Editorial

Welcome to this edition of the International Journal of mentoring and Coaching. Mentoring and coaching activity still seems to be developing across all sectors. They have been mentioned by the leader of the UK Conservative Party, David Cameron and by The UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair in the press recently.

The journal has two main sections: Reviewed Section and Professional Section. The Reviewed Section has three categories:

• A Personal View
• Research Based
• Debate

And the Professional Section also has three:

• Professional skills
• Cases of practice
• Issue Focus

The Reviewed Section rigorously follows conventions of all academic journals in the form of double blind peer review Harvard style referencing. While the Professional Section is subject to rigorous editorial review. Both sections provide good quality writing and interesting comment.

We also welcome book reviews. We have a good collection of papers in this edition. In the Reviewed Section we have four interesting papers. The first, 'Mentoring start-up Entrepreneurs in the East Midlands – Troubleshooters and Trusted Friends' by Jonathan Gravells looks at the challenges of mentoring in the SME sector. The author examines the role of mentoring as a means of supporting small business owners in developing themselves and their enterprises. The participants in the research were mentors and mentees within one of the UK’s largest small business mentoring schemes, the paper challenges the application of traditional, organisational mentoring concepts to the field of entrepreneurial mentoring.

The second, 'An Exploratory Investigation into the Perceived Effects of Team Coaching in the Construction Sector' by Helen Dunlop explores two research objectives in coaching in the construction industry:
To determine the perceived effects of team coaching on individuals, team and organization

To identify the factors which contributed to these perceived effects.

The third, 'The Management of Change in Local Government using a Coaching Approach' by Angélique Du Toit is the first of a series of articles about a longitudinal research project. The project seeks to support the hypothesis that long term change is much more likely to be sustained over a period of time using a coaching approach as opposed to more traditionally enforced top-down change processes.

The fourth, 'From Trail-Blazing Individualism to a Social Construction Community: Modelling Knowledge Construction in Coaching' by Stephen Gibb and Peter Hill presents a model for analysing why and how knowledge construction issues arise around understanding coaching and mentoring.

In the Professional Section, we have four equally interesting contributions.

In previous editions we have featured in our professional skills section newly developed coaching models and the application of an existing coaching model. For our professional skills article this time the spotlight is on applying to coaching the Solutions Focus Methodology, best known for its applications in therapeutic, education and welfare fields. Jenny Clarke and Dr Sabine Demblowski argue that by integrating solution-orientated questioning into their practice, coaches can achieve better results with their coaching compared to problem-orientated questioning.

One of our objectives in this journal is to bring research and practice closer together. After the positive feedback from readers about the article by a coaching provider on business development and market research, we return to this theme in our second article in the professional section. Carole Gaskell, CEO outlines the results of market research undertaken by her company into the barriers and enablers in the development of a high performance workplace culture.

For this edition’s focus piece, we have reproduced an article by Sir John Whitmore one of the founders of the coaching at work movement within the UK. His opinions on the challenges facing coaching’s journey into a profession are included in the expectation that they will provoke a debate among readers. Do let us know if you agree or disagree with him.

Finally, we also have a review by David Megginson of our Zurich Conference last year and three book reviews - 'Mentoring in Action'; 'Measuring Hidden Dimensions: The Art and Science of Fully Engaging Adults'; and 'Facilitating Reflective Learning through Mentoring and Coaching'.

Please keep the articles coming in and send them to Bob Garvey at r.garvey@shu.ac.uk in the first instance.
Mentoring start-up entrepreneurs in the East Midlands – Troubleshooters and Trusted Friends

By Jonathan Gravells, M.A., M.Sc., F.C.I.P.D.

Abstract

This article is taken from original research conducted as part of the dissertation for the masters in Mentoring and Coaching at Sheffield Hallam University in 2004. The author examines the role of mentoring as a means of supporting small business owners in developing themselves and their enterprises. The participants in the research were mentors and mentees within one of the UK’s largest small business mentoring schemes, this paper challenges the application of traditional, organisational mentoring concepts to the field of entrepreneurial mentoring.

The varied needs of small business owners, and their preferences for different degrees of involvement from a mentor require a wider range of helping roles than other forms of mentoring. This creates tensions and ambiguities around the nature of the relationship, raising the risk of damaging and/or unethical practice and “toxic” mentoring. The paper suggests new models, specifically aimed at small business mentoring, which may enable mentors to manage such potential conflicts more successfully.

These findings are translated into practical recommendations for mentor selection, mentor training, mentee induction, scheme design and evaluation.

Introduction

Over the last decade mentoring to support small businesses has grown in the use as evidenced by reports of such schemes from around the world, but particularly in the UK, USA, and Australasia, (Dusselford Skills Forum, 1999; Du Toit, 2003; Tapsell, 1999). There seems to be a strong belief in the appropriateness and efficacy of mentoring for small business owners, despite a relative lack of research attention or literature, and indeed a body of academic research, which has in the past suggested such support offers poor value in jobs and revenue creation (see Deakins et al, 1997).
Despite this, the UK government sees the small business sector as vital to its objective of closing the productivity gap with the US, France and Germany, and has identified “encouraging a more dynamic start-up market”, as one of seven key actions in its quest to make the UK “the best place in the world to start and grow a business”, (DTI, 2002, pp. 4&7). Small businesses account for over 99% of the total number of UK firms and generate 52% of total turnover. They employ 12.6 million people, (DTI, 2002). The UK the only country, other than the US, to have seen a rise in entrepreneurial activity since 2002.

The mentoring scheme used for this study is run by a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, based in the East Midlands. At a regional level, the East Midlands is currently viewed as an average performer regarding start-up activities, with businesses being created at a rate of just 1% below the national average. In terms of its impact, the East Midlands Development Agency indicated that between 1995 and 1999 new start businesses created over 400,000 jobs, or 74% of the net jobs gain in the East Midlands. The Agency is keen to support entrepreneurial activity in order to ensure the economic growth of the region despite the decline of previously successful traditional industries. The scheme offers support and training to individuals who are starting up or running a “micro” business (up to 10 employees). The mentoring it provides is aimed at both new venture creation and supporting established businesses through new challenges or transitions of one sort or another. The Agency sees some four thousand clients per year, and of these provides mentoring, via a bank of trained volunteers, for around four to five hundred every year, making it one of the largest single providers of small business mentoring in the UK. Mentors are generally owner managers of small businesses themselves, although many also have experience in larger organisations, and a small number are still employed as senior managers. Anecdotal evidence suggested that the mentoring provided was both appreciated and effective, but, until recently, they had carried out no formal research to substantiate these claims. This study, conducted in Autumn 2003, attempts to shed some more light on the needs of micro-business entrepreneurs, and develop models specifically aimed at helping mentors and mentoring scheme organisers improve the quality of support to this group.

The context of small business owners is distinct from other mentees, in terms of organisational environment, personal development, other sources of support available and the processes in which they are engaged. This paper will argue that their needs are not the same as managers in large corporations, or public service, or any of the other commonly studied participants in the mentoring process.

In an attempt to address these differences, this paper makes the following assertions:

- Mentoring has real benefits for both new venture and established enterprises with fewer than 10 employees.
- New models of mentoring (which builds on the predominant models of “organisational mentoring”) are needed to deliver these benefits.
1. The wide variety of roles required by “entrepreneurial mentoring” confronts two issues:
2. The prospect of “toxic” mentoring and ethically dubious practices
3. Adopting suitable alternative strategies alongside mentoring if appropriate
4. These new models will have implications the selection, training and matching of our mentors and mentees.

This paper is structure as follows:
• The small business mentoring literature
• The research method
• The findings
• Conclusions.

Other Research into Entrepreneurial Mentoring

If we define entrepreneurial mentoring as mentoring support provided to owners of small business, both at start-up and beyond, then there has been a lack of specific research in this area relative to other contexts, such as mentoring in larger public and private sector organisations, which is referred to here as organisational mentoring, (Bisk, 2002), (Deakins et al., 1997), (duToit, 2003).

Much of the research which does exist, whilst well-meaning, suffers from one or more of the following tendencies:
• It adopts an uncritical and even openly promotional standpoint to the subject. This is unsurprising, given that much research may have been prompted by the need to secure support and funding for a traditionally under-resourced area.
• It is ambivalent about the wide range of roles demanded of the entrepreneurial mentor.
• It falls back on applying concepts and definitions designed for organisational mentoring to the different context of entrepreneurial mentoring (Bisk, 2002).
• Like much of the conventional literature, it ignores the “dark side” of mentoring.

Whilst there is a strong theoretical argument for the application of mentoring to new businesses as a practical means of delivering developmental support, (Deakins et al., 1997; Hudson-Davies et al., 2002), nevertheless, evidence from a more critical perspective, utilising data from sources other than enthusiastic mentor and mentee self-reports, is somewhat thin on the ground. The Dusseldorp Skills Forum report is an example of a study by a group whose very remit is “stimulating innovation in employment and educational practice”. (Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 1999, p.14).
Many studies of small business mentoring draw heavily on established definitions by Clutterbuck, Kram, Ragins and others, (Kent et al., 2003) in an attempt to “pin down” a process which can take many different forms, in different contexts. Phrases such as “a wise and trusted counsellor”, or “sounding board” abound, and mentor roles from “leader” through “teacher” to “buddy” (Kent et al., 2003; Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 1999). In an entrepreneurial context, however, the range of help one encounters is arguably broader than elsewhere, occasionally encompassing direct forms of help, more akin to advising or even consulting.

Accepted models of organisational mentoring may also be less suited to entrepreneurial mentoring because small business owners have a different approach to learning and development (Deakins & Freel, 1998). Despite a commonly-held view that conventional training is not geared to the needs of small businesses, little is actually known about their growth, and there has been a relative dearth of research into training and development (Deakins & Freel, 1998; Kent et al., 2003). Much of the support to new businesses has been based on stereotypical perceptions of the enthusiastic entrepreneur, incompetent at the planning and financial disciplines of big business (Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 1999; Bisk, 2002). Could it be that successful entrepreneurs may legitimately have an approach to strategy that doesn’t fit preconceived notions of business planning (see, Deakins & Freel, 1998)? As with mentoring theory, how appropriate are models and frameworks conceived with large organisations in mind? Understanding how entrepreneurs learn and change their behaviour as their business develops is clearly of importance to mentoring, and a number of issues emerge from what has been written.

The ability to learn from experience is particularly critical as research suggests that entrepreneurs typically learn via a series of “developmental crises” (Cope & Watts, 2000). Conventional start-up training, therefore, may be seen as doing little to address this need (Deakins & Freel, 1998). Whether one subscribes to the notion of life-cycle theories, as Cope and Watts (2000) do, or sees entrepreneurial development as a much more disjointed process, like Deakins and Freel (1998), theoretically mentoring would appear to fit well with the notion of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) and the need for “reflective practitioner” skills (Schon, 1983; Cope & Watts, 2000). The appeal of “practical theory” to entrepreneurs would suggest some relevance for mentoring, as a means of acquiring the appropriate learning skills (Rae, 2004).

The danger inherent in all this is not only that mentoring may get falsely detached from the other networks and forms of support available to new businesses (Maniukiewicz et al., 1998), but also that key aspects of the process are assumed to follow the same definitions and dynamics as in organisational mentoring. For example, most of the conventional (organisational) mentoring wisdom sees the giving of advice as unacceptable, indicating damaging use of power and control and potentially leading to dependency on the part of the mentee, (Garvey, 2004). The entrepreneurial mentoring literature appears largely to follow this lead, asserting that
mentoring is not advice or consultancy, but is all about helping the entrepreneur to learn, (Deakins et al., 1997; Cope & Watts, 2000).

However, in many of the same studies business advice and mentoring are rolled together. Mentor is used interchangeably with coach, counsellor and adviser and advising and recommending are presented as consistent with mentoring (Bisk, 2002). It is quite common to see terms such as mentoring, coaching and consultancy used in reference to a single activity with little or no effort made to distinguish them from one another (Kent et al., 2003). It would be possible to justify this on the basis of mentoring as an integrative activity (Clutterbuck, 1998) or a continuum of roles that might include teaching and directing, (Gay & Stephenson, 1998). However, a couple of examples from the Dusseldorp (1999) study suggest something more directive is going on:

“A crisis mentor team…..negotiated with her landlord to have her released from a five-year lease and assisted Kerry to relocate the business to her home. The mentor team then suggested she start a mobile delivery service…..”

“After going through his records, Jim’s mentor provided him with a weekly analysis of his figures using a computer programme.” (Dusseldorp Skills forum, 1999, pp 9 & 11)

As to the “dark side”, there is an acknowledgement that entrepreneurial mentoring may sometimes be damaging (Kent et al., 2003), and even some superficial tips on what to avoid (Tapsell, 1999). However, for conceptual frameworks with which to identify potentially damaging behaviours, one is again forced to turn to the wider mentoring literature, (Kram,1985; Scandura, 1998; Feldman, 1999; Eby et al, 2004).

But the key thing here is to distinguish the genuinely dysfunctional behaviours in entrepreneurial mentoring from behaviours that are simply peculiar to this environment. For example, as alluded to above, a certain level of directive advice may be dysfunctional in one mentoring context but not in another.

Two key questions arise from this study of the current literature on entrepreneurial mentoring:

- What are the particular needs of start-up entrepreneurs when it comes to support, and how well do these fit with existing concepts of mentoring?
- How might we adjust the traditional models of organisational mentoring to accommodate the varied needs of start-up entrepreneurs, without creating unethical practice and potentially harmful relationships?

**Methodology**

The research methodology included both quantitative and qualitative analysis. A survey was used to collect socio-cultural data and to gain mentees’ perceptions of what help was needed when starting their business. One hundred and ninety questionnaires were sent out to entrepreneurs who were mentored before October.
2003, in order to have sufficient time since start-up for the mentoring to have taken place and had some impact. Following a reminder, 62 mentees (33%) responded. Follow-up, semi-structured interviews were then carried out with six mentees and their mentors, to gather qualitative data about the nature of the relationship, how it was conducted and managed, and what effect it had, both positive and negative.

The biographical data was chosen from factors cited in the literature as having an impact on start-up business success, and therefore served to provide clues as to variables other than mentoring which may have been at work. The suggested list of areas where start-up firms may need help and support were similarly drawn from the literature, including reports from the DTI’s Small Business Service.

The quantitative data was used to select from among the returned questionnaires six entrepreneurs who displayed interesting differences of experience. Clearly it is impossible to account for every combination of variables in just six individuals, but interviewees were selected to include male & female mentors/mentees, more/less successful businesses, different levels of satisfaction with mentoring, and an age spread.

As regards the interview data, faced with the choice of keeping stories whole, or opting for a thematic analysis, the latter was selected in order to ensure the specific research questions were addressed.

Presentation of Findings

Question One
What are the particular needs of start-up entrepreneurs when it comes to support, and how do these fit with existing concepts of mentoring?

In the questionnaire, respondents were given a standard list, covering areas of help that a start-up entrepreneur might need. They were asked to rate these under several different questions. The results were as follows:
Table 1 - Top Six Help Areas as Rated by Mentees

(The items in bold italics are common answers to all three questions.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of help considered most important</th>
<th>Mentoring helped with</th>
<th>Mentoring was most effective source of help</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial Planning</td>
<td>Marketing &amp; Pricing</td>
<td>Marketing &amp; Pricing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing &amp; Pricing</td>
<td>Reassurance</td>
<td>Financial Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regulation &amp; Record Keeping</td>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Reassurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding issues</td>
<td>Access to information</td>
<td>Regulation &amp; Record Keeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision to start business</td>
<td>Financial Planning</td>
<td>Access to information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to information</td>
<td>Improved confidence</td>
<td>Improved confidence</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen that for 50% or more of the topics considered most important by entrepreneurs mentoring is not only perceived to be helpful, but actually the most effective source of help. So mentoring is seen as effective, relative to other forms of support, and is helping with the right things, as far as these respondents are concerned.

However, the manner in which this help was delivered, the nature of the role played by the mentor, varied considerably, as did the preferences of the mentees in this regard. Some mentees clearly wanted little more than a non-judgemental sounding board, someone who might know where to get hold of useful information. A typical quote here is:

“Jane wasn’t there to make my decisions for me…….They’re not there to run your business for you. They’re there to guide you and listen……but not to make your decisions……but it was the support really, as much as anything……just giving me that confidence to keep going, you know?”

Other mentees clearly felt they needed something much more “hands-on”. One mentee requiring help with marketing and licensing a new invention had their mentor accompany them abroad on a visit to a potential partner, handling the initial sales pitch, in the belief that their own presentation skills would be inadequate to the task. It would be easy to dismiss this latter intervention as potentially harmful or simply not mentoring at all. Deakins and Freel (1998) express a firm belief that the emphasis of mentoring should be on helping the entrepreneur to learn, and not on “consultancy”. But this ignores the possibility of a consultancy approach which helps to transfer knowledge and skills. It is true that the potential pitfall of creating dependency is apparent in a mentor whose approach, by his own admission is:

“I will do things that the mentee won’t if I can’t get them to go in the direction that’s required. The best thing is to do it myself……I get very involved with projects. If a whole day is needed, I will give them a day…”
But whilst there are enormous dangers inherent in this approach, we must not ignore
the fact that the mentee felt they had benefited hugely from what they had learned
working with this mentor, and saw a clear distinction between his role and that of a
business adviser or consultant:

“He has taken what feels like a more personal interest….You feel like you’re on the
same level…he tended to let us…to get it out of us rather than him do the talking…”

It would appear that this mentee felt more able to face customers having been helped
through a couple of occasions by the mentor. So perhaps the result was more
development than dependency. Some mentees were frustrated that their mentor could
not offer more specific, hands-on expertise, but others were horrified at the thought of
someone “interfering” in their business. This distinction also raises the question of
whether the mentor requires sector-specific knowledge. Some researchers conclude
that they do (Kent et al., 2003), whilst others resist this idea, (Bisk, 2002). Such an
either/or approach conveniently misses the point about how varied the needs of start-
up entrepreneurs are. There must be some way to reconcile these very different needs
and approaches, with a sustainable view of the mentor’s role?

Simply falling back on a “horses for courses” philosophy ignores the very real ethical
and psychological dangers inherent in an “anything goes” approach. Mentee
satisfaction, whilst important, is not a guarantee of ethical practice, so where should
entrepreneurial mentors draw the boundaries of their role? This brings us to the
second question, which goes to the heart of what makes mentoring a positive or
negative experience.

Question Two

How might we adjust the traditional models of organisational mentoring to
accommodate the varied needs of start-up entrepreneurs, without creating unethical
practice and potentially harmful relationships?

In response to a question in the survey, 80% of mentees claimed never to have found
the experience frustrating or unhelpful. Given just the normal potential for
misunderstanding and incompatibility in any one-to-one human relationship, this is a
strong indicator of how positively the mentoring has been received.

But what made the difference between a wholly positive and a partially negative
experience? The findings can be divided into five main areas:

• Socio-cultural factors
• Scheme Design
• Expectations
• Personal Chemistry
• “Toxic” behaviour by the mentor
Socio-Cultural Factors

Correlating responses with socio-cultural factors showed no connection between negative experience of mentoring and:

- Age
- Qualifications
- Previous Status
- Confidence at Start-Up

There was some evidence of negative experience being more prevalent amongst individuals with previous experience of running their own business. But the strongest correlation was with gender. Men were far more likely to express some frustration with mentoring than women were, (and men with experience of their own business even more so). When analysed against self-reported data on profit and turnover, it appeared a much greater proportion of poorer performing businesses also reported some frustration with mentoring. This may suggest a “hidden” variable, which impacts upon business success and is more prevalent amongst the younger age group, women and those who respond more positively to mentoring.

Analysing the data on what help, other than mentoring, mentees sought shed some light on this. More successful entrepreneurs and those who have a more positive experience of mentoring both share a greater openness to help and a willingness to actively seek it out from as wide a variety of sources as possible. In particular, an inclination to seek out training characterised this group, indicating a possible alternative variable of willingness to learn. All this squares well with the tendency for entrepreneurs to learn largely from experience (see, Cope & Watts, 2000). It may also be one explanation of the parallel links with gender, age and previous experience of running a company. Could it be that older, more experienced men are generally less open to seeking out help and learning, and therefore less likely to get the full “value” from mentoring?

Scheme Design

In this regard at least then, socio-cultural factors do wield some influence, as Bisk (2002) has suggested, but what about the impact of scheme design? A far higher proportion of mentees on the New Enterprise Scholarship (NES) programme reported some frustration, compared to other schemes. Unlike other mentees, the NES programme graduates are obliged to have a mentor allocated to them as part of the terms of the grant they receive. Previous research indicates that voluntarism is a factor in mentoring success, and this result would seem to bear that out, (Kram, 1985). One of the mentees interviewed was highly critical of the mentor he had been assigned under the programme, but later found a mentor via his own network to whom he ascribes a large part of his business success and personal development.

