reflect the organisational nature of the research, the views of the participants and to facilitate learning which may be transferable to similar organisational contexts. This research was undertaken over a seven year period, to enable contextualisation of the research activity within a realistic corporate planning cycle. The research time span resulted in the researcher's stance undergoing two

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stages of evolution and perspective; from employee/researcher with an 'insider' understanding; to an 'ex-insider/outsider' perspective, the researcher having left the organisation before the research was completed. Many participants also contributed to the research from both perspectives since their career paths followed similar trajectories.

The researcher's position in the organisation created challenges particularly around influence, reciprocity, mutuality and informed consent; and these were acknowledged and responded to via the research design e.g. non-observational approaches. The identification of quantitative and qualitative data enabled the development of both positivist and interpretive aspects. An empirical, ethnographic and systematic approach was developed to test and compare ideas and establish valid knowledge on which to better understand the nature and impact of coaching in the case study organisation.

Research Findings

Data gathered from the 9Factors™ Employee Commitment Survey together with survey questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and discussion groups provided the data base on which the research findings were developed.

In sections a-j the author presents the research results followed by interpretations;

a) The key benefits to individual employees from coaching strongly relate to those factors that are considered to drive employee engagement including motivation and commitment (Melcrum, 2005). These benefits included improvements in; motivation and commitment in role, work relationships, higher levels of competence, increased satisfaction with job, trust and integrity, training support, the identification of solutions to problems and personal confidence.

b) Coaching has the potential to positively impact on employee commitment. There were strong indicators that the majority of the benefits derived from coaching had a positive impact on employee commitment through improved morale, motivation and satisfaction. The measure of employee commitment within the research model was the 9Factors™ Employee Commitment Survey Methodology. The research methodology involved a total participant pool ranging between 700 and 904 employees (the total workforce) over the period of the survey

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programme with an average completion rate of 81%, a high response rate compared to 9Factors™ Employee Commitment surveys in other organisations. The survey ratings over a five year period had remained much the same fluctuating between 3.32 and 3.38 until 2006 when it increased to 3.65 (see figure1).

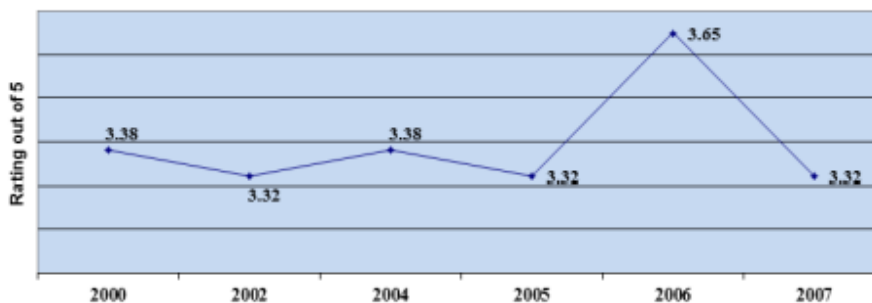


Figure 1. 9Factors™ Employee Commitment Survey 2000-2007 (Source: Turner, 2011).

This increase is statistically significant and can be considered in a correlative context of the coaching programme, which ran from 2003/2004 (via 'pilot' coaching pools) to 2005/2006 (full organisational wide roll-out), that is, an increase in coaching activity was accompanied by an increase in employee commitment. There was, however, no causal linkage identified, by which to show that the coaching programme had a direct impact on employee commitment levels. To further investigate the correlative linkage between the benefits of the coaching activity and employee commitment, a more detailed study of a pool of 46 managers was undertaken at pre and post coaching programme stages. This showed that the 9Factors™ Employee Commitment Survey rating relating to those employees who were coached by managers in the participant pool, increased following the coaching programme by 5.7% in 2004 (compared to a 2.9% increase in overall organisational ratings), 7% in 2005 (compared to a 2.9% decrease in overall organisational ratings) and 9.1% in 2006 (compared to a 12.1% increase in overall organisational ratings). The combined ratings for these managers during 2004 and 2005 inclusive showed an increase of 6.35% at a time when the overall 9Factors™ Employee Commitment Survey ratings remained the same. The pool of managers who had achieved coaching accreditation through regular coaching

activity showed an increase of 9.1% in their 9Factors™ Employee Commitment Survey ratings during 2006, this was lower than the increase of 12.1% for the overall rating.