“I know it sounds daft, but I’ve learned more now with Rosie as my mentor……and no matter where she is I can say…”This is happening. What do you think?”…..”
It is not enough to cite the conventional criticism of formal, assigned relationships as set out by Ragins & Cotton, 1999, as all of the relationships studied were formal and assigned. Furthermore, many of those reporting some negative experience were voluntary mentees, who could end their relationship whenever they wished. So, what other forces are at play?

**Expectations**

It is likely that in some cases mismatching of expectations contributed to dissatisfaction, the type of help required corresponding poorly with the style and knowledge of the mentor. But surprisingly, those expressing some frustration with mentoring rated it just as highly for addressing the top six help topics as those who were entirely positive. This suggests that, whatever mentees may explicitly cite as causes, the principal drivers of “more positive” mentoring lie in more than just well-matched expectations about learning and other benefits.

**Personal Chemistry**

The other most consistently cited influence, from the interview data collected, is personal chemistry. Note what the mentee quoted above says about his new mentor:

“The thing about Rosie is she understands the ME…within minutes she was my mate. We were laughing on the phone and joking the first time I ever spoke to her…..She knows where I’m coming from…”

A feature of all of the least successful partnerships was that the mentoring dyad did not “connect” on a more personal level. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this was more apparent from the mentees than the mentors, who often seemed unaware of how the entrepreneur felt about their relationship. In one case, the mentee reported frustration at first with the mentoring, but then a growing sense of usefulness. Quite separately he also revealed that it had taken some time to establish a rapport with his mentor.

“Frankly? Immediately we didn’t click…No, there’s never been a click….I felt quite uneasy with him….I couldn’t tell you a point at which I became easy with him, but I feel really easy speaking to him…I could probably tell him anything…”

Asked what might have happened had the relationship not improved, he replied:

“I wouldn’t see the point. Because a lot of it is the safety net, the psychological/emotional support. If you don’t have a relationship with somebody then you can’t have that support…”

It would be naïve to suggest that rapport was entirely unconnected with mentor and mentee behaviour. It makes sense that better-developed rapport-building skills on the part of the mentor, (and perhaps the mentee), will increase the chances of the two people “connecting”. But the results of the survey show that, with only one exception, mentors who had been part of less successful relationships were all praised...
elsewhere by other mentees as creating an entirely positive relationship. It must surely be legitimate then to view personal chemistry as a factor in its own right.

“**Toxic**” Mentoring

This is not to say that there was not ample evidence in this research of unhelpful behaviour by both mentor and mentee. Poor mentoring skills, or ethically questionable practices were occasionally apparent:

“If we could’ve made a living from listening to how great he was, he would have been phenomenal….”

“You know, it was a bit like talking to my Dad really….But I wouldn’t say I learned anything from him….I felt like I was doing it for him and not for me, because I was kind of going in a direction I didn’t want to be going in…”

“Oh yeah, Bridget and I sometimes exchange emails about how we can get the best out of Mike (her partner)…..”

It should be said that what might be construed as “poor practice” by the mentor, according to existing literature, did not always result in dissatisfaction or frustration from the mentee. However, most of the examples of what we might call “unconventional” mentoring were the result of some combination of mentor technique, mentor positioning, and mentor motivation.

There was evidence of mentors applying their own standards and success measures to the mentee’s enterprise and ways of conducting business, often inappropriately. One of the mentees quoted above spent most of the time with her mentor doing her accounting according to his instruction, only to abandon this entirely once their relationship finished. Some mentors remained too formal and distant, never forging a workable relationship, or presenting a self-image of success so unassailable as to inhibit the mentee from being open with them. Others seemed to use mentoring as a means of bolstering their own ego by displaying their superior knowledge and achievements. At one extreme, this could be construed as trying to re-capture previous “glories” by living vicariously through the mentee’s business, creating unnecessary dependency on their part, in the process.

“.it’s ever so complimentary. It’s so rewarding when people just get on and do things because they recognise that’s probably the right way of doing it…..that there’s somebody here with a lot more ideas than they’ve got….or, sorry, not more ideas, but more experience than they have……I guess what I’ve got out of it is a confidence or a need to go back into business…”

Usually, the mentors studied were acting out of the best intentions, as they saw it, for the entrepreneur. But also, in many cases, the entrepreneur welcomed what they were doing as invaluable help.
So this still leaves us with a degree of ambivalence about what we can characterise as “toxic” in this context. What model can we apply to help distinguish mismatched expectations from genuinely dysfunctional mentoring?

Conclusions

Mentoring Helps

In examining what specific help start-up entrepreneurs need from their mentors, the research has provided ample evidence that mentoring has very real benefits. Categorising these benefits provides us with the opportunity to build on the models provided by previous studies. Not only is it clear that learning functions must be added to Kram’s (1985) psychosocial and career benefits for the individual, as indicated by Gibb (1994), but also a parallel range of benefits for the business must be considered. We can then complete this typology by adding the crucial dimension of success measures.

The resulting table might be presented as follows:

Table 2 – Potential benefits of entrepreneurial mentoring (near here)

It is apparent from this typology that many of these benefits are not exclusive to mentoring, indeed they may be considered the preserve of other roles altogether. And here we begin to address the ambiguity that dogs so much of the literature on entrepreneurial mentoring, particularly when we consider the helping roles appropriate to each category.

New mentoring models are needed, as well as a range of helping strategies

One could argue that to include mentoring for all of these categories is already controversial; that blurring the boundaries between consultancy, business advice and mentoring dilutes the accepted parameters of the mentoring process and invites ethically dubious practices and potentially damaging relationships. However, this is to ignore the reality of what already happens in entrepreneurial mentoring, and the range of needs that start-up business owners have.

The point to be made here is that both mentees and mentors, as well as the organisations that manage entrepreneurial mentoring schemes need to establish some clarity around what benefits the entrepreneur is seeking, whether mentoring is the most appropriate and cost-effective means of providing these, (or whether, for example, the individual should be undertaking formal training, or paying for professional advice), and what criteria all parties should be using to measure success.

In this survey, some entrepreneurs have found mentoring more useful than any other source of help in all of these categories. As a start point, therefore, I would assert that mentoring may be used to deliver any of these benefits. It is equally clear, however, that mentoring is not necessarily the most appropriate means of delivery, and the
purpose of this table is to enable a structured discussion of alternative strategies and agreement on the best way forward and how to review and evaluate this.

But however successfully we clarify these needs and benefits, certain conditions also need to apply in order for mentors and mentees to extract the full value from these benefits.

Once again, this gives us the opportunity to build on previous models. I would distinguish between what might be called “absolute” and “relative” conditions for success. In other words, some success factors are to do with establishing adequate standards, for example in mentor/mentee behaviour. Others, however, are about ensuring the compatibility of what is needed and what is provided.

Absolute conditions for success would include:

• Mentor / Mentee capability
  • Understanding the role
• Possessing adequate rapport-building skills
  • Avoiding “toxic behaviour”
  • Understanding ethical dimension
• Scheme Design
  • Need for voluntarism
  • Informal vs formal
  • Time commitment
  • Recording, evaluation, etc.
• Mentee characteristics
  • Help-seeker or not?
  • Age & experience of running own business
• Mentor characteristics
  • Self-awareness & motivation

The appropriate mechanisms by which to optimise conditions for success in these areas are selection and training of mentors and mentees, and design of the mentoring programme.

As regards mentor training, some attempt should be made to go beyond the process and technique of mentoring to examine the narrow dividing line between good intentions and potentially damaging relationships. My own observation suggests that, in many cases, such practices stemmed more from poor self-awareness, than malicious intent. Even more pernicious were the potential dangers to which mentees themselves were less alert, such as dependency and loss of decision-making in their own business. The following is an attempt to capture this dilemma in a way which lends itself to mentor training and development:
Table 3 – Good Mentoring – “Walking the line”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE BEST INTENTIONS ..........</th>
<th>...CAN LEAD TO A DARK SIDE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desire to help people out</td>
<td>Too many mentees – poor attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-disclosure – Sharing insight</td>
<td>Talking about self – ego trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing credibility</td>
<td>Inhibit mentee confiding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping mentee improve</td>
<td>Judging – applying own standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanting business to succeed</td>
<td>Applying own success measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining some objectivity</td>
<td>Being too formal – only work agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using experience to help learning</td>
<td>Mentee dependent on mentor skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting involved in mentee’s business</td>
<td>Living vicariously through mentee’s business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring all parties in the enterprise</td>
<td>Collude with one party to manipulate others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relative conditions for success, on the other hand would centre around:

- Compatibility of mentee requirement for help and mentor background, knowledge and style.
- Personal chemistry between mentor & mentee.
Here the chances of success are increased by careful matching of mentees and mentors across a number of factors. Key questions to ask the entrepreneur may be:

- What stage is your business at?
- What do you see as your main areas of need?
- What benefits are you expecting mentoring to deliver?
- Could these be more effectively secured by other means?
- In particular, what business training have you undertaken?
- How would you describe your preferred style of working?
- How would you describe your personality?
- What type of person do you relate to best?

Likewise, key questions to ask the mentor might be:

- What is your business background, in terms of sector & size of organisation?
- What are your main specialist skill & knowledge areas?
- What is your approach to the mentoring role?
- How would you describe your preferred style of working?
- How would you describe your personality?
- What type of person do you relate to best?

In voluntary, unassigned relationships these are the kind of questions each party would be asking of each other or of themselves, during the “courtship” phase. When an organised scheme introduces a “match-maker” between mentor and mentee, then they must make this assessment. Once the match is made, mentors and mentees should be encouraged to talk openly about the development of the relationship.
We might summarise all this as follows:

Illustration 1 – Optimising the success of mentoring schemes

We must address the potential for “toxic” mentoring and give practical help to avoid it

There is a price to pay for a model of entrepreneurial mentoring which encompasses as wide a range of benefits as that which I have proposed. The potential for unethical behaviour and even damaging interference on the part of the mentor is undeniably increased by this degree of flexibility. There is an expertise dimension to this. If the mentor is to undertake activities which might otherwise be provided by a consultant or business adviser, we might reasonably expect them to possess the relevant expertise to offer suggestions or actively help with a particular business problem. But expertise alone does not remove the inherent risk of damage in some aspects of this broader mentoring role. In my view, the way to establish proper boundaries and ensure ethical conduct is not to straightjacket the entrepreneurial mentor unduly in terms of what benefits they can provide, if qualified and able to do so, but to provide them with conceptual tools to help recognise “toxic” practices.

Clutterbuck’s model assesses mentoring roles against two variables; directiveness and stretching/nurturing, (Clutterbuck, 1985). We can begin to build a model by replacing the stretching / nurturing dimension with the degree of involvement the mentor has. This could be used to present the following view of entrepreneurial mentoring roles:
Illustration 2 – Mentoring Roles – a question of fit?

This diagram conveys the idea that greater directiveness may be welcome and legitimate, if it is accompanied by a greater degree of involvement and commitment. However, it makes it clear that, for the mentor, this should be driven by concern primarily for the mentee, for the individual, and not for the business. What is clear, from both my own research and existing studies, is that this distinction is often blurred or ignored.

Undoubtedly, there are many occasions when the interests of the individual mentee and the success of their business entirely coincide, but this is not always the case. Take the example cited earlier of a mentor deciding whether to actively help by doing something for the mentee because they lack the necessary experience. Is this done because the mentee is “getting in the way” of a possible opportunity for the business, or is it done to help the mentee learn how to do it for themselves next time? This seems to me to be a crucial distinction in entrepreneurial mentoring, and the only way of avoiding potentially toxic behaviour is for the mentor to reflect on their motivation. Are they acting out of concern for the business or the mentee? Is their success measure ultimately business success or mentee happiness? This is not to say you cannot have both but which takes precedence?

The model above attempts to identify generally “good”, “safe” aspects of the mentor’s role (the green zone) and clearly “toxic” habits, which are likely to indicate a lack of concern for either the individual or the business, (the red zone). But, between these are a number of activities which a mentor may encompass in their role, with the full support and enthusiasm of the mentee. However, it must be recognised
that these have the potential to be incompatible with a mentoring relationship at best, and at worst be positively damaging. Although it is fair to say that a good mentor needs to constantly reflect on their own motivations, blind spots and mental models, it is particularly important, when the role strays into this amber zone to think hard about whether one is trouble-shooter or trusted friend. These different roles may be accommodated within the context of a healthy and helpful mentoring relationship, provided that:

- the mentor is motivated by, and focused on the learning and development of the mentee
- mentor and mentee reflexivity is promoted through continuous open dialogue between the parties as to how the relationship is developing, and how it is helping the entrepreneur to achieve their aims
- the use of more directive forms of help is both welcomed by the mentee and accompanied by a degree of involvement and commitment from the mentor towards the mentee and their business.

Further Research

There is clearly significant scope for follow-up research on many of the questions raised in this paper. A more complete picture of the relationship between mentoring help and the particular way in which entrepreneurs learn and develop would be best served by a longitudinal study, encompassing a more extensive time frame than my own research. It is fair to say that any further examination of the business impact of mentoring would also benefit from a sample of new businesses taken over a longer timescale, as the first twelve months of any new business are unlikely to be indicative of long-term success. A longitudinal study might also provide further insight into the impact of the timing of mentoring help, relative to the life of the business, and this would undoubtedly help entrepreneurial mentoring scheme organisers to target the help they provide more successfully and match the style of mentoring to the needs of the entrepreneur.

Examining the dynamic of gender and its impact on entrepreneurial mentoring might also shed further light on the links between mentoring, socio-cultural factors and small business success/survival rates.

The sheer ubiquity of personal chemistry as a critical ingredient highlights the need for further research in this area. Pinning down such an elusive concept would present considerable hurdles in terms of methodology and analysis, but anything that helped mentoring scheme organisers to address this area of matching would contribute hugely to the success of the relationships they initiated. Further qualitative research around the impact of mentor motivation might help to deepen our understanding of dysfunctional mentoring relationships. In particular, more work could be done to establish a relationship between mentoring success, the entrepreneurial mentor’s level of involvement in the business, and their concern for the “good” of the mentee.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY / BENEFITS</th>
<th>PSYCHOSOCIAL</th>
<th>CAREER</th>
<th>LEARNING</th>
<th>SUCCESS MEASURES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| INDIVIDUAL          | • Psychological & emotional safety net  
• Friend/Companion  
• Someone to talk to about business  
• Reassurance  
• Recognition  
| • Financial & marketing  
• Self-presentation  
• Record keeping  
• Regulation  
• Specific technical info (e.g. legal)  
| • Learning to learn from experience  
• Understanding own skills  
• Ability to change perspective & generate options  
• Growing into a business person  
| • Mentee’s learning & development  
• Mentee’s happiness / sense of well-being?  |
| Relevant Helping Roles | • Mentoring  
• Counselling  
| • Mentoring  
• Coaching  
• Training & Instruction  
| • Mentoring  
• Coaching  
| |
| BUSINESS            | • Introduction to contacts & likely customers  
• Access to network  
• “Opened new doors”  
| • Routes to market  
• International business  
• Procurement in large organisations  
• Financial expertise  
| • Structure & sense of progress  
• Improved long-term planning  
• Better strategy development  
• Prioritising what to take on  
• More options in decision making  
| • Growth of business  
• Profit  
• Turnover  
• Customer loyalty  
• No. of employees, etc.  |
| Relevant Helping Roles | • Mentoring  
• Networking  
| • Mentoring  
• Consultancy  
• Business Advice  
| • Mentoring  
• Coaching  
• Consultancy  
• Business Advice  
| |
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An Exploratory Investigation into the Perceived Effects of Team Coaching in the Construction Sector

By Helen Dunlop

Abstract
The research sought to explore two key objectives. The first to determine what perceived effects team coaching had at the individual, team and organization level and the second, to identify what factors contributed to these perceived effects. Using an Action Research methodology, four two hour coaching sessions were undertaken over a three-month period with three project teams using the Context Focussed model (Lane, 1992).

The perceived effects reported by individuals and teams indicated that team coaching had a positive effect on individuals and teams thinking, behaviour and awareness not only within the immediate team but also in the way they interact with other teams. The research was unable to determine the effects at an organisation level.

The team, the coach and the process were three key factors that contributed towards the perceived effects. The team through taking responsibility for their own actions and being willing participants; the coach through enabling the team to develop their own solutions, challenge the teams thinking, focusing the team on their goals whilst remaining neutral and independent. From a process perspective, two coaches were perceived to be useful.

Introduction
Coaching in the business context is primarily recognised for its one-to-one work with individuals (Zeus & Skiffington, 2001). Increasingly, the notion of ‘team coaching’ is starting to appear in business under various guises such as facilitation.

Although no definition exists for team coaching there is an acknowledgement that, like one-to-one coaching, it does focus on enhancing performance (Downey 2000; Gallwey, 2000; Katzenbach & Smith, 2003; Whitmore, 2003; Zeus & Skiffington, 2001). For one organisation in the construction sector working on a multi-billion
pound project, the performance of teams is critical to their success. Surprisingly, little empirical research exists on team coaching in the business context for the organisation to learn from.

As one-to-one coaching continues to evolve into a professional field in its own right and mounting evidence gathers as to the benefit for organisations (Jarvis, 2004; Jarvis, Lane & Fillery-Travis 2005) is there a case for coaching to evolve to the team context? If so, with what effect and what factors contribute to such effects? These two questions form the basis of this research and will help to inform the sponsoring organisation’s team development strategy and increase the empirical research base from which the coaching community can draw from.

**Team Coaching Defined**

Given the scarcity of empirical research on team coaching in the business context, the researcher originally explored this area in the broader context of sport. However, it was difficult to do so as the term ‘team coach’ is applied differently, effective performance is difficult to determine and the performance timeframes vary.

In the sporting world, the coach is often seen as a technical expert through providing advice to the team or imparting skills based on their own experience as a sportsperson (Gallwey, 2003). In the business world, the coach has not necessarily worked in a similar role to the teams as the focus is on exploring the issue and getting them to come up with the most appropriate solution. Further, defining effective performance appears more complex in the business than the sporting world. Often, it is not as simple as winning or loosing a game or series over a season. Is it about profit, net margin, share price or something else over a financial year?

Those who have attempted to describe team coaching have used terms interchangeably such as coaching, facilitation, team development and team effectiveness which makes it confusing to understand exactly what it means in practice. Deeprose (1995) refers to coaches both as facilitators and coaches as does Gallwey (2003 p 177) when he states, “the coach facilitates learning”.

For the purposes of this research the researcher will utilise a commonly used one-to-one coaching definition refined to suit the team context: “unlocking a team’s (formerly individual) potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them” Whitmore (2003, p 8).

In addition the researcher will distinguish between a group and a team using

Katzenbach & Smith’s (2003, p 45) definition “a team is a small number of people with complimentary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable”. Teams are interdependent as opposed to a group where individuals work independently to produce results.
Application of Team Coaching - Role of a Team Coach

Downey (2002) describes the role of a team coach as one who enables the client to explore, to gain a better understanding, to become more aware and make a better decision then they would have previously made. Whitmore (2003, p 152) highlights the awareness element through stating that “the more aware a team is both individually and collectively, the better it will perform”.

Principles of Team Coaching

Diedrich (2001, p 238) sums up the principle of team coaching by stating that “the coaching of a team is the process where the coaching has an ongoing jointly defined learning process (clear roles, responsibilities and goals) with both the team and the individuals, whereby the task is one of helping to establish and maintain relationship that provides the freedom to learn, that the team owns the problems as well as the potential solutions, with a focus on the here and now. Coaching is an iterative process for both the team and the individual that is developmentally orientated as opposed to being a problem-centred quick fix for the team”. Despite the absence of a definition of team coaching, the role and principles are broadly congruent.

Approaches to Team Coaching

The researcher could only find one methodology that was named team coaching in the literature, which is offered by Zeus & Skiffington (2002). Their approach involves four phases: 1) establishing the coaching partnership; 2) action planning; 3) the coaching cycle (review, reassess and feedback); and 4) evaluation and follow-up. Various other methods of working with teams to enhance their performance exist that align with the role and principles of team coaching but are labelled something else. These are Behavioural Change Models, Process Consultation and Facilitation.

According to Hackman and Wageman’s (2005) literature review, two models of team coaching emerge which are based on theories of individual behaviour – operant conditioning and team focussed coaching. Operant conditioning refers to the direct reinforcement (usually positive) of particular task behaviours when exhibited by team members and is based on the principle of individual learning that behaviour is a function of its consequences (Wageman, 2001). Applied to teams, it involves three coaching stages: 1) providing instructions about how to behave, 2) monitoring the team’s performance, and 3) providing performance-contingent consequences to the team (Komaki, 1986; Smith, Smoll & Curtis, 1979).

On team focussed coaching Hackman and Wagemen (2005, p 270) state that “Schwarz posits that coaches should provide feedback to a team in ways that help members learn new and effective team behaviours, especially in how they give and receive feedback. The coaching process involves three phases. First is observing actual group behaviour to note behaviours that are impeding the group’s work and to identify behaviours not presently exhibited that might facilitate group work. Second
is describing to the group what has been observed and testing interferences about the meanings of those behaviours. And third is helping group members decide whether they wish to change their behaviours and, if so, how they might do so.”

The Process Consultation approach developed by Schein (1988) focuses on “how things are done rather than what is done” (Schein, 1999, p 146). Team members must be involved in owning, analysing and improving the situation so that they have the skills to continue to enhance their performance once the consultant has left. The consultant engages team members in analysing group processes on two levels. The first is the substantive level whereby it examines how human processes affect work on a specific organizational problem and the second, is on an internal level to better understand the team’s own interaction process that enhance or limit effective performance (Schein, 1988 p11-12).

Another method that is frequently employed when working with teams is facilitation. Cockman, Evans & Reynolds (1999) highlight four distinct facilitation styles. These are 1) Acceptant (neutral, non-judgemental style which gives clients space to talk without being judged or censured in any way); 2) Catalytic (uses focussed open questions and gives the client support and encouragement to make their own diagnosis and decisions). 3) Confrontational (helps the client by pointing out the discrepancies between beliefs or intentions and actions in practise so that the clients can recognise the discrepancies and have an opportunity to decide if they wish to change) and 4) Prescriptive (offers advice and wisdom). Heron (1996) identifies a further three modes of facilitation: 1) hierarchical (power and control lies with the facilitator); 2) co-operative – power and control is shared between facilitator and group and 3) autonomous – power and control is given entirely to the group who self-direct their own learning. Such different categorisations indicates that the facilitation scale can range from directive through to non-directive leading to the proposition that potentially, team coaching could be viewed as another form of facilitation.

In summary, each of the approaches overlap to some degree with the notion of team coaching such as Cockman et al., (1999) Acceptant style of facilitation. This leads to confusion about exactly what team coaching is and is not with each approach being dependant upon the role consultants, facilitators or coaches advocate, the assumptions they make about the teams and the skills they bring. Subsequently, the researcher was explicit with the teams she worked with upfront about what they could and could not expect from her during the coaching sessions. It could also be argued that, with the exception of Process Consultation, each of these approaches have an element of ‘teaching’ or ‘advice’ which contradicts the “learning” element used in the definition of team coaching used by the researcher such as Heron’s (1996) Prescriptive facilitation style which offers wisdom and advice.

**Qualities of a Team Coach**

In order to make the above methods work in practice, a team coach needs to understand what knowledge and skills they need to be successful. Although various
practitioners and academics have identified specific behaviours required, there has been little, if any empirical research to identify what a coach does contribute to the actual performance outcome.

According to Zeus and Skiffington (2001), qualities of a successful team coach include the following: the ability to develop commitment to a shared purpose and vision, good communication skills, listens, questions and tests all assumptions, the flexibility to facilitate or be directive as the situation demands, provide learning opportunities through encouraging self-directed learning with the emphasis on the process of learning rather than knowing and provides ongoing feedback. Diedrich (2001) reinforces these perspectives and indicates that team coaches also need to keep the coaching agenda focussed and nurture the ability of individuals to both observe and then to share what they have observed. Downey (2002) goes even further and indicates that team coaches do not necessarily need to know much about the work of the team.

An important part of working with a team is for the coach to understand and appreciate the impact that team dynamics and contextual factors may have on the performance of the team. Hackman and Wageman (2005) identified four conditions that may impact the effectiveness of a team coaching intervention: 1) structure of a team; 2) organizational processes to support the performance of the team (ie strategy, knowledge and skill); 3) timing of the intervention (ie is the team ready and able to deal with it) and 4) the critical team tasks. Team factors identified by Douglas (1983) include the level and nature of team members interactions, goals of the team, decision making processes, norms, standards and values, cohesiveness of the team, the influence of the team on its members, the climate within the team, the environment within which the team operates, the abilities, experience and attitudes of team members, time spent working together and the size of the team. Other factors include the motives of team members and the leadership of the team (Heron, 1999).

**Effects of Team Coaching**

Despite the acknowledged importance of team coaching in the literature to the firm’s overall goals, statements such as the following quote from an article in the Sunday Times written by Coles (2000, p 26) are descriptive in nature and seldom backed up with empirical research as to the effect it has actually has on a team’s performance: “we were each running our businesses independently. When we were coached as a team, we found we had similar initiatives, but were not benefiting form sharing experiences. Talking through ideas in a supportive, unthreatening environment encouraged people to be more creative”.

However, some research has been conducted on the methods that most closely align to team coaching with mixed results. Komacki, Deselles & Bowman (1989) found that operant-based coaching does facilitate team performance whilst Kaplan (1979) reviewed research on the effects of process consultation on performance and found no evidence to support the hypothesis that it does improve it. Such limited research
indicates that there is still a need to conduct research on team coaching in order to increase our understanding.

Research Context and Aims

Increasingly, organisations are looking to multiple, international suppliers to work effectively as a single team in order to deliver complex projects successfully within time, budget, cost and to a high quality – regardless of the company hat they wear.

One such organisation in the Construction industry is doing just this. With a multinational workforce of over 4000 employees, this construction project is paving the way. Integrated teamwork was considered so critical to the delivery of the project that it has been incorporated into a contractual agreement with key suppliers that they all had to sign up to. This is unique to the construction sector as it meant that each contractor has had to change their traditional method of working in ‘silos’ and in ‘isolation’ from each other to deliver what they were contracted to do. Instead, each contractor has had to rethink their approach to ensure that they work effectively as part of multiple, cross-functional project teams - a first for the construction sector.

Team coaching was one option the organisation wanted to explore in order to help them foster integrated teamwork across suppliers. Subsequently, the research sought to answer the following questions:

1. What perceived effects does team coaching have on the individual, the team and the organisation?

2. What happened in the team coaching sessions that contributed towards the effects reported?

Conclusions from this research will help to inform the organisation’s team development strategy. For the coaching community, it will generate perspectives on coaching for teams.

Research Methodology

Sample

Due to the construction project been under severe time constraints purposive sampling took place (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2003). Four teams were approached (of which 3 accepted) who were deemed to fit the following selection criteria aimed at reducing sample bias: 1) criticalness of the team to the project stage; 2) the team’s willingness to incorporate the time commitments of the coaching sessions into their project deliverables; 3) stability of the team over the research timeframe (as teams are constantly disbanded and reconfigured on the project); 4) outside the researcher’s immediate client group to ensure an independent perspective in the coaching sessions; 5) no more than ten individuals in a team including the Team Leader; 6) Team Leader was comfortable being considered part of the team.
with no special considerations given. The characteristics of each team are outlined in Table 1 along with their coaching objectives. Each team is labelled A, B and C throughout the remainder of the text.

Table 1: Team Characteristics and Coaching Objectives (fit in methodology or data analysis section)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Team A</th>
<th>Team B</th>
<th>Team C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Team Activity</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels</td>
<td>Different Suppliers up to</td>
<td>Different Suppliers up to and</td>
<td>Specialist Suppliers up to and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assistant Project Leader</td>
<td>including Project Leader</td>
<td>including Project Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration team been together</td>
<td>18 months</td>
<td>12-18 months</td>
<td>12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time leader worked with team</td>
<td>18 months</td>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency team works together each month</td>
<td>24 hours</td>
<td>6 hours</td>
<td>20 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching Objectives with % of objectives</td>
<td>To hold effective team</td>
<td>Flush out key issues and put a</td>
<td>How do we build a great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achieved through the team coaching</td>
<td>meetings with a strong</td>
<td>plan of plan of action in place</td>
<td>relationship with Suppliers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sessions as reported by the teams themselves</td>
<td>emphasis on financials</td>
<td>(20%)</td>
<td>(40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To be seen as setting the</td>
<td>Review layout of team in order</td>
<td>How do we get Suppliers to ask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>quality benchmark standard</td>
<td>to increase communication,</td>
<td>us for information once only?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(60%)</td>
<td>trust and working together</td>
<td>How do we get suppliers to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(80%)</td>
<td>react to our advice or come</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Build trust and openness</td>
<td>and discuss it immediately with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>within the immediate team will</td>
<td>us if they are not satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>enable the team to drive out</td>
<td>with the answer? (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>waste and maintain programme</td>
<td>How do we escalate key issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>deadlines (20%)</td>
<td>up to senior managers for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Identify and agree common</td>
<td>action and track progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>team objectives (20%)</td>
<td>without damaging existing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>relationships? (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact of Coach with Team Leader</td>
<td>15 mins</td>
<td>90 mins (manager requested a</td>
<td>15mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>meeting with the coach prior to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>each coaching session after</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the second session)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of team coaches</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 (for 3 out of the 4 sessions)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Approach & Coaching Model

Given the exploratory, real time nature of the research an Action Research Methodology was employed (Coghlan & Brannick, 2003) which was integrated with the team coaching model selected by the researcher.

Given the absence of a team coaching model in the literature, the researcher selected the Context Focussed therapeutic model (define, explore, formulate, intervene, evaluate) developed by Lane (1992) as it has been used with groups, emphasises the context within which individuals operate, has a focus on enhancing performance and resolving real life problems - the main organisational driver behind the research. Furthermore, it closely aligns with the role and principles of team coaching and the researchers own one-to-one coaching model.

Importantly, the researcher mapped the Context Focussed model onto the Action Research methodology as follows: Define-determine context and purpose; Explore-diagnose; Formulate-plan; Intervene-take action; Evaluate-evaluate action. By using this integrated model, it allowed participants to direct their own change in each coaching session rather than relying on an outside expert to do so. This ensured that the coaching was iterative, relevant and critical to the achievement of each team’s objectives.

Coaching Process & Data Collection Techniques

In order to allow enough space for teams to incorporate their learning on the job, four, two hour coaching sessions were scheduled with each team over a 3-4 month period. This was deemed a realistic time commitment by the teams and the researcher.

A coaching contract was established in the first coaching session which focussed on developing coaching objectives and establishing working guidelines for the remaining sessions. The second and third sessions explored the coaching objectives in more depth utilising the Context Focussed model (Lane, 1992).

At the end of each coaching session, individuals completed a self-reflection questionnaire that focussed on the research questions and what the team coaches could do differently at the next session to make it more useful. The final coaching session incorporated a team review which focussed on the same research questions that were completed by each individual along with the extent to which they had achieved their initial coaching objectives.

Data Analysis

Provisional, emergent themes were identified from the data and were paraphrased or renamed by the coders (researcher, co-coach and her colleague) to express underlying statements with quotes, statements or key words that typified the reported data (Lacey & Luff, 2001). Such analysis was undertaken independently by each coder and then
collectively agreed as a group to improve inter-rater reliability. Given there were three coders the majority decision was taken.

Once the key themes were identified and agreed, the coders would independently identified specific pieces of data from each data source for each team that corresponded to the themes previously identified. Both numerical and textual coding was used (Lacey & Luff, 2001). This consisted of a word, a statement, a quote or a particular term along with the frequency with which particular words occurred (Bell, 2003). Where quantitative data was collected, basic statistical analysis would be conducted (4825 Research Methods).

**Ethical Considerations**

A clear confidentiality statement was included on all documents that participants received stating that all data collected for the purposes of the research would be reported anonymously. High level themes were validated with each of the teams before it was included in the final report to avoid mis-interpretation of the data.

Given the small sample size, the protection of participants in the final report could be compromised and easily identifiable (Gill & Johnson 2002). Therefore, the researcher decided to delete any characteristics that would identify any of the teams to an employee reading the research.

Due to the researcher being an in house coach there was potential for her to bias the findings. To minimise this, the researcher decided to get another coach to work with her in the coaching sessions and another colleague to help analyse the data to provide more objectivity. Also, a provision was made to employ external coaches if the coaching required by the teams was outside the coaches’ level of expertise. This ensured that the teams’ time would be utilised effectively.

**Research Findings and Discussion**

Overall, the data reported by both individuals and teams was broadly consistent, although there were small variances between teams B and A&C which the researcher has attempted to explain in the discussion.

**Research Question 1**: What perceived effects does team coaching have on the individual, the team and the organisation?

A summary of the Reported Effects of Team Coaching perceived by individuals and teams is outlined in Table 2.

**Individual Level**

From an individual’s perspective, it appears that team coaching has had an effect on individuals and the team’s thinking and behaviour. In particular, it appears to have
increased individual’s level of self-awareness such as “I try to get my points across by bullying”, their recognition of other’s perspectives and how they interact with other teams “I attend more integration meetings...I go and give other teams more confidence with their own solution to the problem”. Such data aligns with Whitmore’s (2002) statement that the awareness element of an individual and a team will help it perform better.

Team Level

Creating the space and time to openly discuss and surface issues appears to have enabled teams to become closer and to work more cohesively together. This suggests that there is a need for teams to create the time and space for dialogue to occur. It also appears to foster the development of inter-team relationships for two out of 3 teams (a and c) such as “gave insight into possible future supplier / client dialogue”. This infers that the impact of team coaching goes beyond the boundaries of the immediate team, which may affect those teams, or individuals that the team interfaces with.

Evidence from Table 2 indicates that team coaching has helped teams A and C to build both inter and intra team relationships “more open with each other and with other individuals and team we work with (ie XYZ team – means if we have a good relationship with team it means less aggression, less emails and more time to spend on other things)”. These findings again validate the results, which suggests that the impact of team coaching goes beyond the boundaries of the immediate team. Despite this, both the individual and team review data indicates that team coaching is difficult to put a tangible benefit on. This means that organisations that utilise team coaching need to realise that each team’s coaching reporting metrics will be different dependant upon the coaching objectives agreed.
Table 2: Summary of the Reported Effects of Team Coaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Analysis</th>
<th>Reported by Individuals</th>
<th>Reported by the teams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased level of self awareness</td>
<td>“That I try to get my point across by bullying”</td>
<td>Changes in individuals behaviour both within and outside the immediate team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I will try harder to see the other side”</td>
<td>“taken a different approach to office layout than would have previously done”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We are all making other teams dependant on our guidance”</td>
<td>“emailed less – talked more”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of other’s perspectives</td>
<td>“Realisation of different perspectives to what I thought was straight forward issues”</td>
<td>“I have looked at the relationship with (Supplier) differently. Traditionally we don’t trust suppliers. I have been open minded and given them the benefit of the doubt than I previously would have put my foot down…and getting a better response back from them”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Some surprising insights into colleagues thoughts”</td>
<td>“I attend more integration meetings with other teams…I go and give other teams more confidence with their own solution to the problems”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Gave another view on looking at solutions and issues we need to work on”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactively manage intra-team relationships (team A &amp; C)</td>
<td>Realised importance of managing perception of external team</td>
<td>Build inter and intra team relationships including external suppliers (team A and C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“gave insight into possible future supplier / client dialogue”</td>
<td>“bought us closer together as a team”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“more open with each other and with other individuals and team we work with (ie XYZ team – means if we have a good relationship with team it means less aggression, less emails and more time to spend on other things)”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“better communication with those higher up than us (ie now get Financial Forecast)”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of time and the space/forum for open discussion</td>
<td>“allow team to work together”</td>
<td>Limited benefit in terms of time, scalability and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“open discussions were had”</td>
<td>“there is only so much you can do in four 2 hour sessions”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“we are only 4 in X000 people on the project”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“other teams not wanting to work together with us”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of frustration (team B)</td>
<td>“highlights difference rather than commonality”</td>
<td>Team Self Awareness (team B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“not all members on board”</td>
<td>“we need as a team decide to what we want to do and then work through it”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of time to address issues in depth</td>
<td>“we could have got more out o the sessions overall than we did”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frustration of team around lack of goals</td>
<td>Individuals in the team need to attend the sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team works together</td>
<td>“achieved a common understanding”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“bought us closer together”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More cohesive team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved consensus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space to surface issues</td>
<td>“Another way of looking at the daily challenge and resolving them”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“opened up divisions”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Inference that team coaching is useful for the organisation</td>
<td>Difficult to place a tangible benefit on team coaching (team A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“If its good for us it must be good for the sponsor”</td>
<td>“cost versus time”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved sense of teamwork</td>
<td>Creates possibility for collaborative environment</td>
<td>Builds integrated team working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive action</td>
<td>“drives the team ethic”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“the more things we work through the more we realise the importance of working as one big team”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“improve communication across the XYZ project”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“creating quality time together outside of day to day operational challenges”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“it would have been helpful if you (the coach) had worked with other sub project teams to reinforce teamwork for the good of the project, relationship and communication across the project”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Beneficial to use with teams who are made up of multiple suppliers, or within a company that has very different business areas”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Organisation Level**

Even though team coaching was reported to build integrated teamwork through statements such as “drive the team ethic” and “beneficial to use with teams who are made up of multiple suppliers, or within a company that has very different business areas” it appears to be too early to say how team coaching ultimately affects the organisation.

One reported limitation of team coaching is time “there is only so much you can do in four 2 hour sessions” and magnitude “we are only 4 in X000 people on the project”. This implies that the number of coaching sessions may be restrictive and that it is difficult for such few teams being coached to drive the overall teamwork momentum required across the project.
Table 3: Summary of the *Contributing Factors* that Appear to have Influenced the Reported Effects of Team Coaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Analysis</th>
<th>Reported by individuals</th>
<th>Reported by the teams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to work together</td>
<td>“All attempting to agree on a positive way forward”</td>
<td>Team ownership and responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“pick up live tasks”</td>
<td>“we got to some solutions”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“open discussion”</td>
<td>“developed team issues and an agenda”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of other’s perspectives</td>
<td>“people have differences in terms of priorities”</td>
<td>Team took action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“realised the need to listen to others perspectives”</td>
<td>“we were proactive – you didn’t drag us”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“differing priorities must be listened to”</td>
<td>“we actioned the items from the sessions”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team saw insights into their own behaviour (team A and C)</td>
<td>“We see the faults that we complain of in others”</td>
<td>Individual ownership and responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“made the team look into themselves”</td>
<td>“we turned up”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“talked honestly about ourselves”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“we could have got more out of the sessions overall than we did”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowed everyone to have their say</td>
<td>“allow everyone to have their say”</td>
<td>Ensured everyone had a say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“involve all members of the group”</td>
<td>“made sure everyone’s views were heard”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided connectivity and focus between each session</td>
<td>“Helped to maintain focus for the sessions”</td>
<td>Lateral thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Perseverance”</td>
<td>“we do things automatically makes us think”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“keeping positive”</td>
<td>“reflective”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“focus on points trying to discuss”</td>
<td>“agile minded”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“look at things in a different way”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“think on your feet”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided observations on teams behaviour and helped them reflect on it (team A and C)</td>
<td>“made the team (the coach) look into themselves”</td>
<td>Encouraged team self reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“continue to find our failings”</td>
<td>“focus back on ourselves”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“identify the key drivers and issues in our statements”</td>
<td>“pointed out our tendency to discuss and not decide”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“ability to turn people’s thoughts on themselves or pointed it out” (the coach)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenged the team’s thinking (team A and C)</td>
<td>“made us think, made us challenge our preconceptions”</td>
<td>Ability to challenge team’s thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“challenge what we were saying to make us think”</td>
<td>“asks us why we do it and how”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“raised questions”</td>
<td>“question where we are coming from”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“searching for underlying issues or hidden agendas”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take control (team B)</td>
<td>“controlled the disbelievers”</td>
<td>Two coaches (team B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“control the meeting”</td>
<td>“need to have 2 coaches as we are a tough group to work with”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“stop the debating”</td>
<td>One person can observe and pick up on things whilst the other is talking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped team identify their own solutions (team C)</td>
<td>“help us drag solutions into the open”</td>
<td>Helped team reach own solution (team A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“explore solutions”</td>
<td>“drove the answer out from the team”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“helped us drive out our own team solution instead of”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Influence of other initiatives on the team</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 1-2 coaches for each team | "XYZ Quarterly event – the exercise you did (the coach) helped spread the word (ie we are helping others to help us succeed)"
| "like (coach 1) doing the talking, (coach 2) listening and making sound pointers" | "heavy workload outside the sessions meant that your focus is elsewhere in the sessions" |
| "we need to have 2 coaches as we are a tough group to work with" | |
| *Team identified coaching objectives based on their respective business challenges and opportunities | Awareness of Coaching sessions (team A) |
| *Worked through the D.E.F.I.N.E coaching model with 2 out of the 3 teams (team a and c) with one team (team b) using only the first, second and fourth stages of the model | "know we have the next session to bring any issues up"
| Collect data on the team prior to the coaching sessions (team B) | "session raised our awareness in our day to day activities"
| *Four 2 hour coaching sessions 2-4 weeks apart over a 3-4 month timeframe | "would like to see coaches collect data on each individual in the team prior to the session...so we knew how the team worked"
| *Development of team objectives | Two teams (a and c) agreed their team coaching objectives. Subsequently, each session contributed to the overarching objectives agreed and were made more explicit in each session. However, one team (b) could not agree which objective to work on. Subsequently each session had a different team objective.