This result was possibly a sign that many other managers had by this time undergone coaching skills training and this was impacting positively on overall employee commitment levels, thus enabling the ratings of these managers to catch up with those of the early advocates of coaching. The 9Factors™ Employee Commitment Survey ratings of the accredited coaches pool fell in 2007 when compared to 2006 ratings, by 10.5%, however the overall ratings of all managers fell by 12.1% (see figure 2).

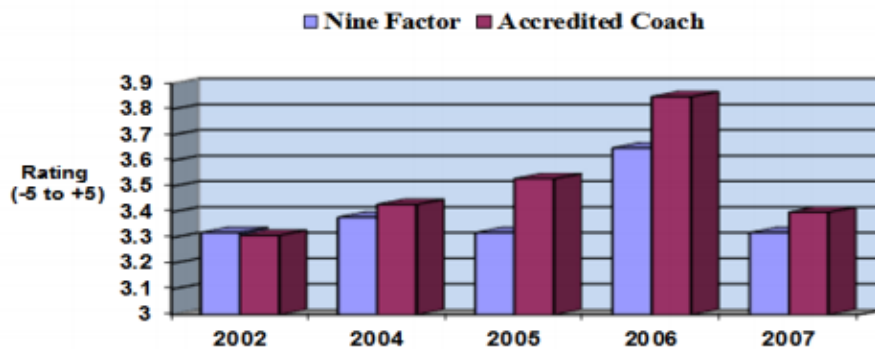


Figure 2. 9Factors™ Employee Commitment Survey ratings 2002-2007 comparative data – accredited coaches to manager population (Source; Turner, 2011).

c) **Management coaching behaviour is strongly impacted by organisational strategies including ongoing support structures and processes.** The incidence of above average increases in employee commitment, as measured by the 9Factors™ Employee Commitment Survey Methodology, relating to those managers who underwent the coaching accreditation framework was considered. A survey was undertaken to assess the employees' perceptions of the level of commitment to the desired coaching behaviours displayed by their managers during coaching sessions. The survey showed a high level of manager commitment to coaching behaviours averaging 4 (out of 5) during the period of the coaching programme, that is from 2003 to 2006. The same survey undertaken in October, 2007, 12 months after many of the supportive strategies within the coaching programme ended, showed employees' perceptions of positive coaching behaviours falling away to an average of 3 (out of 5), a 25% reduction. Whilst this varied on an individual basis, the fall in the average rating would

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indicate that to maintain a level of impact and benefit on an ongoing basis requires strong supportive strategies, such as a continuous framework of accreditation, designed to encourage effective coaching on a regular basis in addition to the delivery of coaching skills. Where this happened within the case study there was a strong indication that this resulted in increasing employee commitment levels. These findings would indicate that to achieve sustained management change towards coaching behaviours there is a need for a holistic ongoing developmental approach incorporating other supportive strategies apart from coaching skills training. Examples of ongoing supportive strategies within the research case study were quality accreditation processes, follow-up training and a reward initiative which ensured that only managers who had achieved the coaching accreditation level were eligible for the highest level of performance bonus.

d) The role of a manager as a coach may benefit from a balanced approach between directive and non-directive behaviours so as to blend managerial inputs with coaching inputs and achieve an optimum leadership coaching style. The key attributes of a successful coach as a manager may vary dependent upon the perceptions of the individual coachee, the personality, role and skill sets of the coach and the contextual situation of the coaching relationship. However there is evidence from the research to suggest a commonality of view on specific attributes of listening, empathy, supportiveness, trustworthiness and questioning/probing skills. From a coachee's perspective there was an emphasis on relationship building skills and from a managers' perspective there was an increased emphasis on performance focus and direction. This was possibly driven by the contextual nature of the coaching, that is line manager in the workplace and the emphasis on sorting problems rather than enabling solutions. The need for managers to balance directive and non-directive behaviours is argued to be necessary to achieve an optimum leadership coaching style. This was addressed within this research through the development of a coaching tool for managers in the workplace, the 3D Performance Coaching model, a summarised version of the 9R Performance Framework, a model developed within the context of this research. The 3D Performance Coaching model was designed to reflect the nature

of a managers' role and therefore to be of practical assistance when managing performance (see figure 3).