**Coaches observations only**

As outlined in Table 3, on average 40% of the team coaching objectives were achieved which does not appear commercially viable from an organisation’s perspective. This proposition is not surprising given that approximately 70% of the team coaching objectives are behavioural based which would probably take more than three 2 hour coaching sessions to successfully achieve. This suggests that the
teams may have used team coaching to help them figure out how best to address less tangible objectives such as “build a stronger relationship with (our supplier)” and “build trust and openness within the immediate team” on which it is difficult to put a commercial value. As one team indicated “we are never going to sort it in a forum like this as it’s been an ongoing issue for at least 6 months on the project”.

In summary, such evidence suggests that both individuals and teams benefit from team coaching in terms of thinking and behaviour. For two teams (A&C) this not only occurred within their immediate team but also in their relationships with other teams. Also, one team (b) reported that team coaching had increased their level of self-awareness.

Research Question 2: What happened in the team coaching sessions that contributed towards the effects reported?

The team, the coach and the process were three key factors that were found to have contributed towards the reported effects. A summary of the contributing factors that were reported by individuals and teams is outlined in Table 3.

The Teams

Both individuals and teams acknowledged that they contributed to the session by taking ownership and responsibility for their own actions. Teams’ willingness to work together and the need to listen to others perspectives were two further factors that were reported by individuals to have contributed towards such effects with teams A and C indicating that they also reflected on their own behaviour “made the team look into themselves”.

From the coaches’ own observations of the teams, it appears that team B was not so comfortable working with ambiguity (unlike the other two teams) which may help to explain the need for control wanted by the team from the coach and the frustration they experienced in the sessions. Combine this with the fact that this team worked together on a monthly basis considerably less (on average 72.5%) than the other two teams, and the fact that Team Leader requested time with the coach prior to each session suggests that this team did not appear as mature or cohesive as the other two teams and that maybe there was a tension between the team and their leader. Such evidence indicates that team dynamics may play an important part in the outcome of the coaching sessions. This notion is reinforced further as team B’s coaching objectives are focussed on tasks which are typical of a new team starting to form (ie identify and agree common team objectives) as opposed to the other two teams where their objectives were focussed on how they can enhance their existing performance and or their relationships with external teams.
Team Coaches

Evidence from Table 3 indicates that team coaches need to allow time for individuals to have their say and provide connectivity and focus within and between the coaching sessions. For teams A and C, the coaches also needed the ability to provide observations of the team’s behaviour and help them reflect on it “made the team (the coach) look into themselves”. Individuals in these two teams also reported that the coach challenged the team’s thinking through testing their preconception, raising questions and “searching for underlying issues or hidden agendas” along with helping the team to identify and reach their own solutions such as “helped us drive out our own team solution instead of giving it to us”. This suggests that these are important components of the coaching process all of which are mentioned by Downey (2002), Whitmore (2003) and Diedrich (2001). Independence and open mindedness were two more additional characteristics of a coach that were reported by teams’ A&C and not mentioned in the literature.

Such evidence indicates that in some instances, it may be beneficial for a coach to know little about the team apart from understanding the wider team context. However, team B requested that the coaches find out more about their roles which suggests that this might not always be the case. Furthermore, organisations may want to consider this when selecting a team coach rather than looking for consultants or experts who can provide the teams with an answer to their challenges.

Process

From a process perspective, the Context Focussed model used by the researcher was made explicit to varying degrees for each team although it was not reported by participants as contributing towards the perceived coaching effects. This suggests that the actual process may not be as important to the teams as opposed to what the coach says or does.

Furthermore, team B requested that the coaches collect data on individuals prior to the session so that they knew how the team worked. This suggests that in some instances it may be appropriate for the coach to conduct a team diagnostic with individuals prior to the coaching session, which in turn may help inform the coaching objectives, although this was not the case with the other two teams suggesting that the coach may need to consider the dynamics of the team and adapt their style accordingly.

The two teams who had two team coaches (A and B) appeared to value this - “(we) need to have 2 coaches as we are a tough group to work with”. Comments by individuals such as “I like (coach 1) doing the talking, (coach 2) listening and making sound pointers” supported this. Team C only had one team coach and said that they didn’t need a second coach. This may be due to their level of maturity and cohesiveness as indicated by the higher level relationship objectives they sought to
achieve in the coaching sessions. Again, this suggests that the number of coaches may be dependant upon the dynamics of the team.

In summary, the team, the coaches and the process all contributed towards the reported effects with individuals in all three teams agreeing that team coaching contributed “reasonably” towards the achievement of their coaching objectives. This suggests other variables such as the dynamics of a team may also affect the outcome. Interestingly, the data suggests that for some teams it may be more important what the coach says or does rather than the process itself indicating a need for coaches to explicit about their way of working upfront and have the ability to work in the moment.

**Conclusion**

**Sponsoring Organisation**

As team coaching appears to have had a positive effect on individuals and teams in terms of their thinking and behaviour within and outside the immediate team, it is recommended that the sponsoring organisation continue to use it. This is further supported by the fact that two out of the three teams perceived team coaching to have helped them to foster their relationships with other teams – the essence of what the organisation is trying change in the construction industry.

Critical to the success of continuing team coaching is the need to employ coaches with a similar philosophy and skills as those used by the researcher and her co-coach as opposed to a consultant who typically provides expert advice to teams. For those teams who struggle to identify and agree on coaching objectives upfront, the coach may consider conducting a team diagnostic to help inform the development of such objectives. However, the team diagnostic should not be the primary focus of the coaching sessions which is often the case with facilitated sessions, rather the emphasis be placed on what the coach says and does with the team in the moment when exploring their coaching goals.

In addition, teams need to be willing to participate in the sessions, develop their own solutions to their coaching goals and take ownership for their actions – all with the support of their coach.

In order to get maximum value from team coaching it may be worthwhile for the organisation to gain momentum across the project by coaching other teams so there is a critical mass. As one person said “it would have been helpful if you had worked with other sub project teams to reinforce teamwork for the good of the project, relationship and communication across the project”. For the organisation this will be a difficult decision to choose between delivering the project on time and the costs and resource taken to coach teams.
Coaching and Academic Communities

For the coaching and academic communities, changes in individual’s thinking behaviour is not something that is mentioned explicitly in the literature on team coaching nor does it mention that it fosters the development of inter and intra team working. Based on these findings, a new team coaching definition may be articulated such as “enabling changes in individual and team thinking and behaviour within and outside the immediate team”. An independent coach helps teams to explore their coaching goals through raising their level of awareness, challenging their thinking and assumptions, helping them to reflect and develop their own solutions. For those Academic Institutions who train team coaches, they may want to utilise the coach qualities identified in the research as a basis for future research to determine which attributes (if any) can be utilised effectively across different teams and sectors.

Importantly, the research highlighted some core characteristics and activities of team coaching as follows:

• It has time-bound coaching sessions with willing team members (different from facilitated sessions that are usually a mandatory initiative and are often one off)
• Coaching activities focus on specific job related coaching goals via a contract developed and owned by the team (not by the sponsor who typically engages a consultant for a specific purpose)
• There is no formal team diagnostic upfront (unlike Process Consultation, operant conditioning and team focussed coaching)
• The team develops their own solutions with the support of their coach (similar to Process Consultation and unlike operant conditioning and some of the facilitation styles employed by consultants which tend to provide expert advice)
• The coach is neutral and independent from the teams they work with (unlike operant conditioning whereby managers or leaders often act as coaches to their teams)
• Requires a skilled coach who can adapt to the dynamics and needs of the team in the moment whilst keeping the team focussed on their coaching goals (unlike operant conditioning and some of the facilitation styles employed by consultants which tend to be more prescriptive and structured in their approach)

As such, team coaching could be seen as more exploratory in nature as opposed to structured, diagnostic and advice driven more typically employed by other approaches. Interestingly, the Process Consultation method employed by Schein (1999) and the Acceptant style of facilitation identified by Cockman et al., (1999) most closely aligned with the researcher’s and her co-coaches approach to team coaching. This suggests that regardless of the definition, coaches need to be absolutely explicit about their approach so that teams know what to expect which will help to avoid confusion about what the coach is there to do.
In summary, it appears that team coaching may be useful in provoking changes in individuals and teams thinking and behaviour through raising their level of awareness which in turn enhances inter and intra teamwork. As the findings are limited given the small sample size and self-report nature of the study, further research needs to be conducted to determine whether or not this directly affects performance.

Given that the teams achieved 40% of their coaching objectives in fewer than five hours, this suggests that team coaching may be useful for organisations to consider using in their quest for integrated teamwork. Furthermore, it begs the question: What would it take for the remaining 60% of the objectives to be achieved? Clearly, there is a need for further research to investigate and isolate different variables that may impact upon the reported results such as the relationship of the team leader with the team, task performance and the wider organisational systems.

Finally, it seems that team coaching can indeed be usefully applied in the team context regardless of the definition. It could be concluded that team coaching may indeed be an emerging field in its own right in the world of business, although further longitudinal studies in different contexts with different teams needs to be undertaken before this hypothesis can be validated.

Acknowledgements – A huge thank you to my organisation and those people who participated, I-coach academy and my friends and colleagues Joanna Yates and Andy Iwaniac for making this research possible.

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The Management of Change in Local Government Using a Coaching Approach

By Angélique Du Toit

Abstract
The longitudinal research project seeks to support the hypothesis that long term change is much more likely to be sustained over a period of time using a coaching approach as opposed to more traditionally enforced top-down change processes. One of the reasons for the hypothesis is that coaching creates ownership of change in those involved in the change. It also breaks down both external and internal barriers to change which often sabotage attempts to change and facilitates the necessary change to organisational culture. The research is to be carried out with a Local Authority within the UK who is responding to the pressure by government for the improvement of efficiencies within the public sector. Change within the public sector has traditionally been managed by external consultants, thereby abdicating power and responsibility. In contrast the essence of coaching is the recognition of how our actions and behaviours influence and create our experiences. The success of coaching is related to the nature of coaching as it addresses the values and beliefs of the individual or team involved in the coaching process. In order to bring about change and transformation, the coach facilitates the process of understanding what it is that drives the behaviours and actions of the client and the client organisation.

This is the first paper in a series.

Introduction
The purpose of this paper is that of a positioning paper and to set the scene to a series of papers which will discuss ongoing research being conducted with a Local Authority (LA) within the United Kingdom. A number of subjects and themes will be introduced relative to the research project and which will then be presented in much greater detail in subsequent papers. In 2004 Sir Peter Gershon produced a report based on his review of public sector efficiency. In it he identifies opportunities to embed efficiency across the sector and it is in response to his report that the LA in this research project rose to the challenge. They decided to lead the way in implementing the recommendations of the Gershon report and establish the
guidelines for best practice within the sector. Before change can take place within an organisation, there needs to be a recognition and acceptance for change. The Gershon report provided the impetus for change. Not only has the LA authority responded to the challenges, but it has also decided to take a radically different approach to change, namely that of coaching. As organisations continue to invest more in the employment of coaching as part of their management development, little empirical research has been conducted to ascertain the effectiveness of coaching in the management of change. The purpose of this research project is to determine exactly that and the subjects introduced in the paper will be explored in greater detail in future papers and as the research project unfolds.

Innovation and accessibility to an ever demanding consumer market has meant that the public sector is not exempt from the pressures of change and finding better and more efficient ways of delivering customer value. However, innovation and creativity is not traditionally associated with the leadership styles of Local Government. It is also subject to political pressures for change and particularly the need for change in the services agenda and way in which they respond to change. Change within Local Authorities has traditionally been carried out by external consultants with a result that the embedded culture of the authority remained unchanged. The senior management team of the LA in question had for 18 months prior to the start of the change project undergone one-to-one Executive Coaching with Sentient UK, one of the largest providers of business coaching within the UK. As a result of the value they have gained from coaching, they decided as a senior management team to use a coaching approach to change, hitherto unknown at this scale of organisational change. A coaching approach was selected to facilitate change through action learning. A pilot programme is currently underway and following successful completion, other major change projects will follow using a coaching approach.

This paper will serve to introduce the methodology to be employed in researching the change project and to conduct a literature review of coaching and the management of change applicable to this project.

The Nature of Change

Whilst an organisation is locked into old patterns of behaviour and ways of operating, change will be problematic and probably not very successful. Organisations might engage in avoidance tactics until there is recognition that old behaviours and practices are no longer effective. To bring about change and move from a state of equilibrium Lewin (1951) argues that an organisation can either amplify the forces driving change or reduce the forces resisting change. The well known model of change put forward by Lewin involves a three stage process. The first stage is to unfreeze the change situation and reduce the forces creating the state of equilibrium, secondly the organisation implements a change process and in the third stage refreezing occurs whereby the new state once again becomes the state of equilibrium. The motivation
for change can be driven either internally by recognising the need for change or it can be external forces necessitating a response from the organisation.

The future is an unknown quantity (Carnall, 1990) that holds only potential and no certainties. A key element of change, and one which is often ignored or taken for granted by organisations, is the human element of change. Carnall (1990) profoundly reminds us that change is very much dependent on the behaviour of people within the organisation. For change to take place people have to behave differently and if they are supported and rewarded through this period of change, they will adopt new behaviours. Furthermore, a successful change programme requires that the organisation learns from the process. Major change programmes are often associated with single themes (Carnall, 1990) and as outlined above, major change in terms of efficiency is expected of Local Government following the Gershon report. Many blocks to change have been identified, but the one block that is perhaps particularly relevant in a LA when it comes to the delivery of change is that of cultural blocks. Traditional and hierarchical working practices have persisted within LA which has meant that any change that has been introduced has been tinkering on the surface rather than fundamentally challenge the long-held values and beliefs of the culture.

The Learning Organisation

Brockbank and McGill (2006) argue that there is no specific theory of learning that encompasses all of the facets to human learning and perceives the field to be wide as well as varied. Depending on the psychological perspective from which one approaches learning, it will either be motivated by learning associated with changes in behaviour or attempting to understand learning and change from inside of the individual. These are broadly speaking the approaches from either the behaviourist or cognitive perspectives. Increasingly emotions are seen as important in the process of learning and Brockbank and McGill (2006, p. 26) argue for the inclusion of all three domains of learning namely, “doing, thinking and feeling, for deep and significant learning.” Furthermore, contemporary theories to learning argue for the importance of reflection to sustained learning (Steinaker and Bell, 1979; Boyd and Fales, 1983; Boyd et al., 1985). Peddler (1994) reinforces the need for reflection and argues that learning involves both the inner learning of the individual as well as the outer learning, which involves the acquisition of external skills and changed outer performance. Learning requires both the internal processes of the learning by way of reflection on the outer actions, namely experiences, for learning to take place. The coaching process is very much concerned with the reflection of the individual or group on their experiences and how this process influences their learning.

A fundamental aspect of learning is the impulse to be generative and to ‘expand our capability’ according to Senge (1994, p. 5). A fundamental principle of coaching is to facilitate the expansion of capabilities of both the individual and the organisation. Senge (1994) also advocates the need for creative tension within the organisation which will provide the energy for the organisation to move towards the vision of where the organisation wants to be. Within this LA the course of the creative tension
was both external by way of changes being driven by government, but also the vision of the team involved in the change project.

The inclusion of reflexivity in learning acknowledges the subjective world of the learning and recognises that each individual will experience different realities based on individual experiences, personality, gender, etc. Furthermore, Brockbank and McGill (2006) argue that learning is a social process and fundamental to learning. This supports a social constructionist perspective that reality is created within the social environment due to the interactions of the participants within a particular environment. Meaning is therefore created within the interactions between the learners. Argyris and Schon (1996) introduced the concept of single and double loop learning. Single loop learning is seen as focusing on immediate improvement, but does not consider the values and beliefs of the individual or the way that they may perceive the world. On the other hand double loop learning incorporates the paradigms held of the world thereby creating much more powerful shifts within the learner.

According to Carnall (1990), learning is associated with changing processes and behaviours and evolving cultures, elements that have remained wedded to historical hierarchical traditions within LAs. If major change is to be implemented successfully, learning has to take place. It is also critical that everyone in the organisation is involved in the changes as learning takes place through personal experience and experimentation. The LA in question took the unprecedented decision to challenge the traditions and to bring about fundamental change and organisational learning through a radically different approach from past change methodologies. To bring about fundamental change it is necessary for an organisation to reinvent itself. The essence of the learning process is when people are stimulated and either helped or hindered by prevailing circumstances (Carnall, 1990).

It is a truism that renewal requires destruction and that is precisely what the senior management of this LA set out to do. The organisation recognised the need to destroy and fundamentally change the traditional approach to change if improvements and efficiencies were going to be achieved. A part of the destructive process was to create a bottom up approach to change, allowing the departments to redefine their own practices and procedures, giving true ownership for change to the teams who had to bring about change. Public organisations have the added challenge to instil in their staff a much greater commercial awareness and the need for consistently delivering quality. Furthermore, a culture of ownership for achieving this has to be created with each and everyone responsible for the implementation of change. Learning also requires the surfacing of deeply held beliefs which might lead to conflict within the organisation. It is also common for political gaming to intensify as people respond to protect territories (Pettigrew, 1973).

The involvement of people is crucial not only for learning to take place, but it will also ensure that change is sustained throughout the organisation. A key activity in ensuring involvement and support for change is communication. Not only does communication help reduce the uncertainty associated with change, but it involves
people in the debates and discussions relevant to change and helps to create ownership for change. Involving staff in both the planning and the implementation of change is one way to ensure commitment to change. Change is not only a technical exercise and ignoring the people aspect of change will result in change that is not sustainable over any length of time. Any change has to be carried out by people and if the people in the organisation is not wholly committed or involved in change, change will be mediocre at best.

**Organisational Culture**

Changing the organisational culture is often vital to sustainable change. The LA in question is representative of the stereotypical hierarchical and bureaucratic public sector organisation. A role culture has prevailed and although effective in a stable environment, it is not serving the organisation well in dealing with the changes required of the organisation. Organisational cultures provide the patterns with which organisations will handle and solve problems and more importantly, how the organisation will approach change and adapt to changes in their environment. Organisational culture therefore provides the organisation with a blueprint of how it should behave in a particular situation (Burnes, 1992). The public sector continues to challenge historical cultures and mindsets that appear less effective in dealing with their rapidly changing environment. According to Cummings and Huse (1989), there are four elements to culture. These are:

1. **Basic assumptions** – The deep, unconscious and unquestioned beliefs about who and what the organisation is and how the role of people within the organisation, how change should be approached, human activity and relationships.

2. **Values** – That which is perceived as necessary to the organisation and what is important to the organisation.

3. **Norms** – Guide the behaviour of how members of the organisation should behave in a given situation and act as the unwritten rules of how behaviour should be conducted.

4. **Artifacts** – These are the visible manifestations of the others levels of cultural elements, namely behaviours, structures, rules and regulations, organisational structures, processes and other physical aspects of the organisation.

Organisational cultures are dynamic and will change and adapt as the organisation changes and adapts. Change is sometimes painful for the organisation as change by its very nature requires a change in the deep seated mindsets of the organisation as discussed above. Being out of step with changes in the environment will sometimes put tremendous pressure on the organisation to bring about changes in the organisational culture. This is necessary for the organisation to adapt and respond to a changing environment, if it is to survive Burnes (1992).
As Clutterbuck and Megginson (2005) advises, creating a coaching culture is a difficult process as it involves changing attitudes in all spheres of the business. Furthermore, it requires sustained commitment to bed in new practices and new beliefs, a process which takes time. Creating an organisational culture that draws on coaching as a mechanism for change requires the growth of both the organisation and the people. Furthermore, as Clutterbuck and Megginson (2005) suggests, introducing a coaching style to the management of change is not linear. As the change unfolds challenges and unanticipated issues will be revealed. In the particular change project within the LA it became apparent that people needed to be supported through coaching in developing the ability and competencies to manage change projects. Equally the management of expectations and assumptions at all levels of the organisation became a challenge alongside the change project.