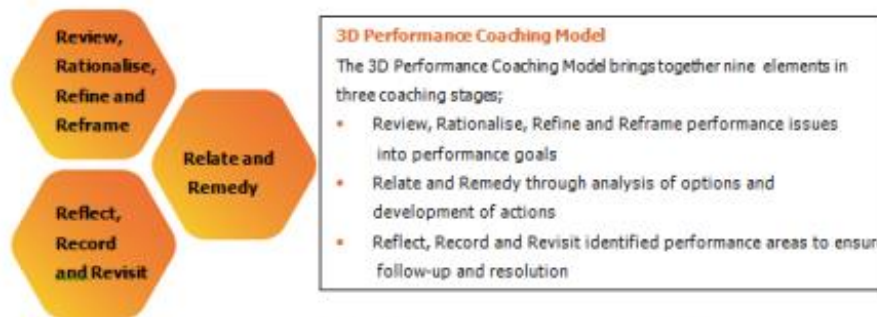


Figure 3. 3D Performance Coaching Model (Source: Turner, 2011)

3D Performance Coaching Model (Source: Turner, 2011)

e) The primary competency of an effective line manager coach is relationship building ability. Whilst the key features of a positive and productive coaching relationship appear to vary dependent upon the coaching participants and their coaching relationship, there is a strong emphasis on the value of a relationship displaying supportiveness, openness, trust and mutual respect. From a coachee's perspective the research study identified the primary feature of a successful coaching relationship as a supportive, open relationship, followed by a high level of trust, a good understanding, empathy, mutual respect and the availability of coaching in line with the needs of the coachee. These desired relationship characteristics were not achieved in all cases and the findings suggest this impacted upon the effectiveness of the coaching relationship. The barriers to the development of the desired relationship included the managers being unable to devote the necessary time to coaching activity. The research would indicate that those managers, who achieved an appropriate balance between a directive and nondirective stance in their coaching approach and allocated time for coaching activity, achieved better value from their line reports through a performance focused, yet relationship driven coaching style. The research would indicate that those responsible for training managers in coaching techniques

should also consider interventions, which build awareness, emotional intelligence and relationship building skills (see figure 4)

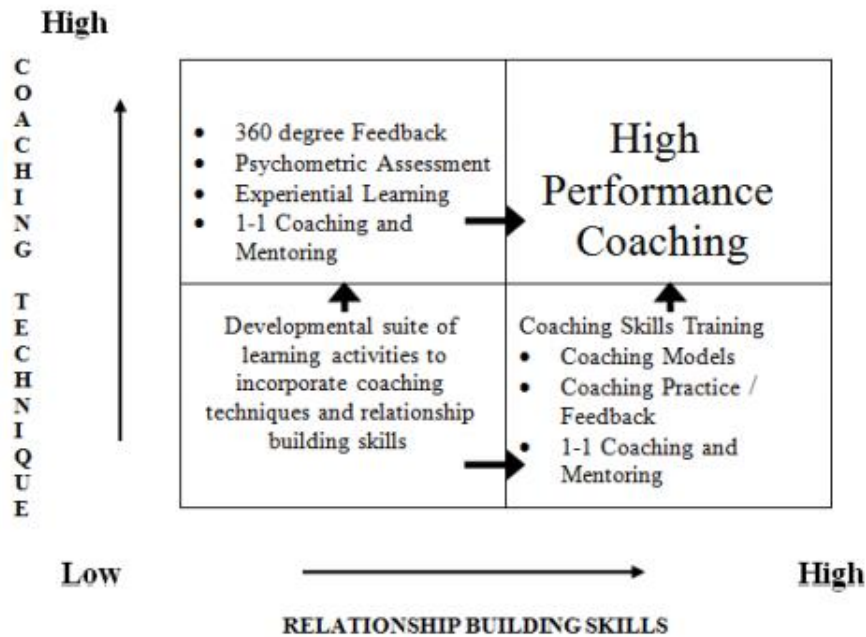


Figure 4. Coaching technique -v- relationship building skills (Source: Turner, 2011)

f) A performance focused relationship driven coaching style can directly and significantly impact favourably on the bottom line, through increased sales, improved customer service and improved productivity; as well as achieving other less tangible benefits. Based on a pool of 72 managers and 259 employee reports within the case study organisation, quantitative benefits were identified using performance coaching models and techniques. These benefits were achieved through increases in sales, improvements in customer service and savings in cost amounting to £4,287,060 per annum, to which a confidence rating of 80% was applied reducing the amount to £3,429,648. To this can be added a saving in management time through a qualified reduction of referrals from employees to managers of £415,100 per annum; making a total estimated return of £3,844,748 over a one year period. If costs of £130,000 are taken from this then the net return on investment equates to £3,714,748. Other non-

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tangible benefits perceived by coaches and coachees to have been achieved from the coaching programme related to skills, knowledge, behaviours, personal confidence, ideas generation, effectiveness, improved working relationship/atmosphere, career development, self-awareness and motivation, which could arguably have had an indirect impact on performance through increased employee commitment. However, in view of the difficulty in equating such improvements to a monetary equivalent, this was not attempted in such cases and instead these type of benefits have been categorised as benefits in a general yet important and significant sense, which can be considered in tandem with the quantitative results derived from those coaching interventions relating to sales, customer service and productivity improvements. Whilst the research has not attempted to relate these benefits to a tangible value, there is evidence to suggest that such benefits impacted positively upon the morale and motivation of the coachees.

g) Managers are unlikely to coach their staff on a regular basis unless their organisation has in place a structured management process for coaching approaches and sessions, even then some managers will seek to avoid coaching their staff.

Within the case study of an organisation committed to a coaching ethos with agreed processes and structures to try to ensure coaching took place, there were still 20% of participant employees who indicated that they received no coaching from their managers, relating to performance, career or role. Further, nearly 47% did not receive as much coaching as they felt they needed with an average of 1.2 hours coaching per employee per month taking place. 61% of coaching activity was driven by the organisation's performance system and the coaching programme's processes. Only 3% of the coaching interventions were driven by a manager's proactive approach to an employee's development compared to 36% of coaching interventions driven by an employee's request for coaching support. This would indicate that there was a greater desire for coaching from employees than was delivered by the managers. Factors for this mismatch included time constraints, a lack of managerial commitment to coach and a lack of support from the manager's boss.

h) A majority of employees participating in the research case study believed that coaching improved both their performance and job satisfaction, sometimes to a

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significant extent, by achieving more of their potential. Over 8 in 10 (81%) of participant employees who received coaching believed that it had improved their performance; nearly 4 in 10 (38%) of participant employees believed this to be the case in a significant way and over 6 in 10 (61%) employees who received coaching believed that it had improved their job satisfaction. The reasons for the views that coaching had impacted favourably on their performance were primarily fourfold: their manager providing inspiration through motivational coaching behaviours; the development of trust within the relationship; the provision of feedback and input on their performance and acknowledgement and recognition of their value and worth.

i) The key challenges to the success of an organisational coaching programme often relate to the development of other factors apart from coaching skills; including 'hard' factors such as a communication strategy and 'soft' factors such as the attitude and emotional awareness of the management team. These factors should be considered in advance of the coaching activity and included in any related project plans. The research findings showed strong indications that there are critical factors to the development of a coaching culture, which need to be managed and developed to ensure a successful launch and maintenance of a coaching programme, namely: employee communication strategies; resources and priorities (e.g. time, cost, importance); management elements (e.g. skills, behaviour, attitudes and ability including emotional intelligence); employee awareness and buy-in; integration into and alignment with other employee learning and development processes; reward initiatives and a supportive environment.