It is inevitable that any change to organisational culture will meet with resistance. There will be those who will want to protect the traditional ways of doing things, protection of territories and the inevitable power struggles that accompanies change. The management of organisational change is not a distinct and clearly defined organisational discipline instead it borrows from many disciplines and traditions. This does make for a complex study and to understand organisational change it is necessary to draw on psychology in order to understand the behaviours of those involved in the change process. One particular approach to understand and managing change, is Business Process Re-Engineering. It has also influenced the approach to change within much of the public sector thus far.

**Business Process Re-Engineering**

A popular model for change and doing more with less was the concept of BPR pioneered by Hammer and Champy (1995). Doing more with less is at the heart of the Gershon report and what the public sector has to achieve in order to implement the recommendations of the report and become more efficient. The essence of the model requires organisations to radically rethink their business processes to achieve dramatic improvements. This is precisely what the public sector has to achieve if they are to rise to the challenges of the Gershon report and as mentioned above, the traditional route in implementing BPR has traditionally been through the consultancy route. The first step of BRP is for the organisation to carry out some soul searching and to identify what is required for the organisation to deliver its product or service and ultimately offer value to the customer. If an organisation is going to successfully embrace the philosophy of BPR it is often necessary for the organisation to abandon existing procedures and embedded assumptions and beliefs about who and what the organisation is (Morden, 2004). Within the public sector in the United Kingdom it is an established approach to assess your performance against targets of best practice benchmarks.
Morden (2004) summarizes the main characteristics of a re-engineering process as follows:

**Several Jobs are Combined into One**

Many tasks or jobs are integrated and combined into one making one person or team responsible for the tasks thereby providing a single point of contact. The benefits are that those responsible for the outputs are able to produce the product or service in more creative and efficient ways. As fewer people are involved control is another benefit.

**Workers Make Decisions**

BPR challenges the assumption that the workers are incapable of making decisions as to their performance and advocates that decision-making becomes part of the work. The workers therefore assume some of the management responsibility previously owned by management exclusively.

**The Steps in the Process are Performed in a Natural Order**

Different processes are synchronised avoiding arbitrary linearity. The result is that more than one task can be performed simultaneously as opposed to sequentially, reducing time between the steps.

**Processes have Multiple Versions**

The logic of mass production is not effective or appropriate in dealing with the diversity of ever changing markets. Multiple approaches to processes are required to deal with different needs.

**Work is Performed Where it Makes the Most Sense**

Traditionally work has been arranged around specialists, functions and departments. The result is that much of the activities within organisation have been outsourced in order to reduce cost or to improve performance.

**Checks and Controls are Reduced**

Controls are applied when they make economic sense and adds value to the final outcome.

**Single Point of Contact**

Having one person as the point of contact for the customer is useful when the process is complex. It does mean that the individual needs to have access to all necessary information systems required for the task to be performed and contact with others when further assistance is required.

Research reveals that one of the key elements leading to the success of a BPR approach is the human factor (McAdam and Donaghy, 1999; Cooper and Markus,
Aspects of the human factor included the commitment and support from senior management, communication to all staff and the empowerment and involvement of staff in the process. Furthermore, BPR requires a radical review of long-established ways of doing business and if successfully implemented will require the necessity of fundamental and revolutionary change. Organisational culture was discussed above and the success of a BPR approach is seen as being dependent on the ability to change the organisational culture and structure (Al-Mashari and Zairi, 2000).

An approach to change that at its core addresses the people aspect is that of coaching. The essence of coaching is to liberate the full potential of both the individual as well as that of the organisation.

The Nature of Coaching

Coaching has traditionally focused on a one-to-one relationship between the coach and the coachee for the purpose of developing the personal performance of the client (Witherspoon and White, 1996). The coach would draw on psychological and behavioural techniques to achieve this. A further reason for the success of coaching is the identification of the crucial skill of managing self and others. Coaching provides the coachee with access to non-judgemental support in reflecting on critical issues and exploring the complexities which managers of contemporary organisations have to deal with. Access to such impartial support is not often available within organisations. Managers do not necessarily obtain open and honest feedback from peers and subordinates and coaching provides the mirror managers need to understand the impact they have on others and how their actions and behaviours are perceived by others within the organisation. The coach is in the position of being able to ask the questions no one else in the organisation would necessarily have the courage to ask. Through the coaching process the coachee increases self-awareness and improve their communication with others.

Numerous disciplines have informed the models and techniques used in coaching such as psychology, psychotherapy and philosophy. However, within organisational coaching a competence in psychological methods is not enough. A knowledge and awareness of business, business issues and leadership is also important (Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson, 2000). A key role of the coach is to challenge the assumptions of the coachee, to provide feedback and to offer support in exploring and creating options and identifying the consequences of those options. O’Neill (2000) argues that presence is one of the most important principles and tools of coaching. No manager operates in isolation within an organisation and it is therefore crucial for the coach to understand the manager within the context of their working environment and their interaction with others. The success of coaching further relies on the ability of the coach to work with the values and beliefs of the individual. In order to bring about change and transformation, the coachee needs to understand what it is that drives their behaviours and actions.
As mentioned above, various psychological approaches and disciplines have strongly influenced the developing profession of coaching. Coaching seeks to influence and bring about changes in behaviours which will change and improve performance, for example, cognitive-behaviour therapy which includes a wide variety of intervention techniques can assist with this process (Ducharme, 2004). It supports the way in which we interpret situations and which will in turn influence our behaviours in response to various situations. By redefining events or our interpretations of events, we will therefore have various options with which to respond, if the process is at the conscious level. We all have filters through which we interpret and judge events and situations and if we are able to understand our drivers we may have more choice in terms of responses to any given event. These filters reflect the beliefs we have about ourselves and others and our behaviours and responses in a particular situation. If we are therefore able to change our cognitions we will also be able to bring about changes in our behaviours (Dobson & Block, 1988, Dobson & Dozois, 2001). The coachee will often seek help within a coaching environment to bring about changes in behaviours that are interfering with performance such as changes in leadership styles (Ducharme, 2004).

A key aspect of coaching is the ability to increase and improve the sensitivity and awareness the client has of both of themselves as well as that of others. In order to develop self-awareness the individual must have access to honest feedback and this is sometimes difficult to obtain within the organisation, particularly if the client is in a senior position within the organisation. Emotional competence is increasingly rated as the most important competency to develop en route to senior management positions (Wasylyshyn, 2003). The value of the coach is the ability to provide open and honest feedback within a supportive environment. The coach therefore needs knowledge and experience in both psychological models to help the client develop self-awareness and understand their personal drivers as well as a knowledge and understanding of how they impact their organisational environment and performance. Personal change wrought through coaching extends beyond an increase in personal awareness and includes behavioural changes and the ability to build stronger relationships. This is achieved through deep personal communication facilitated by the coaching environment (Quick and Macik-Frey, 2004). Through such communication complicated issues are discussed, revealing the personal barriers, fears and dreams of the coachee. The coach also facilitates the learning of the client through strategic questioning. This aids learning by exploring issues and to challenge the client, using various methods such as metaphors, stories and questioning techniques (Richard, 2003).

Senior managers tend to be much more outwardly focused, certainly action-oriented and often motivated by power. Introspection does not always feature highly on their list of priorities. It is also a given that operating at the senior level of an organisation can be lonely with few people the senior executive can confide in or even share weaknesses and fears with (Kets de Vries,1989). According to Quick and Macik-Frey (2004) we can observe two levels of communication within the coaching environment. The first is the functional level whereby the coachee communicates
externally throughout the organisation. At this level the manager communicates information and is involved in different external roles. Within the coaching environment the coachee is involved in communication at the inner tier and which involves a much more personal and intimate level of communication. It is at this level that the manager is both given permission as well as challenged to deal with her personal complexities, drivers and values which influences her external communication. Working at this level with the coach enables the manager to develop the self-awareness and management of personal emotions that are vital in building interpersonal relationships and the skill to manage people.

The ability to recognise and manage one’s emotions and the effect they have on others are skills seen as fundamental to being a successful manager. Self-management allows the individual to control and manage disruptive emotions, adaptability, accountability and the recognition of when to act (Wasylyshyn, 2003). The sensitivity and atonement to the emotions of others leads to the ability to demonstrate empathy. These competencies also equip the manager to deal much more effectively with conflict at work and the building of collaborative teams (Wasylyshyn, 2003). The education of managers does not prepare them for the complexities and dynamics of the emotions which they will encounter within the organisation. The toxins that result from strained and difficult organisational relationships will inevitably impact the bottom line of the organisation (Quick and Macik-Frey, 2004). Numerous research carried out has built the business case for the ability to manage your own emotions and the important of possessing a high level of emotional competence at work (Wasylyshyn, 2003).

There is an increasing demand for team coaching in order to achieve the type of transformational change required of a BPR approach. As discussed above, the power of coaching is that it addresses the human aspect of change which is perceived as a crucial success factor in the change process. It is for this reason that coaching is seen as a powerful intervention strategy in bringing about complex change within an organisation.

**Methodology**

In terms of a research methodology action research is seen as the most appropriate approach for this particular research project. Action research will provide the bridge between research and the practical experience of conducting the change project. A benefit of action research is that it influences and improves the practice which is precisely the objective with this change process. As coaching is a relatively new approach to managing change, especially change of this scale, improving and building on the process for further change projects is fundamental. The objectives of action research are very complimentary to the objectives of coaching. As discussed above, coaching aims to heighten the awareness of self and others within the coachee and to facilitate an understanding of the complex and systemic nature of the context within which they operate. Action research equally seeks to enhance the understanding the practitioner has of her environment and to bring about
improvement of future action and behaviours (Somekh, 1995). A further complimentary approach is that coaching is action learning and action research is the evaluation of that learning and with the emphasis being on the interpersonal relationships and interactions.

The change project is a partnership between the Local Authority who is seeking a change methodology that will deliver sustainable change as well as meet the objectives of external government drivers and the providers of the coaching process, Sentient UK. As academic, researcher and coach, I have a vested interest in the research project. A fundamental principle of action learning and action research is to facilitate the coming together of parties to learn from the experience of each other, studying the shared situation and learning from it with the purpose of improving the practice (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000).

The underpinning epistemology of the research approach is that of social constructionism and together the parties involved in the research project will construct and reconstruct their knowledge of the subject matter. Together they will make sense of the management of change using a coaching approach. Furthermore, they will construct their understanding and interpretations based on their shared language, practice and experiences of coaching and change management. Equally constructionism is perceived as metaphors, narratives and storytelling. The participants of the process will construct the story of change management through a coaching approach and take away their own personal learning to inform future practices.

Conclusion

The research project will proceed with the analysis of secondary data, which will include the documentation that preceded the change project. These documents will provide insight to the discussions, debates and motivations for selecting a coaching approach to change. In addition one-to-one interviews are arranged with key members of the change project as well as focus groups with the teams involved in the implementation of the change. The research project will seek to support the hypothesis that long term change using a coaching approach is much more likely to be sustained over a period of time as opposed to more traditionally enforced top-down change processes. One of the reasons for the hypothesis is that coaching creates ownership of change in those involved in the change. It also breaks down both external and internal barriers to change which often sabotage attempts to change and facilitates the necessary change to organisational culture.

References


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From Trail-Blazing Individualism to a Social Construction Community; Modelling Knowledge Construction in Coaching

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Abstract

This paper describes a model for analysing why and how knowledge construction issues arise around understanding coaching and mentoring. This analysis concerns the literature and empirical context one kind of coaching, executive coaching. Data from a survey of coaches who completed a preferences instrument derived from the model was collected. Analysis of this data indicates patterns in the academic identity and knowledge construction preferences of coaches. In discussion the initial model is revised for further stimulating thinking around integrative knowledge construction in the field of coaching.

A History of Trail Blazing?

The period of trail-blazing and path-finding in coaching and mentoring by pioneers is over. The ‘wild west days’ (Sherman & Freas 2004) are history. Original thinkers and contributors have been producing there 2nd editions (Downey 2003, Whitmore 2000, Clutterbuck 2004). The momentum to establish an institutional infrastructure for coaching and mentoring has built up considerably in recent times. In the present the growth of occasional articles into integrative literature reviews (Feldman & Lankau 2005, Joo 2005 ) networks into more formal bodies, of short courses into qualifications, of a few published textbooks into many texts in catalogues, give a real sense of coaching becoming an integral feature of the learning and development landscape. Sustaining and building on that momentum now brings into starker relief an issue that faces any successful knowledge construction initiative which grows as much as this . That is the issue of the academic identity of coaching and mentoring.

The issue now is that knowledge about coaching and mentoring are currently being socially constructed during the course of interaction between two big forces. Social construction here simply means that knowledge is made and sustained as a community is made and sustained. The process of knowledge construction is
mutually reciprocal with community construction. One big force in this is the continuing strong presence of pragmatists. Accepting, embracing and advocating a ‘pragmatist’ view of people and performance in coaching and mentoring, means accepting a ‘whatever works is good’, loose process and technique-laden approach to knowledge construction around coaching and mentoring practices. The pragmatist belief that what is important is what works, not the coherence and consistency of a body of knowledge or theory, allows for multiple eclectic accounts of process and practice. Pragmatists are, and often wish to remain, free to locate and blend techniques in this individual, personal and eclectic fashion. They have blazed the trails, and want to be free to continue wandering where they wish at will. People who positively value this kind of environment and freedom continue to be attracted into the area of practice, people who consider that any other kind of environment would be stifling.

The other big force is the influence of those who have followed along the trails, representing the great knowledge communities of already socially constructed established subjects, disciplines and professions, the well established domains of academic identity allied with established areas of institutional practice. These include, but are not only, practicing academics from the divided kingdoms of business and the study of adult learning, of schools of psychology and counselling. Their social construction influence is to question the sustainability of the trailblazers individualistic way of going about things, and to propose that now development be done in a more structured and evidence-based way (Pawson et al 2004, Pawson 2004).

Where the free spirits of individualism and eclecticism, of the pragmatic approach to coaching and the advocates of a tighter governance requiring evidence-bases, conceptual coherence and clarity about curricula for development meet there are elements of both common interest and confrontation. There have been meetings in the burgeoning literature about coaching and mentoring (Chapman et al 2003, Crane 2002, Zeus & Skiffington 2003). Texts written by practitioners and experienced coaches, the wisdom literature, typically ventures into and deal with aspects of academic territories, often at a deep philosophical level though, not at the bread-and-butter level of methods, evidence and structured analysis. They may go beyond reviewing standard themes and techniques; like basic skills in the area such as listening, questioning and consider heuristics and techniques to help with doing work, such as using ‘clean language’ and ‘exploring metaphors’ (for example Leonard 1998, Hill 2004).

Competency mapping provided another meeting point. A map of the coaching and mentoring (and other development role) territory needs to be staked out for common interests such as curriculum design and course accreditation purposes. The question that arises is who ought to occupy that staked out territory? There is competition, a plurality of groups that may/should be encouraged to prevail. These could be thought of as academic subjects; psychology, consulting, organisational analysis, HRD, leadership. Or they could be thought of as associated ‘professions’ and methods (and
movements); such as counseling, adult learning, mentoring, positive psychology. The potential threat is of being pulled to a centre of gravity in one form of professional practice (for example Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), or typologies of kinds of coaching and mentoring).

The Momentum of Social Construction

This situation is not peculiar to coaching. When a new area of professional development is emerging and approaching institutional status, being more than a loose collection of practices which a few individuals are trail-blazing as they go along, the usual option is to reach for and gather together the ‘right’ set of subject-matter based disciplines. This process of constructing an academic identity is a social process, one that involves creating and sustaining a community. In the case of coaching and mentoring the community is one that has been open to incorporating a set of members from, for example, psychology, social psychology, career studies, management development and organisational analysis.

Another source of possible members of the community that may coalesce around coaching and mentoring is people in associate professional areas. They bring with them experiences of how competence is developed, incorporating methods and areas of expertise. This may bring validation by connection with the scientific and cultural capital created in these areas of established expertise. Alternatively they may bring with them confusion and problems as they overshadow other members.

This is a period of social construction and searching for a basis for community to connect evidence-based, coherent and education-grounded development without over-shadowing or even sacrificing what has gone before.

This as a big picture of the situation might be of little concern, if it did not turn on a crucial dilemma that

“The human mind serves two masters; the stress of practice and the craving for a larger wisdom ... adventures in thinking are vital quests for guidance in action and for insight into order and destiny”  (Jastrow 1962 )

One risk is that social construction phase draws attention into the consideration of larger wisdoms. But to be helpful in supporting effective coach development studies need to be addressing the stress of practice, providing for guidance in action. The complex social construction phase currently being experienced needs to serve both the stress of practice as well as the cravings for ‘larger wisdoms’. The other risk is that the community withholds from opening up and advancing analysis of larger wisdoms. But to support effective coach development also means recognising an interest with and concern about insights into order, these are an equal part of effective coach development.
Why Model?

Exploring academic identities can help transcend coaching being either too pragmatic and ‘techniques’ driven or becoming too enmeshed in the mazes of larger wisdoms, esoteric philosophy and sense-making systems. One option is to adopt and adapt the work of Becher and Trowler (2001) and model and analyse academic tribes and territories. This model can be adapted to conceive of an integrated framework for knowledge in coaching and mentoring. For Becher and Trowler 4 kinds of knowledge construction or academic identity, can be identified and explored. Each of these has distinctive features that contain effective sense-making, with characteristic patterns of communication for the construction of what is deemed to be useful knowledge. Each type of academic identity requires a kind of ‘savoir faire’, making them distinctive. While there is evidently scope for conflict and confrontation between these different groupings, ultimately each of them may have a role and can be useful to inform understanding coaching and mentoring.

In advancing such a framework the denotation of ‘academic’ places emphasis on matters relating to education and scholarship, on reading and study rather than technical or practical work. The connotations lead in many directions. They can end up with meanings that define the academic as dry, boring, tedious and remote from operational significance; or end up with meanings that value the academic as of high status, representing the informed challenge of conventional wisdom which drives dynamic cultures and societies. Here we mean only to acknowledge that it is to be taken seriously that the ‘academic’ has to articulate its value, to avoid being mis-perceived as irrelevant.

There will be wariness and sensitivities around advancing any such framework. Those in and around the occupation still favouring pragmatism, to be more independent and action-oriented, will be wary of being drawn away from the personal certainties they have attained and into what they may fear are stagnant backwaters and swamps.

The Model

Becher & Trowler (op cit) propose that any area of knowledge production and consumption can be considered as a kind of ‘territory’; an environment with conditions that may range from the ‘hard’ to the ‘soft’. At the ‘hard’ end of possible environments are the territories inhabited by those who have been successful by adopting a ‘realist’ strategy for knowledge construction; these are groups who form to seek to identify the facts of a discernable and stable reality. In the environments deemed ‘soft’ are the groups who have been successful by adopting phenomenological strategies, to articulate and give voice to diverse accounts of reality. In between the extremes of environments warranting either of these in there pure and contrasting forms are those environments that afford success to a mix of the hard and the soft. These are inhabited by groups that accept that ‘realist’ and objective knowledge is possible, and even desirable, but that such knowledge
construction is always embedded in processes of testimony and communication (Goldman 1999). That mean knowledge construction is also subject to the mediation of social and the subjective factors.

This dimension alone would produce two kinds of knowledge construction. But there is also a second dimension to modelling the possible realms of knowledge construction, and this is a cultural dimension. There are, in addition to strategies appropriate for inhabiting a certain kind of territory, equivalent preferences and adaptations for belonging to a certain kind of ‘tribe’. Similar lifestyles may evolve, for instance, in hot and cold places, but the communities inhabiting them may not share the same language, customs and beliefs. The key differentiating element in the founding and sustenance of academic tribes is whether they are a tribe that adheres to a clear, single paradigm or a tribe that adheres to not have a clear, single paradigm. Those knowledge construction communities evolved around adhering to a clear, single paradigms have, as it were, only one face on their totem pole, in essence being monotheistic. Those tribes evolved around adhering to no clear, single paradigm have many faces on their totem pole, being polytheistic.

The former tribes are, in Becher and Trowler’s terms, in a culture of convergence. The latter are in a culture of divergence. The fundamental nature, coherence and permanence of knowledge construction communities, of academic identity, divides along these lines. With the former a stable and continuing consensus on the core paradigm is necessary for their everyday work to be sustained; the need is to work from, reinforce and extend the clear, single paradigm. For the latter variation, disagreement and dissent is the norm; to be sustained they value and the contest of not just competing arguments, theories and schools but of paradigms.

This dimension introduces contrasting patterns of taken-for-granted values, attitudes and ways of behaving which characterise different groups markedly. Their preferred cultures are articulated through and reinforced by recurrent practices among the group. This is manifest in the behaviour, language, values and rituals to be found in the faculties, departments, conferences, publications and every other place that tribe members gather. Socialisation and initiation into a kind of culture, a culture of convergence or divergence, will entail encountering quite distinct challenges to values, beliefs and behaviours if these do not occur naturally in the person, or on changing from kind of environment to another. The culture shock of crossing discipline boundaries can be as severe as anything encountered elsewhere.