j) Organisations that wish to introduce and maintain a performance coaching management style within a developing leadership coaching culture will benefit from adopting a flexible yet coordinated strategic approach, considering organisational factors apart from the development of skills, through the progression of a coaching programme and related supportive elements. These strategic elements involve the values that drive organisational behaviour; the mantra and predominant behavioural characteristics of the organisation's leadership model and the organisational environment. It is argued that these three strategic elements help to create the unique organisational culture which will both surround and impact upon the coaching activity.

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However the behaviours and benefits, including employee commitment, accruing from the organisational coaching strategy were not sustained once the focus changed and emphasis reduced – indeed the fall-off was significant.

Research Limitations

The development of the research methodology also incorporated a review of the known and potential constraints. This review resulted in certain research enquiries being constrained both from limiting and delimiting perspectives. When limitations were identified actions were developed to ameliorate the negative impact of such factors or note such impact so that the findings were considered against their contextual relevance. Similarly delimitations were considered either at the outset or ongoing as the research progressed together with the steps and measures adopted in response to these challenges. The methodological framework set out to adopt a critical rationale achieving learning through comparing and contrasting (Yin, 1984) to consider whether learning could arguably be applied to other organisations that adopted similar approaches. The singular nature of the case study provided challenges to the scope of the research. The societal changes that occurred over the seven year research period were to an extent unknown at the outset and difficult to gauge on an ongoing basis.

The case study research provided evidenced measurement from both a qualitative and quantitative position yet it is acknowledged that there are limitations to this evidence due to the scope of the research, in that the qualitative 'soft' skill gains were not financially measured whilst the quantitative gains of sales, productivity and service improvements were. Also, there were areas of contradiction in perspectives between different parties, for example, the difference between actual time coached (outside of the formal accreditation process) from a managers' viewpoint and their reports' viewpoint; with the managerial group generally stating that they conducted more coaching than the figure provided by their employee reports. Another difference in perspective involved the secondary data gathered externally which showed that value of coaching rated by professional coaches was higher than the value as judged by managers who received coaching. It should be noted though that the secondary data was used only as background information rather than in a robust research sense.

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However, in most areas a general consensus was gained, for example, the qualities, attributes and skills of an effective coach. Notwithstanding these findings and other findings, whether qualitative or quantitative, the potential limitations of the research relating to subjectivity, bias and cultural norms are acknowledged due to the social construction of the case study and the many and varied perspectives of the participants involved. However, the research framework used a multi perspective approach, which was aligned to enable cross-checking, comparison and contrast to strengthen the reliability and validity of the data.

Conclusions

The research study indicated that employee commitment and performance will benefit from an organisational coaching programme underpinned by a network of factors focused on supporting coaching activity. These factors relate to a culture built on common shared values, high performance, trust, openness, support, mutual respect and inclusiveness; leadership that role models the coaching culture through all levels of a management team that is skilled in coaching technique and relationship management; a learning environment that provides an appropriate setting for coaching activity, and HR processes that develop, monitor, and reward coaching behaviours. Based on this learning the author defines organisational coaching as a 'multi-level leadership strategy supported by systematic, results-focused performance management, aligned HR processes and relationship driven leadership coaching behaviours designed to achieve an engaged, committed workforce and a high performance culture'.

This approach is, for the purposes of the research, termed an ambietic approach to coaching (Turner, 2011), which in a general sense is developed from a consideration of the ambience by which is meant the environment, surroundings and atmosphere. These factors, which envelop the coaching activity include the aura or unique aspects of an organisation, the physical surroundings and the atmosphere including the emotions of the workforce that impact upon workplace activity as well as coaching relationships, whether externally expressed or internally suppressed and which are often as, or more, important than the coaching itself. The approach primarily

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recognises the need for unstructured free-flowing coaching activity within a framework of flexible control processes. Such an approach has been developed on the basis of a coaching philosophy of ambieticism. In the author's view, ambietic coaching is some feature of a situation of human behaviour that arises through the result of a coaching intervention, which alone would appear to have caused the resultant reaction yet would in reality have had no direct impact unless influenced by the combination of several other environmental elements. These elements being the supportive organisational factors either preceding or following the coaching intervention, which relate to human motivational perceptions.

The search for ways, in which employee engagement can be cultivated, is considered as of strategic importance in terms of the UK economy (MacLeod and Clarke, 2009). Employee commitment and performance may be viewed as being intrinsically linked to employee engagement whether in terms of employer practices, job performance or business results (Vance, 2006). This research offers strong indications that effective leadership coaching is a key predictor of employee commitment with the potential to maximise the benefits of an organisation's performance management system and drive improvements in both employee performance and commitment through the development of appropriate skills, knowledge and behaviours (see figure 5).

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Leadership Coaching Attributes

- Role modelling
- Relationship driven
- Emotional intelligence
- Building trust
- Performance focused
- Personal enrichment
- Management capability



- Organisational culture is a facilitator of leadership coaching behaviour
- Leadership coaching behaviour drives improved employee performance and is a predictor of employee commitment
- Employee commitment is a predictor of employee performance
- Employee performance sustains and develops the organisational culture

Figure 5. Relationships between organisational culture, leadership coaching, empl commitment and employee performance (Source: Turner, 2011)

This research indicates that higher organisational performance through leadership coaching is best served by the application of a holistic, systematic and leadership driven ambietic coaching approach, which embraces the organisational elements surrounding and impacting upon a coaching activity and which is aligned to the development and utilisation of employee potential. Additionally there would appear to be a requirement for a critical mass, in relation to the emotional capability and selfawareness of the management team. This is necessary to enable managers to build relationships with direct reports through trust and mutual respect and bring those personal attributes that are supportive of a coaching relationship including listening, empathy, supportiveness, trustworthiness and questioning/probing skills to the fore when utilising a performance focused coaching approach. Significantly, the research indicates that once there is a change in focus in terms of the importance of those factors that drive employee commitment, then employee commitment levels will fall off very soon afterwards and cannot therefore be 'stockpiled' for a period of time, like many other more tangible assets.

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The longitudinal nature of the study combined with the ‘insider/outsider’ research stance highlighted new insights into evidence-based learning providing an enhanced understanding of leadership in an organisational coaching context, which evidenced that workplace coaching has the potential to increase statistically significantly both employee commitment and individual performance. The importance and use of emotional intelligence, role modelling and relationship based abilities within the management team was established to be critical to the success of the coaching activities. In doing so the research challenged the skills driven competency paradigm (often utilised singularly in organisations with the aim of achieving immediate behavioural change) and argued that an ambitious, holistic approach encompassing several organisational driven interventions focused on leadership development, employee engagement, HR alignment, evaluation and continuous improvement is needed to achieve a sustainable coaching culture and the related performance benefits. The mix of qualitative and quantitative methodologies offered advantages in that there was potential to achieve a balanced set of findings, by which to measure the success or otherwise of coaching interventions and acknowledged the relative lack of evidence based case study research in this area. From an organisational aspect the research framework acknowledged, through its longitudinal approach, there is little evidence to suggest that a short term answer to achieving culture change through a leadership coaching strategy is possible and arguably this holds true to any other approach given most situational positions.

Next Steps

The research offers a base, on which to take forward further research possibly via a multiple organisational case study utilising similar methodologies including survey formats. There is also potential to further explore the impact of feedback mechanisms such as 360 degree feedback and psychometric assessments within a line manager coaching programme particularly in respect of the enhancement of relationship building skills. The research addressed coaching from a broad leadership and management perspective and this could be developed to consider specific applications relating to knowledge workers, talent management or performance issues. The ongoing debate on the importance of employee engagement could be enhanced by

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further investigation of linkages between organisational coaching and employee morale, satisfaction and commitment.

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