The central point is that the way that members of a tribe come habitually to define situations and use the appropriate discourse of either convergence or divergence becomes central to their knowledge construction, and accepting that becomes an essential feature of continuing tribe membership. Using the discourses and modes of argument, demonstrating the savoir faire of the convergent or divergent tribe, is not an option, it is a fundamental part of membership.

Taken together these two dimensions of environment and culture produce a matrix of four potential kinds of knowledge construction and academic identity (see Figure 1).
By extension this model can be used to examine knowledge construction and academic identity in any existing, or new and emerging, area. Some subjects come to evolve around one mix of environment and culture, for example, favouring those who prefer hard and convergent forms of research and learning while others will attract and favour those preferring, in contrast, soft and divergent forms of research and learning.

**Figure 1: Mapping Academic Identities; Source Becher and Trowler 2001**

**Method**

An instrument was developed to translate the Becher & Trowler model of knowledge construction into a series of statements which could be given to respondents. Their forced choice on agreement or disagreement with these would profile them as members of one kind of the 4 possible academic tribes. This involved identifying 6 soft and 6 paired hard indicators and 5 divergent and 5 paired convergent indicators derived from the descriptions Becher and Trowler (2001) give of the territorial and tribal differentiators. There were then in total 22 statements (see Figure 1) with which a respondent could agree or disagree, with agreement indicating support for that indicator of academic identity.

A survey was completed by circulating this tool (see Table 2) to 20 people who attended a presentation on the model at a conference, The European Mentoring and
Coaching Council conference, in Zurich in November 2005. None of the respondents were made aware of the underlying model prior to completing the survey instrument. The executive coaching domain is a good one to explore, as the literature around the theory and practice of executive coaching shows a breadth and diversity in academic terms is evident (Sperry 1993, Witherspoon & White 1996, Clutterbuck & Megginson 2000, Kilburg 2000, Crane 2002, Ludman & Erlandson 2004, Shuit 2005, Khan 2005, Kaufman 2006). The literature found ranges from the ambitious attempt to generally summarise ‘all there is to know’ about Executive Coaching (Zeus & Skiffington 2003) to the more reflective and questioning approaches that raise concerns about challenging the myths that the occupation may be in danger of getting stuck with (Chapman, Best & Van Casteren 2003) or even the potential dangers of unprofessional executive coaching (Berglas 2002). It is a domain where it is claimed (Orenstein 2002) the literature on executive coaching is dominated by descriptions of methodologies by practitioners, defining and designating practices, types and roles for coaching, but there is more on the agenda than this. It is a domain of coaching that is not an exclusively individual intervention, but also overlaps with team and group issues; and coaches need to develop self awareness and reflection about that..

Those who completed the survey indicated the following about themselves as background;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A coach</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers of coaching</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers in coaching</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchaser of coaching services</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A combination of the above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coach &amp; teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coach, teacher and researcher</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher &amp; researcher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach &amp; researcher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher &amp; purchase</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher &amp; purchaser</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1; Survey respondents

The sample is then one which includes both academics and practitioners concerned with the identity of executive coaching. Most respondents had British institutional connections, with some representing German, Swedish and other European institutional contexts.

Figure 1; Questions derived from Becher and Trowler
**I think that most effective teaching and research around executive coaching will be found where...**

### Soft-Hard Dimension

1. It is appreciated that there are many possible approaches to understanding executive coaching
2. Clear boundaries are established to map out what executive coaching is and isn’t
3. A particular focus on the core of the executive coaching role is well defined for learners
4. An eclectic, inclusive, pluralism of possible executive coaching roles is accepted
5. It is recognised that there are no well established and understood boundaries around the subject
6. Differentiation between executive coaching and apparently similar roles is absolutely clear
7. The specific theory that is present in the literatures about executive coaching is made more explicit and critiqued
8. There is freedom from having to be rigorously grounded in particular theoretical traditions
9. There is evidence available from many quantitative and causal studies about the practice of executive coaching and its impact on careers
10. There is evidence from many qualitative case studies about the organisational contexts of the practice of executive coaching
11. There is a conscious collection of and building upon existing studies in executive coaching extending study into ‘gap’ areas and new concerns
12. Only recent studies are used, as there is a continual re-visiting in studies of a familiar set of core concerns, problems and issues but in current conditions

### Convergent-Divergent Dimension

13. The networks of teachers and researchers concerned with exploring executive coaching need to be in close touch and tightly knit as a community
14. The networks of teachers and researchers concerned with exploring executive coaching are only loosely connected as a community
15. In teaching and research there is a high level of tolerance of diverse and even unusual and idiosyncratic approaches to executive coaching
16. In teaching and research there should be a low level of tolerance of multiple and unusual views about executive coaching
17. It is accepted that disputes in understanding executive coaching may persist over prolonged periods, and even become institutionalised in separate theories
18. Procedures for resolving disputes effectively are an integral part of exploring the subject, so as to keep theory development coherent and integrated
19. It is acknowledged that there are a great many topics that are connected with understanding executive coaching in research and teaching
20. There are only really few essential topics at the heart of executive coaching which in research and teaching need to be prioritised and focussed upon
21. Teachers and researchers in executive coaching being scattered thinly across several institutions is a good thing
22. Teachers and researchers in executive coaching being concentrated in a few big, permanent clusters would be a good thing
I think that most effective teaching and research around executive coaching will be found where...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soft-Hard Dimension</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 many possible approaches</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Clear boundaries</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 focus on the core</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 pluralism</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 no well established boundaries</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Differentiation clear</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 specific theory</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Not grounded in theoretical tradition</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 quantitative and causal studies</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 qualitative case studies</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 collection of and building upon existing studies</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 continual re-visiting in studies</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Convergent-Divergent Dimension</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 tightly knit as a community</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 loosely connected as a community</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 tolerance of diverse approaches</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 low level of tolerance of multiple views</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 disputes may persist</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 keep theory development coherent and integrated</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 great many topics</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 few essential topics</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 researchers scattered thinly across several institutions is a good thing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 researchers being concentrated in a few big, permanent clusters</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2; Tribe and territory preference based on survey returns

The extent to which the survey responses were consistent could be judged. This was possible as pairs of statements in each dimension matched; with one positive statement and the other a negative statement on the same factor. Perfectly matched characteristics would indicate a clear preference for one kind of the 4 kinds of academic identity. Most of the survey responses were matched, suggesting that there was a consistent view of academic tribe core identity views being expressed; but in some indicators there was a mismatch.

The evidence here (see Table 2) is that there is a discernible preference, for what in Becher & Trowlers terms would be the ‘soft-divergent’ academic identity, but that is not entirely consistent on either of the primary dimensions. On the soft-hard dimension there are potential tensions around the qualitative-quantitative inquiry
factor, and around the open-circumscribed subject factor. The former may indicate differences among the respondents, while the latter may indicate uncertainty about taking a position on the definition of boundaries around the subject. Figure 2 gives a graphic representation of preferences, using font size to indicate the dominant preferences, with indicators in the largest font being preferred by the majority and those in the smaller fonts preferred by fewer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Font Size</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 Point</td>
<td>Substantial Majority for (&gt; 15 put of 20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Point</td>
<td>Majority Supporting ; Between 10-15 agreeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Point</td>
<td>Minority supporting ; Between 5-10 and agreeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Point</td>
<td>Smallest Minority supporting; less than 5 out of 20 agreeing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 2: Academic Preferences, Graphic Modeling](image)

**Knowledge Construction ‘Tribes’ in Executive Coaching**

**Tribe 1; Skills- Sports and Performance**

An identity preference based on an affinity with domains of behaviour and performance such as sports represent the affinities behind this preference (See for example McLean et al 2005). The styles of coaches and coaching in this domain...
offer potential insights, and studies have been and can be done around that. For some this identity for knowledge construction is attractive because it is more ‘fun’ than the others. For others there is also a potential gender bias that has to be taken into account. Typically the key sports, and sports coaches, and their coachees, are male. There is also a division on the perceived isomorphism between sports and business and teams in these areas. For some various factors in coaching success are common across these different domains, including using both directive and non-directive techniques and strategies. There is an immediacy of results and outcomes in much sports coaching which can make it a useful model for illustrating otherwise abstract ideas or processes that may take time to emerge in other contexts. There is also a shared historical connection with long standing support and involvement in outdoors-based development. This interface may be expected to continue to produce new initiatives and insights from studies, though the ‘martial’ and adventure aspects can sit uncomfortably with some.

The typical themes that tend to arise are trans-sport, broader than the specific activity that is of concern, raising a combination of behavioural change and positive psychology issues. These are, for example;

- Performance requires drive, discipline and determination; performers are being focus and ‘dream’ driven
- Teaching the fundamentals closely and carefully is critical; mastering the rudiments and practicing them is a continual challenge
- Performers are laying against themselves as the ever-present challenge; bettering your own best performance not just winning matters
- Visualization matters; mental rehearsal is as important and valuable as physical practice
- Performers learn from ‘defeat’; people lose as much as they win, many even losing more than they win, and performers need to be able to learn from that
- The coaching relationship is mediated by values; honesty, trust, and communication

There are few pure approaches to executive coaching rooted in this tradition, and the kind of knowledge construction it represents. Galleway (1986) represents one version and variation of this approach. The narrative and empathy with games and sports is warranted because;

“The value of a game lies in its ability to create an illusion—that is to provide a separate reality in which you can experiment and take risks without great penalties for failure…for the purpose of learning better how to meet real challenges and overcome real obstacles in the presence of real pressures.”

Galleway 1986, P 228

Coaches need to understand the key equation of;

    Performance - Interference = Potential
Interference is run by ‘Self 1’, impeding the role of the capable ‘Self 2’. Bad performance is attributable to this interference. Perversely most education and training is based on passively acquiring what Galleway terms ‘do-instructions’, and this is to be seen as a source of interference. Performers expect to be advised by coaches to ‘do’ this, and ‘do’ that. They are dependent on experts, they mistrust themselves and their natural learning process.

The historical and continuing popularity of this approach to knowledge construction can be attributed to the audience demographics for much Executive Coaching, being male (Ludeman & Erlandson, 2004). Executive Coaching was a safe way of slipping in ‘soft issues’ in the guise of behavioural psychology wrapped up in sports talk. This got under the radar of ‘sceptical men’, who, it is often explicitly or implicitly believed, are happier to review and reflect upon their performance and leadership or team role problems if they are contained in narratives founded on sports and sporting dilemmas, teams and activities.

Criticisms of this kind of academic identity for Executive Coaching centre superficially on the extent to which the parallel between sports and management can be either made or sustained (Peterson & Little 2005). In sports the boundaries and rules of the game are clearly delineated. Games are brief and self-contained, with the outcomes of choices and actions clear. Feedback is relatively immediate, and much coaching occurs during practice sessions. Coaches may know the rules better than the players, and design a strategy that players implement; the coach is an expert guiding the game and calling the shots. In management all these factors can be contrasted (see Figure 12).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Sports context</strong></th>
<th><strong>Management context</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boundaries and rules</td>
<td>Clearly delineated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difficult to define; people may enter, leave or change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions</td>
<td>Brief and self contained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lengthy and inter-connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Effect of actions and decisions evident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effect of actions and decisions hard to gauge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>During practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>During performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach Role</td>
<td>Expert designing strategy, providing answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partner helping review, facilitating review</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure ; Sports and Management Contexts for Coaching Compared**
At a deeper level the objection is to assuming that the ‘realities’ of a stable, discernable relationship can be fixed and observed in order to produce a science of coaching. The alternative view is that complexity, uncertainty and contextual factors interact to render such ambitions not just misleading but positively distorting; framing phenomena such as coaching in ways that make them mechanistic exercises in controlled ‘doing’ of specific things rather than human exercises in mutual ‘being’ and healthy growth.
Tribe 2; Cognitive Theory and HRD

An interest in and affinity with psychology, especially cognitive psychology, is a rationale that represents this second kind of tribe in Executive coaching. Rather than behaviour and the performance of a game the structure of knowledge construction here is about individuals’ learning. The challenge for them is that understanding the brain and research about its functions is rooted in the hard and convergent but there are softer and more convergent aspects. To be informed about and involved in knowledge construction here entails engaging with movements such as the evolution of positive psychology (Seligman 2002) to challenge conventional accounts of psychology in coaching (Peltier 2001). Challenges arise around the encounter with highly specialised knowledge, and the scope for pseudo-science and misunderstanding. That leaves knowledge construction vulnerable to hype in linking techniques and applications based in this area to practice.

This tribe is also more divergent, belonging as it overlaps with the domain of Human Resource Development (HRD), the interface of learning, careers and organisation development rather than sports, games grounded in description and analysis of the body. This gives it ‘social construction appeal’ among the community of HR managers and other managers whose sense of savoir faire overlaps with studies in that area. These are groups who are familiar with the language and research formats typically adopted in this area. These usually attempt to capture the ‘whole’ series of issues around a topic through exploring cases which link organisational, group and individual levels of analysis together; for example in ‘talent management’ or development interactions (D’abate et al 2003). This crossing of levels is a major strength, grounded in evidence directly from workplaces.

It is also possible to see this in some ways the least ‘negative’ kind of tribe to belong to, rather than a positive choice; for those who are not comfortable with the constraints around the hard and convergent identity. An ambivalence around a positive embrace of a tribal identity that is hard-convergent may be best hidden, or contained, in accepting a more ‘divergent’ identity. It is not going all the way into being a ‘bit of everything is relevant and may be seen from multiple angles’ culture; but communication norms around inquiry and data standards are loose. The demands of working within an agree paradigm, or explicitly and constantly challenging paradigms, is less strong.

There are those who outline and use theories from associated domains explicitly (Fitzgerald & Garvey Berger 2002). They represent an attempt to combine several strands, to explore the diversity of approaches that exist, reflecting different theories about development and learning. They themselves prefer psychology, and the Jungian school within that, along with the adult learning work of Kegan. They also include reference to the established concepts of ‘double loop’ learning at an individual level and to ‘triple loop’ learning, which they associate with asking ‘why’ questions to promote insight into paradigms. They review coaching practices in contexts such as midlife change, psychotherapy and transformational learning. And
they seek to identify and apply coaching to a range of special situations; including isolated executives, entrepreneurs, and those working across countries.

**Tribe 3; Human Relations and Helping Professions**

The tribe here is softer and more convergent, accepting of multiple possible interpretations and various authorities co-existing. It is in executive coaching represented by those embedded in the human relations and ‘talking cure’ modalities traditions (Anderson 2002, Arnaud 2003). There is ambiguity here, as the taint of ‘negativity’ that comes with knowledge and techniques developed for helping those suffering problems is ever-present; both in the way that coaches may be perceived and in the ways that coaching might be construed. Nonetheless there is a substantial body of knowledge, and an esteem as well, that means a popular concern with the unconscious and the area of ‘talking cures’ may indeed illuminate significant things about coaching. It has potential to supply an authentic and respectable expertise on people. Its proponents have intellectual and emotional expertise in dealing with ‘helper-client’ relations, and appreciate that this involves more than surface competence and behaviour, and involves accessing the ‘hidden’. They have a rich understanding of the course and content of such relationships, and have elaborated ways to work systematically in those.

They may help coaches to widen their own repertoires, though no single representative from this stream alone could review all understanding in it. It is also getting more divergent; what is deemed to be epistemic, the core to a paradigm, and what is open to debate among various authority figures complicates the understanding of process and ideas about helping relations practice that follow from that. At the extreme end of divergence is a demand to engage in more less permanent paradigm contests. In such conditions it may be that an expertise in being multi-paradigm savoir faire is considered the ideal. Becoming transtheoretical, as Proschaska (1992) presents, is taken into the literature or it may mean learning to live with having commitments to one of the competing paradigms and always being open to challenge by the others. The way I read it currently there is a core commitment in coaching to helping, and to personal growth as a paradigm, with aspects of the unconscious recognised as significant. Thus the current concern of connecting with knowledge construction in this area but continuing to differentiate coaching from counselling and therapy will continue, and will also extend into the supervision roles and relationships. Whether this represents a welcome extension of a valid frame of reference or a complication too far in the circumstances of actual coaching practice is a real concern.

**Tribe 4; Totalities, Beliefs and Values**

At the most soft and divergent level is the tribe represented by those concerned with totalities, complex and integrated wholes seeking to articulate how beliefs, ‘tacit’ knowledge and values are influences on people and performance in areas like
coaching. Smith provides a representative modern definition of complex totalities of belief as;

“configurations of linked perceptual/behavioral tendencies of various degree of strength, continuously formed, transformed, and reconfigured through our ongoing interactions with our environments.” (Smith op cit, p 44).

The divergence here proliferates around the high level abstractions central to discourses here; beliefs, values and knowledge itself. Belief is not then just, or perhaps in any sense even, something ‘in the mind’; rather it is integral to an entire organism’s complex and linked tendencies to perceive and act; in action some belief is strengthened and other elements weakened. The differences among the ways that such totalities can be conceived of give rise to the wealth of philosophical, social, economic, political and ethical discourses with which man seeks to take the measure of man. For instance they are discernible in assumptions and debates around values which are present in much of the literature on Executive Coaching (see for example Flaherty 1999). These areas of value contest are:

- **Phenomenological**: in coaching ‘empathy’ is the best means of accessing and knowing the coachee’s reality
- even if coaches learn and commit to use all kinds of formal and structured diagnostic tools
- **Post-Modernist**: in coaching several domains (‘life’, spiritual, etc) are important for individuals and organisations
- motivation for upward career development (talent management ?) is still ‘the’ lever for full potential realisation
- **Idealism**: in coaching nurture the ‘will to change’ for good; self development and consciousness change/raising
- even if individuals and organisations really want to change behaviour and performance
- **Voluntarism**: personal, local, action and agency is the foundation of successful change
- Even though we realise people are always members of groups and are embedded in more general (even ‘global’) systems

**Discussion on the Modelling of Knowledge Construction**

The development and application of a model produces a profile of the academic tribes and identities of coaching. It is possible to explore representatives of these, and their influence on explicit or tacitly in structuring and inform knowledge construction in coaching and mentoring. For example, how coaching and mentoring is a domain where a proliferation of many ‘universal and integrated’ theories and models appear as individuals compete to gain prominence for their ‘totality’ level model. To counter this, a greater concern with evidence-based argument around lower levels is needed around relations, cognition and behaviour concerns in coaching instead of further
‘universal and integrated’ pioneering accounts. Remaining stuck in a field containing many prescriptive models, and choosing among them or seeing to integrate them, displaces concentrating on learning about significant and sustained core areas worthy of study and reflection.

For Executive Coaching to be perceived as a domain where aspects of all the four different kinds of tribe are represented has potential. The preferences instrument has been derived from the work of Bech & Trowler. provides a way of locating existing underlying preferences for a kind of tribe. Some results here show that there is a preference for viewing executive coaching through a lens that is divergent and soft. Outside the primary preference of soft-convergent there is a tension in the pull of other kinds of identity. On the one hand, territorially, the perception is that the interface with the hard domain of ‘Sports’ offers most; yet in terms of ‘tribal’ preferences the ‘Helping professions’ domain is preferred. These secondary preferences are the harder to reconcile, in terms of academic identity, out of the possible secondary combinations. There were interesting findings around the soft-convergent domain, where survey returns show greatest disagreement and/or splits around preferences.

Understanding academic identity issues is part of developing professionalism, beyond initial and personal perspective starting points is an important part of development, alongside techniques and methods. This may advance professionalisation in Executive Coaching, helping to avoid the criticism that the stress of practice is met only with a semi-skilled mastery of technique rather than a higher status foundation of knowledge and understanding.

It is though possible and desirable to re-model the academic identities, to map identities on a continuum rather than in quadrants (see Figure 3). This can help integrate rather than divide the domains, and stimulate inter-domain questions for research, and accommodate different traditions in methods as well.

It fits with professional development requiring a dynamic and reflective understanding of Executive Coaching. People's theories and identities as coaches can be secured by engaging with conflicts and debates around the types of groups which exist, to get at the deep and real issues rather than the superficial manifestations of merely inter-tribal difference.

Exploring the tribes and identities of Executive Coaching opens up fresh lines of thinking and questioning, which can advance the credibility and effectiveness of the occupation. Learners can gain both greater knowledge of people and performance, human interaction and enhanced professionalism. Professional practice is not exactly like that in associate fields, whether therapeutic or sporting, educational or scientific. Living with the tensions of this pluralism is perhaps exactly what the real challenge of Executive Coaching is about, and that is not something to deny or avoid or wish away.
In advancing such an analysis of identities around knowledge construction in Executive coaching new options emerge.

One implication of an identity for knowledge construction is that people will have a natural home, and be comfortable with one kind of analysis and identity and uncomfortable with the others. Recognising that and then working within that comfort zone, but also being able to work across groups, switching as appropriate, are both important. Teaching, researching and being professional as a coach means more than picking and mixing insights from each identity for knowledge construction.

Understanding the nature of knowledge construction can help move us beyond a contest among favoured prescriptive models to situating theory and action in an integrative and inclusive framework for reflective practice. And it may also help guide both teachers and learners, writers and commentators, away from the traps of exchanging or mistakenly criticising unexamined preferences, and into debates where issues and matters, both critical and empirical, can be engaged with to the benefit of a broad and growing community.

Figure 3: Re-modelling Identities for Knowledge Construction as a Continuum for Coaching & Mentoring
References


The Art of Asking Great Questions

by Jenny Clarke & Dr. Sabine Dembkowski

Introduction

There is a spectrum in the coaching conversational repertoire from telling, through advising and suggesting, to questioning. Asking questions is one of the core capabilities of coaching. This is true for any coaching - be it executive coaching, life coaching or strategic coaching. Questioning is a process – each question builds in some way on the preceding answer, in a way that demonstrates good listening and a good sense of where awareness can be usefully placed. Questioning is at the heart of any coach’s toolkit.

As questioning is so crucial to the outcome and the results we achieve as coaches, this article aims to reflect on the art of asking questions. To improve coaching practice further we believe it is critical to stop and ask ourselves:

- What are we listening for when our client is speaking?
- How do we ask questions?
- How can we achieve a greater impact with our questioning?
- What impact do different questioning styles have on our clients?

In this article we will contrast questions from a ‘problem’ perspective with questions from a ‘solutions’ perspective. We will also share with readers an approach we use called the Solutions Focus Methodology, and offer our insights into how the methodology might help coaches of any genre to enhance their own coaching practice and achieve a greater impact with their clients.

Different types of questions

Questions come in many guises within the coaching context. Some are simply to understand the client’s situation from his perspective and to gather information for example “How long have you worked there?” or “How many people report to you directly?”

Some are leading questions or disguised advice, for example “Do you think that the Marketing Department has a role to play here?” or “Have you thought of doing x?”
Some are probing, often in pursuit of some theory or hypothesis, for example “Mmmm – is your boss an introvert?” or “It sounds as if she’s quite a bully?”

Some questions are there to further explore patterns and relationships i.e. “How come John is stressed about the deadline for the project?” Other questions are more strategic in their nature and serve to open up new options for the client for example “What happens when you talk directly with a member of the board?” Yet other questions invite reflection about actual behaviour and the impact of that behaviour on others “How do you think Jane felt when you challenged her in the meeting?... What reaction did you get when you got up and left the room?” These strategic questions tend to be more challenging in their nature and coaches are encouraged to use them sparingly.

The kind of questions recommended as best coaching practice are described as awareness raising. We have a choice about what we are helping our clients to become more aware of: are we shining our metaphorical torches on what’s wrong and on deficits and barriers to progress - or on what would be right for the client and the strengths and resources that will help him/her move in the right direction?

When we analysed transcripts of coaching sessions, talked to colleagues and listened carefully during group supervision sessions, it seemed that current questioning practice often homes in on the former. Attention is drawn to what’s hindering or stopping progress, be it the client’s beliefs, attitudes or lack of skill. The idea seems to be that by making the client observe his/her behaviour and the impact it has on others, the client becomes more aware of his/her own role in problematic situations and therefore more willing to do something about it.

In his book Principles of Psychology, William James, the father of modern psychology, said “The art of being wise is the art of knowing what to overlook.” The Solutions Focus methodology favours overlooking information about what makes things difficult in favour of shining the torch on what makes things easier – on the strengths and resources that will help the client achieve what’s wanted.

**The Solutions Focus Methodology**

The Solutions Focus approach has its roots in the therapeutic world. The ideas have found applications in many other fields, including education, social welfare, prison and probation services and, most recently organisational Solutions Focus is a part of a wider development including strengths-based positive psychology, positive deviance and appreciative inquiry – all part of the new wave of change methodologies seeking direct routes to progress.

Classically, we are taught to see the present problematic situation on a straight line connecting the origins of the problem through the present to an undesirable future. We call this the Problem axis. The theory is that the problem has intriguing roots in the past and, if things continue unchecked, it will lead to dire consequences in the future. Much time and intellectual energy is devoted to analysing both the roots of
problems and just how bad things might become. Diagnosing the problem and investigating the causes of the problem are seen as an essential part of addressing the problem.

People working using the Solutions Focus Methodology operate on a very different axis – the Solution axis. They are interested in what the client wants (not what they don’t want) and what is already happening which is pushing them in the desired direction. They use their analytic skills to explore the desired future (sometimes called the Future Perfect), to pile up and investigate examples of the Future Perfect happening already and to draw attention to the skills and resources involved in that achievement.

**Solutions Focused Awareness-raising**

Solutions Focused coaches shine their torch on

- What the client really wants
- The resources the client has available

To illuminate these, the coach will ask for concrete descriptions of the Future Perfect, for examples of some aspects of the Future Perfect happening already and details about these. We ask pre-suppositional questions implying competence and resources.

**What the client really wants**

Coaches using the methodology ask their clients to suppose they are fast-tracked forward into an ideal world – a future where the issue they are grappling with has vanished, as if by a magic wand. They ask them to describe this ideal world in detail. “What would be the first thing you noticed that tells you that a transformation has happened?” They ask for concrete evidence rather than about hidden processes like motivation or feelings for example. Further to this, coaches ask for detailed descriptions from different perspectives for example “What would your boss/colleagues/customers notice?”

**The resources he/she has available**

After getting a full description of the Future Perfect, attention turns to examples and instances of some or all aspects of the Future Perfect happening, albeit briefly. Coaches may use a scaling question: “On a scale from 0 to 10, where 10 is the Future Perfect you just described and 0 means that absolutely none of that is happening – ever, where would you say you are now?” Nearly everyone gives an answer somewhere between 0 and 10 – and wherever the answer lies, it contains two important pieces of information: that something is happening that is taking the client in the right direction and that there is still a way to go. All the time, coaches are listening carefully to what the client says - using our torch to find strengths, resources, coping mechanisms and strategies for making progress. The questioning
presupposes competence (see below) and each question is based on the previous answer.

Affirmation is a key tool in the Methodology toolbox and one we use freely – always being specific in naming the strengths and resources we have spotted: “I’m really impressed by the extent to which you planned that project” “You did well to spot that opportunity and seize it.” “I admire the way you motivated your colleagues by doing that.”

We have observed that when people are stuck in a problematic situation, it is often because they are paralysed by the enormity of the task. So coaches using the methodology encourage clients to take really small steps, perhaps by way of experiment, to take them just a point or a fraction of a point up the scale and move things on. “What can you do or say in your meeting tomorrow to take you just one step closer to the ideal relationship with John that you just described? What would tell him that things have improved? How would your other colleagues know that things were better?”

**Pre-suppositional questions implying competence and resources**

Let’s examine a typical Solution Focus question, one which might be an early question in a new coaching assignment:

“Of all the things you’re doing in meetings at the moment, what would you say you were most pleased with?”

“Of all the things” recognises the multi-faceted nature of the client’s activities in meetings, and that many things are going on at the same time. “Most” implies that there are indeed many aspects which are pleasing. Note how different the question feels without the word “most” in it. “Pleased with” is not the same as “good at” and is therefore less loaded.

As an opening question, this kind of formulation serves many purposes:

• It’s a gentle way to start a conversation – problem-free talk helps relax both parties.
• It gives the coach information about what the client enjoys about his/her work.
• It tells the coach something about what motivates and enthuses the client.
• It gives some ideas about the client’s strengths and resources.

Coaches using the Methodology ask lots of pre-suppositional questions implying competence and resources in our clients. Some examples are set out in Box 1.
Box 1: Solution-orientated questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Presupposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How did you do that?</td>
<td>Presupposes agency – that the client had an influence on the outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you know to do that?</td>
<td>Presupposes knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did that make a difference?</td>
<td>Presupposes awareness and observational skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did you learn from that?</td>
<td>Presupposes reflection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What helped?</td>
<td>Presupposes something was helpful!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What else?</td>
<td>Presupposes that the client could say more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What might you do differently next time?</td>
<td>Presupposes choice and decision making ability.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These can be contrasted to questions about the Problem axis which hone in on difficulties and offer less hope – see Box 2.

Box 2: Problem-orientated questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Presupposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What’s causing this problem?</td>
<td>Presupposes a cause (linear), rather than a series of interactions (systemic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s stopping you/what’s the barrier?</td>
<td>Presupposes difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why did you do that?</td>
<td>Asks about motivation and can provoke defensiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anything else?</td>
<td>Invites premature closure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What’s different about coaching using the Methodology?

Coaches using the Solutions Focus Methodology espouse the core competencies of coaching, as promulgated by organisations such as the EMCC. These include
providing a good environment for co-creating the relationship based on respect and trust, setting a clear contractual understanding of the joint project, active listening and facilitating learning. At first glance, one might not be able to spot an coach using the methodology from one with any other training, but we think that questioning is subtly different from current mainstream coaching practice and has a different impact on the client. We have synthesised our view of the most critical differences in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main stream practice</th>
<th>Solutions Focus Methodology practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Looks for difficulties and barriers.</td>
<td>Builds on what works for the client and on personal resources and strengths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs to understand and diagnose the problem.</td>
<td>Concentrates on recognising what the client wants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses this information to address the problem.</td>
<td>Finds elements of what the client wants happening already.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General emphasis on insight.</td>
<td>Emphasis on concrete detail and tangible evidence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What does the research say about the Methodology?**

We are not aware of any formal research into the outcome of coaching using the methodology and would encourage any researcher or student readers to consider this as a research topic. However, there is a growing body of research into more traditional applications of the Solutions Focus Methodology, including mental health, recidivism in criminals, parenting and couples therapy and counselling in schools. In those settings 17 out of 18 studies, clients reported improvement. In 7 out of 11 studies comparing treatments using the methodology to other treatments, we understand that SF treatment achieved better results.

**Conclusion**

We believe that in current coaching practice there is too much focus on the past, deficits, gaps and barriers. Both client and coach can be demoralised by this – the phenomena of client resistance and coach burn-out bear witness to this. The solutions focus methodology overlooks details of problems (except of course to the extent that the client introduces them to the conversation), preferring to ask questions evoke awareness about available resources and what is already working well for the client.
By integrating the methodology into their practice, coaches can achieve better results with their clients and further improve the effectiveness of their coaching.

**About the authors**

**Jenny Clarke**, is an independent consultant with wide functional experience in industry. She is a solutions focused facilitator and trainer, helping people who want to change what they do or how they do it. She works with large organisations who are adapting to change, and as a personal coach to managers and directors. You can find our more about the methodology at [www.thesolutionsfocus.com](http://www.thesolutionsfocus.com).

**Dr. Sabine Dembkowski**, is Founder and Director of The Coaching Centre in London and Cologne [www.thecoachingcentre.com](http://www.thecoachingcentre.com). Together with her Associates she serves members of boards, executives and high potentials in DAX 30, FTSE 100 and Fortune 500 organisations as well as leading professional service firms. Before founding The Coaching Centre she worked as a Top-Management Consultant for A.T. Kearney and Monitor Company in London.
Embracing High-Performance Coaching Culture

by Carole Gaskell

Introduction
As the CEO of a company focused on creating and sustaining high performance coaching cultures within businesses, I and my colleagues have been interested for some time in finding out:

- whether organisations understand what it means to truly develop and integrate a high-performance coaching culture throughout a business,
- the extent to which this is happening,
- the obstacles that HR professionals face in gaining buy-in to the concept,
- the practicalities of implementing a high-performance culture within UK organisations.

In order to find some answers to these questions, last autumn (2005) we conducted some research among 65 HR directors and managers who attended or expressed an interest in attending our company’s specialist forum, Driving a High-performance Coaching Culture.

I think our research provided some surprising, and at times concerning, insights. In this article I share the key findings of that research, together with the conclusions. In addition I present a set of six guiding principles which my colleagues and I have derived through experience, and which we believe are essential to the process of engraining a new culture in the DNA of businesses. I hope these principles will be of interest to both HR and management readers within organisations, as well as other coaches.

Who’s coaching who?
It’s encouraging that only 9% of respondents’ organisations offer no coaching at all, while 15% offer some form of coaching support at all levels. However, it’s disappointing that so few people at senior level are personally benefiting.
We find that board members are least likely to benefit from coaching, with only 35% receiving coaching of any sort, fewer than junior managers (42%). A likely outcome, as revealed by our research, is a lack of senior role models, which makes embedding a coaching culture more difficult to achieve.

Middle managers are the group most exposed to coaching (62%). This will benefit their organisations in the future because they will take with them the skills they have learned as they move up the career ladder. However, just 56% of senior management benefit from coaching, although this group is the most likely to work with an external coaching supplier (44% do so).

### Who is offered coaching?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Board members</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle management</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior management</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People at every level</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobody</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How is coaching provided?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>External supplier</th>
<th>Internal coaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Board members</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle management</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior management</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People at every level</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobody</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One-to-one coaching is the most common way to receive coaching, particularly for senior executives. Meanwhile, middle and junior managers tend to benefit from coaching skills workshops, offered in approximately a third of respondents’ organisations.
The call for coaching

Many organisations are using coaching specialists to up-skill and develop people, cited by 76% of respondents. Increasingly, however, they are brought in to change entire cultures: 44% are working with coaching specialists to strategically embed a coaching culture, while 38% are bringing in outside expertise to improve productivity and profits.

Other common ‘prompts’ for calling in a coaching specialist are to improve individual performance (49%) and to enhance talent development (43%).

What would prompt you to call in a coaching specialist?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompt</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To up-skill and develop people</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve individual performance</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To strategically embed a coaching culture</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To enhance talent development</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve productivity and profits</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve team performance</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve staff retention</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve staff motivation</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To enhance the organisational climate</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help support restructuring/reorganisation</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve work/life balance</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bringing down barriers

Those wishing to implement and embed a coaching culture within their organisation face a number of obstacles in doing so.

The greatest barrier, cited by 92% of respondents, was lack of sufficiently-skilled role models who are able to provide internal coaching. A close second, mentioned by 90%, was the belief among managers that they have no time to coach.

Learning coaching theory is one thing, but we know from experience that the bigger challenge is how to implement this on a daily basis in the real world of work. Our research confirms that it’s important to focus on pragmatic and practical ways to apply coaching in daily situations so it becomes part of an organisation’s DNA. Unless people know how to apply what they have learned, quite simply, they won’t.
### To what extent are the following factors a barrier to embedding a high-performance coaching culture within your organisation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Major barrier</th>
<th>Minor barrier</th>
<th>No barrier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of sufficiently-skilled role models able to provide internal coaching</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief among managers that they have no time to coach</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of understanding of how to integrate and apply coaching on a day-to-day basis</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived difficulty in embedding coaching on a day-to-day basis</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of ability to measure the impact of coaching</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget constraints</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of senior management buy-in</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional training practices are a priority</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What does the future hold?

Organisations have ambitious plans for coaching, expecting it to play an increasingly significant part in overall HR strategy.

Two thirds of organisations (65%) expect coaching to play a major part in their future HR strategy, up from 21% today. Of those respondents who state that coaching currently plays no part in their HR strategy, almost half expect it to play a major part in the future. Among organisations in which coaching plays only a minor role in their HR strategy today, 68% expect it to play a major part in future.

In many instances using coaching to support HR strategy is going to require a huge step-change: to truly embed coaching as a cultural norm, and to align it with other HR and wider organisational strategies is not a quick process, requiring a commitment of around two years.

Encouragingly, no respondents expect coaching to play a diminishing part in their future HR strategy.

### How big a part does coaching play in your overall HR strategy?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How big a part does coaching play in your overall HR strategy?</th>
<th>Currently</th>
<th>Next year and beyond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A major part</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A minor part</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not currently/will not play a part</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What did we conclude from our research?

The HR Directors we interviewed believe that creating a high-performance coaching culture is key to ensuring an engaged, creative and performing workforce, competitive advantage and long-term business success. However, it’s clear that HR professionals are frustrated with the struggle they often face convincing the powers-that-be in their organisations that it’s worth investing time and money and that the changes need to happen in a sustainable way.

We also unearthed some interesting misconceptions about what ‘coaching’ means and about how readily a coaching approach can be adopted and embedded into an organisation’s DNA. The belief that coaching is a time-consuming, additional task for leaders and managers is frequently cited as a barrier to the adoption of a high-performance coaching culture, yet our clients tell us that this is not the case in practice. There is clearly a need for more education on what it really means to embrace a high-performance coaching culture – both practically and in terms of the results that organisations can expect – so that coaching is not seen as an unwelcome ‘extra’, but as a natural part of everyone’s day-to-day management style.

We know, from experience, that when this happens, the benefits to an organisation can be huge and far-reaching, with a clear and significant impact on the bottom line.

Six guiding principles to successfully embracing a high-performance culture

1. Clarify drivers for change and get buy-in from senior management

   It is important for the coaches or coaching company to work closely with HR and business leaders to identify organisational pain points, challenges, missed opportunities and hidden costs to the organisation associated with, for example, high staff turnover. This will help to make a compelling case for coaching.

2. Agree ROI measures that are relevant to the organisation and that can be tracked effectively

   These might be revenue/profit-focused or centred around employee or customer satisfaction for example, as well as behavioural measures that can be monitored through 360° assessments and employee health surveys.

3. Co-create a coaching culture vision

   Get senior management to put a stake in the ground. Ask them to think about when a coaching culture is in place, what results can be achieved, how people will feel and ultimately what difference it will make to individuals and the bottom line.

4. Integrate coaching with the organisation’s strategic plans

   Coaching should not be a stand-alone initiative; the greatest results are achieved when organisations commit to a programme of a minimum of two to three years and integrate the vision and KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) into their strategic HR plans.
5. **Communicate quick wins**

One-to-one coaching with a select group of individuals or a regional pilot programme, for example, are often good ways to prove the case for coaching. These examples can be publicised later to help sustain momentum.

6. **Review and sustain momentum**

- **Identify coaching sponsors and role models**
  
  Every cause needs a champion and coaching is no exception. Senior management need to walk the talk and continually inspire learning and growth.

- **Cascade the coaching skills through the organisation**
  
  Look at creating programmes that not only coach individuals but also teach them how to coach the people they manage.

- **Celebrate successes**
  
  Make sure you work with marketing and PR to communicate success stories, both internally within the organisation and to the outside world, to show what a great work environment the organisation offers.

- **Review and measure progress**
  
  Both people and organisations are constantly evolving so progress should be assessed on an on-going basis. This will help to ensure that key objectives continue to be met.

- **Trust your instincts**
  
  It’s amazing what people can achieve with the right support. There’s no doubt that coaches and HR have a fundamental role to play in embedding a coaching culture and hold the key to unlocking untapped talent and potential.

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**About the author**

Carole Gaskell is founder and Managing Director of Full Potential Group (FPG), a coaching, leadership and high performance culture specialist, established in 1997. Carole has published a number of books including two bestsellers *Transform your life – 10 steps to real results* and *Your Pocket Life Coach* and two specialist pocket books *Full potential leadership – a provocative call to make a dramatic difference* and *Full Potential Coach – Transforming people’s potential into results*. Carole can contacted via her company’s website [www.fullpotentialgroup.com](http://www.fullpotentialgroup.com)
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The Challenge for the Coaching Profession

by John Whitmore

Introduction

Coming from a place of caring, sharing and collaboration in the current “never enough” business culture of fear, acquisition, possession and competition, is indeed a challenge, or so it would seem. It may, however, be easier than we think; we may find there is little to lose, and our future may depend upon our ability to manifest such qualities. Indeed if we are to take the bigger vision of coaching to business, that of creating a better quality of life for all, we must “be the change we wish to see in the world” and become role models of collaboration ourselves.

How are we doing?

Since its arrival in the world of work some 25 years ago, followed by ten years of becoming accepted and established, the coaching industry has grown exponentially. Such fast progress is inevitably accompanied by growing pains but they have been less traumatic than might have been expected, and less energy consuming than the psychotherapy profession experienced at a similar stage in the 1960s and 70s.

The majority of workplace coaches have come from three areas, from sport, from psychotherapy or as dropouts from the ravages of corporate life as consultants, trainers, HR professionals or executives. Those coming from sport brought expertise in high performance, those from psychotherapy have contributed in the areas of life coaching, stress management, and personal psycho-spiritual development; HR people are strong on career development and ex-corporate consultants or executives often combine coaching with mentoring in their areas of expertise. Of course the divisions have become blurred over time and many coaches move comfortably in all of these areas in line with the coaching principle that you do not have to be and expert in a field to coach in it.

More coaches with less history are now entering the profession, and coaching schools to meet their needs have sprung up, ranging from the on-line instant coach variety to modular courses leading to an academic diploma or degree. Several self-styled “governing bodies” or umbrella associations have emerged of which the International
Coach Federation was the first, originating in the United States but with regional outreach in Europe, the Nordic countries, Australasia and elsewhere. The European Mentoring and Coaching Council, and the Association for Coaching followed; then the Worldwide Association of Business Coaches in Canada and a number of others surfaced. Each attempted to occupy a slightly different territory, cater for a different type of coach, or offer a different service to members or groups. Some became involved in coach education or accreditation, while others claimed the high ground in devising standards and ethics.

After a fantasy flirt with the idea of becoming “the Global Coaching Governing body” for a short while, most of these associations accepted that that was not to be, and settled for the compromise of a niche role and/or of collaboration. Each probably found that working together was easier said than done and that when differences arose, it always seemed that it was “them” who were not as elevated as “us”, and “them” who are holding things up. As is often the way, it is all smiles on the surface, but a mildly guilty grumble behind the scenes.

Likewise small coaching companies and consultancies both compete and cooperate with one another in ways dependent more on the mood and the day of the week than any cohesive intent. This is especially so when coaching reaches a new territory or country. The first there on the ground feels that it owns coaching and then a second organisation, often bigger, enters the game. Now the first feels usurped and faces the uncomfortable choice of being subsumed within, or playing second fiddle without. Notions of “unfairness” and “we are better than them anyway” are entertained, if not expressed.

Of course there are a few - happily few - coaching companies that are unashamedly about making money and little else, and to hell with collaboration, the competition and the client too, in the end. Their values are transparent to all but themselves, the coaches that join them and the least discriminating potential clients. Fortunately they will fall by the wayside sooner or later, but not before someone has made a pile, and a few others have lost their way.

What lies at the root of the good intentions, and also the squabbling?

The short answer is evolution, and the lack of it, respectively. There are many evolutionary models that apply equally to individuals and groups, ranging from the simplest three stage models like Firo B, (Inclusion, Assertion, Cooperation), to the elegant multi-coloured Spiral Dynamics. The most widely known is Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, so that is the one that I will refer to here. Our dominant Western culture collectively is currently at the lower Esteem level, better described as the need for Status and Recognition. We have an economic structure commensurate with that consciousness; capitalism rooted in acquisition, materialism, and self-importance at the top and survival at the bottom.

It is not surprising, therefore that our most common social attitudes and behaviours are products of that same consciousness and the system that it spawns, so
competition, protectiveness, mistrust, command and control, are the norm and habitual in our culture. Since our psycho-spiritual evolution has been slow, in the past at least, many people go as far as to believe that these less than pleasant qualities are endemic to human nature. Any amateur psychologist or professional coach knows better, but that is the way much of society sees it, that is the environment in which we grew up, and some of it remains with us, despite the work we may have done on ourselves.

Is it a wonder then that when we try to collaborate, for that is what our higher aspirations are, our competitive, protective, fear driven attitudes and behaviours sneak out? It is not surprising that we find it hard to get our associations, our companies and even ourselves, within our own organisations, to collaborate. We are schizophrenic; we want to, at the higher level, and we don’t want to, at a more primitive level within ourselves. Of course on the outside we speak of the good stuff like trust and cooperation, but our behaviour does not quite live up to our good intentions. Like most psychological change, it is easier to do the new stuff than to give up the old, but without giving up the old not much will change.

We coaches are aware of this problem because the biggest part of ourselves is almost certainly getting up into the Self-Belief or Self-Actualising level, and from any level it is easier to see the previous ones, than the ones ahead. Most business people have some notion of the higher levels too, but the lower levels still dominate their experience, or their need for conventional or corporate security holds them hostage. They can’t or won’t give it up.

Exceptional business people, the all too rare Ray Andersons and Ricardo Semlers of this world, are themselves entirely in those higher levels, and by their extraordinary achievements, they are a living demonstration of them having rid themselves of their fears and their old consciousness. In fact, their consciousness, in my view, may well be ahead of that of many coaches.

If we coaches are going to help business people to reach these levels, and I would argue that this is essential for human survival in the not so long term, we had better have reached at least that level of consciousness ourselves. Our continuing internal competitiveness indicates that we are clearly not there yet. To get there, we need to actively engage in personal development work beyond that of training to improve our coaching skills, and that would take us inevitably into the transpersonal or spiritual arena. As coaches we can no longer afford the lazy luxury of not going into that space – or if we choose not to move on in there, we need to acknowledge the limitations on our ability to work with more advanced individual clients or the more progressive corporations.

Of course the assertions above are based on the assumption that we cannot use transpersonal coaching techniques to best effect, unless we are ourselves embarked on a transpersonal journey. How much is our being is also a part of the system in play? In any event, if a client is “going transpersonal”, do I not have a duty to tell him or her if I myself am not there yet? The jury is out on this for me.
Of course another aspect of Maslow’s hierarchy is relevant when we look at the youthful creators of some coaching companies. An essential stage in personal development is moving beyond the self-interested level of status and recognition into self-belief, and that liberates us from fear. One vehicle for this right of passage is having competed successfully in the business game. Fortunately, I and others emerging from sport usually worked out much of that stuff back then, and have less of an unrequited need to play the competitive game as a coach. Some younger entrepreneurial coaches suffer from a conflict of interest as they work out their own stuff through their colleagues and even their clients at a lower level. This is an argument for getting coaches to work out their competitive needs in some other field before, lest they blight the industry with their personal process – but of course that may seem a little harsh. It does mean, however, that they should be aware of their tendency to compete, and make a conscious decision to cooperate when appropriate.

There are others who, in every other way, are embarked on their journey, but are still in the grip of their own fears of inadequacy, their need for recognition and their desire to hold onto what they have. They too have a hard time collaborating even, with their erstwhile colleagues, lest they somehow lose something. This is especially true in the coaching field around copyright issues. They use techniques, exercises, models and power point visuals in their teaching of others to become coaches, but then become protective of their material. This is schizophrenic behaviour.

What pray are they going to loose? Don’t they want the coaching industry to succeed? Don’t they see that they will be the first beneficiaries if their colleagues, other coaches and their clients do a great job? Are their not plenty of people out in the world who need what they have to offer, for them to release their fear of sharing? Do they not want the next generation of coaches to stand higher on their shoulders?

I am reminded of the premier sports promotion company, IMG, a number of years ago. When founder Mark McCormack discovered that here was a limit to the amount of sponsorship money he could generate for his golf clients because golf had a limited profile as a sport, he decided to promote golf itself. The result was that all competitive golfers benefited, his own players and their competitors too, but was that bad for anyone? No.

When we share, people trust us and they share in return or simply because of the role model we are. This is moving beyond, “Well, I’ll share when they share,” to “I’ll share anyway, whatever they do”. When we all share, we all do our job better. When we do our job better, as midwives of human consciousness, the corporate community gets better and they in turn improve the planet rather than take from it.

**Come on coaching organisations!**

Let us truly, willingly collaborate with one another, including the willingness to give up a little, to compromise, in order to raise our vision in the profession and beyond. Come on coaching companies and consultancies; find ways of working together to give clients what they really need. Let us begin to recommend each other to clients, if
you honestly recognise that another provider is better equipped to meet the clients need than you are. Think about the respect you would gain from both client and competitor for so doing – if you must justify so doing with a pay off. Come on you fledgling coaching companies in countries new to coaching; get together to enable coaching to be a healthy role model right from birth. And come on individual coaches in and outside organisations; cut the copyright crap, share all you have and let coaching put its best foot forward all the time.

These sorts of behaviours are just what we want, or should be wanting, the business community to be adopting for the good of all. What stops us doing it then? Fear, of course, fear that we might be left out, fear that we might not measure up, fear that our weaknesses might show, fear that we won’t win, fear that we will be seen as weak and a million other fantasy fears.

Hey, the coaching industry needs some coaching. The Inner Game, the purest basis of workplace coaching, is predicated upon us recognising and eliminating the internal obstacles to our becoming what we may be, and fear is the greatest of those obstacles. If we expect to shift business from the Fear paradigm where it is ensconced now, into the Trust paradigm where it needs to be. Do we, ourselves, not have to make the shift first?

“If you wish to change the world, with whom to you start, yourself or others?”

About the author

John Whitmore was one of the initiators in the UK of modern coaching in the workplace some 25 years ago. He is the author of the bestselling Coaching for Performance, now in 17 different languages, and five other books on related subjects. He is Chairman of Performance Consultants International and the Institute of Human Excellence. He consults now on corporate leadership and social change. He is co-founder of the Be the Change conference series. Before turning to business and then coaching, he was a British and European Champion professional racing driver.

Note

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The State of Mentoring and Coaching

by David Megginson

The twelfth European Mentoring & Coaching Conference took place in Zurich in December 2005 under the auspices of the European Mentoring & Coaching Council. It was the biggest conference yet, with over 190 participants from 17 different countries.

The corporate world offered support for the conference – with major sponsor, UBS, and further support from Holcim and Lindt & Sprungli, all of which are based in Zurich. The existence of formally constituted EMCC Country organisations in Switzerland and five other countries is a further sign of the maturing of coaching and mentoring. EMCC’s Executive Board recognise that we are working not just with a profession, but also with a social movement. Mentoring and coaching are used to develop not only senior executive and directors in the largest organisations, but also those most disadvantaged in our society, and everyone in between!

With four strands running in parallel this year, it was impossible to be everywhere, but a compressive CD of materials from most sessions and the buzz of discussion about good sessions that I missed, left me with the sense that the following themes were prominent at this year’s event:

1. What lies at the heart of the enterprise of coaching and mentoring?
2. What is the organisational agenda for coaching and mentoring? How does it fit into the wider system?
3. Who are we – coaches and mentors – as a community?
4. How do we help people get out of the bubble of their current experience?
5. Is supervision the same as reflective practice?
6. Where does releasing energy happen – between people in different silos, across cultures.

I will explore each of these themes in turn.
The heart of coaching and mentoring

Coaching and mentoring are both an emerging profession and a social movement. They rub up against other professions and other movements. Psychologists and counsellors throughout Europe and supervisors in Germanic central Europe, are interested in laying claim to the action. In some cases they are saying that nobody should be a coach unless they have this additional professional identity. In many instances, they assert the need for the extra qualification if you want to supervise the practice of other coaches and mentors. But coaches and mentors at the conference and elsewhere (this issue was first brought to my attention by Paul O’Donovan Rossa) are saying, ‘What is it about coaching and mentoring that is uniquely of itself?’ This agenda is being developed, but it is still in the early stages. It represents a rallying-ground for those wishing to see psychology as just a strand in our practice, rather than allowing psychologists to see us as strand of theirs.

Peter Hawkins indicated the force of this direction in his plenary speech, when he announced a successor to his classic book on supervision, specifically in the context of coaching. Workshops at the conference from Shaun Lincoln (line-manager vs. off-line coach), Stephen Gibb (the tribes of coaching and mentoring) and Michael Samson (professional identity) also contributed to this theme.

The time for sniping and excluding seems to be coming to an end. Concerted work is needed to find and articulate what we have in common and how we can advocate and regulate this for the good of our customers and their sponsors. EMCC’s work on competencies and standards provides a vase for this work.

The organisational agenda for mentoring and coaching

Many contributions at the conference encouraged a system-wide perspective. Jenny Rogers’ pre-conference workshop offered seven ways of getting beyond the bubble of the coachee’s own narrow account of their experience – these included:

- contracting with the organisation
- 360° feedback
- snowballing (a method of cumulative feedback with colleagues)
- shadowing.

Ruth Garrett-Harris, Sally Williams and Neil Offley offered a perspective on the UK National Health Service agenda for coaching and mentoring, and the company cases from UBS (Chris Roebuck), HBoS (Andy Callaghan) and Tesco (Carol Gaskell) emphasised high performance and removing barriers and interference. Stephen Oberli offered a systematic perspective for working in matrix organisations.

Our own work (David Meggison and David Clutterbuck) focused on the creation of a coaching culture in organisations and invited individual coaches and scheme
organisers to raise their sights from relationships and programmes and attend to wider organisational concerns.

Who are we?

Stephen Gibb’s session on tribes in the teaching of executive coaching, offered us four sources for wisdom about one-to-one helping.

- psychotherapy
- human resource management, and especially careers
- cognitive science and understanding the brain
- sports coaching.

The tribes for academics reflect similar interests among practitioners. Part of the work, outlined earlier, of defining the profession and the movement involves mining the lode-stones highlighted by Stephen, and deciding what to take and what to leave in creating an integrated whole.

Michael Samson’s session on ‘Who are we?’ presented some results of his research, but also engaged with the audience in an experiential way, encouraging us to think through and share our background and training, and then – more important and more difficult – think about the implications of what we discovered. Some senior members of the profession found Michael’s open approach quite a handful, which emphasises, I suppose, how far we have to go as a reflective, reflexive community.

Helping people get out of the bubble

Jenny Rogers’ session, outlined earlier, offered one approach to getting out of the bubble of the coachee’s/mentee’s own experience, by asking or observing others in their interaction with the coachee/mentee. Another pre-conference workshop, presented by Nancy Kline, offered an alternative route out of the bubble – down, down, down, into the depths of the individual’s experience – rather than across to the opinions of others, as Jenny Rogers was advocating. As anthropologists of daily life, we are there to help make the familiar strange, and the strange familiar. Feedback and learning to think, offer two routes to the same end.

Supervision or reflective practice

I was delighted when Peter Hawkins, in his plenary, suggested that reflective practice was an alternative phrase to describe the process of supervision. This seems to put it in the right hands. Linguistically, having a coach (active) and coachee (one done to) seems all wrong. Most of us are clear that the coachee or mentee needs to do most of the work. I liked Myles Downey’s use of the word ‘Player’ at EMCC 11. Supervisor and supervisee present a parallel problem. Reflective practice liberates us from this linguistic trap. It is the learner (in this case the coach or mentor) who is reviewing
their own practice with the help of another. And, ‘reflective practice’ places the onus of thinking and work on the person being helped.

The linguistic challenge was first articulated for me, at one of the Mentoring & Coaching Research Unit’s biannual research days at Sheffield Hallam University, by my colleague Cathy Hill. And the idea of reflective practice as a re-formulation of supervision came from Kate Kennett, who was on the first cohort of our MSc in Mentoring and Coaching. Part of our development of the profession and the movement of coaching and mentoring surely rests in finding our own way of supporting practice improvement, rather than borrowing wholesale from social work, counselling and psychiatry, where processes were invented to deal with a very different range of issues and concerns. Paul Stokes in his presentation at EMCC 11, and again this year, is a strong voice pointing up this direction.

Releasing the energy

Many presentations addressed energy release – Susan Blow’s on helping experts to share expertise; Chris Roebuck’s, on connection across Divisions of UBS; the HBoS presentation of Andy Callaghan talked specifically about this release of energy by connection across different parts of the organisation. Zulfi Hussain and colleagues, Ine van Emerick and Mary van der Boon all emphasised inclusion of disadvantaged groups or enjoined us to attend to our own inner diversity as a way of releasing potential.

In a sense, Nancy Kline and Paul Z. Jackson and Mark McKergow, with their solutions focused approach, and all the coaches who had frameworks for self-discovery, are in the business of energy release. Perhaps this is the alchemical process at the core of our profession.

Conclusion

I see the coaching and mentoring world as being like a healthy teenager – curious, exploring, open to experience, not settled on a way forward, but with a vivid newfound identity that presages a long and fruitful adulthood.
Mentoring in Action by David Megginson, David Clutterbuck, Bob Garvey, Paul Stokes and Ruth Garrett-Harris (2005), Kogan Page, London UK.

Five authors who describe themselves as ‘mentoring nuts’ (p240) have produced the second edition of Mentoring in Action – a Practical Guide. The book is divided into three parts: the first is a detailed series of lists and diagrams outlining ‘The Mentoring Framework’; the second section is a series of cases, both organisational and individual, by a variety of business practitioners; and the third part is a short summary on ‘Applying The Lessons’.

Within 30 pages, The Mentoring Framework provides a comprehensive check list of definitions, design principles, processes, evaluation tools and a discussion on ethics. The Framework would be a useful guide to anyone who wants to be a mentor or structure a mentoring programme for the first time. I found the discussion and diagram about the phases in the mentoring relationship (p.20 figure1.2) particularly useful.

The twenty seven case studies form the majority of the book. They are broken up into organisational and individual case studies and cover situations from mentoring young, black academics in South Africa to a twenty-plus year mentoring relationship in the UK public sector. The style of reporting varies with the writers. Some include diagrams and others write in a more descriptive fashion.

From the point of view of learning, the cases often provided an example of how not to do things. The failures and shortfalls of many programmes provided rich learning environments for the reader. But from the point of view of the mentees there were some sad outcomes. There is clearly a lot to be learned about how to structure mentoring programmes for greater success.

The last section, Applying the Lessons, is only 16 pages long and left me thinking that more could have been digested from the rich materials provided in the case studies. Overall, though, I found this book a useful tutorial and process guide.
It’s not often that I read a book on coaching twice in rapid succession. Indeed, there are a lot of books on coaching that I give up on before I’ve even read them once, because they are trite, uninformative or unhelpful. Otto Laske’s *Measuring Hidden Dimensions* is without doubt the densest, most difficult book on coaching I have ever worked through. It is almost impossible to read in other than short, repeated chunks. It's compelling, well-structured arguments and practical examples place the book well into my top ten for relevance, depth and usefulness.

Laske’s basic argument is that both coaches and their clients are adults, who have achieved a level of maturity in both their cognitive and socio-emotional development. The higher the level of maturity the coach has reached, the wider the range of their potential to help – as long as they are able to recognise and work with the client’s own level of maturity. An unrecognised mismatch of maturity level is likely to place severe restraints on the coach’s ability to help and the opportunities for the client to use the learning relationship to make significant progress in their thinking and behaviour.

The core of the book (the first in a planned series aimed at helping coaches build their competence in assessing and working with their own and their clients’ developmental levels) is a detailed analysis of how to assess how a client constructs his or her view of the world. Building on the work of Robert Kegan (1982) and Ed Schein (1999), Laske deconstructs the five known levels of human development, with particular emphasis on the three highest levels, which relate to adulthood. These levels differ in how people view others, how much self-insight they have, the nature of the values they hold, the predominant needs they feel, their need to control their environment, and how they perceive their roles in organisations.

The role of the coach, in this analysis, involves helping the client move from one level to another, so that they can tackle their issues with greater maturity and perspicacity. Moving between levels involves subsets of thinking patterns, in which they may partly be resident in one level and partly in the next highest. The *spread* of the client’s maturity provides clues as to which sub-level they are currently grounded in.
Laske examines these transitions through discussion of the theory, followed by detailed conversations, in which the reader is invited to work out for himself or herself what levels are represented by the client’s statements. In effect, he provides a template for effective listening, with the purpose of identifying significant language and assessing what each significant statement indicates about the maturity of the client’s thinking. He presents a pragmatic system of ordering these assessments, which helps the coach establish the client’s “centre of gravity” (the level of maturity they are currently grounded in), the risk (where they may slip back into less mature thinking) and the potential (what sub-level they could move up to as their next centre of gravity).

As an introduction to the subject, *Measuring Hidden Dimensions* does not give all the answers in the sense of teaching coaches how to structure their conversations with clients, who are at a particular developmental level. Nor does it provide much guidance to the coach, who wants to raise his or her own developmental level. It also skirts around the ethical issues. For example, is it possible and appropriate to be an effective supervisor of coaches, without being at least one level above them, except when both are at the highest level of development? Should the accreditation of coaches depend in part on an impartial assessment of their developmental level, to ensure that they operate within the bounds of that level?

Typographical errors and a rather limited index are minor irritants, but they do not detract from the intensity and value of the book as a whole.

In short, Laske’s stimulating book opens up a can of worms for the coaching profession as a whole. There will be many practising coaches, who will wish this topic had never been raised and – I hope – many others, who will embrace the concepts enthusiastically.

David Clutterbuck

**References**


This comprehensive and detailed book examines the theory and practice of mentoring and coaching within a learning framework. It provides a powerful framework for specifying different types of help and it offers useful lists and activities to develop skills.

It is divided into four parts. The first uses Burrell and Morgan’s (1979) framework of two dimensions: objectivity and subjectivity; and transformation/equilibrium to create a two-by-two matrix of four types of mentoring/coaching. Objective-equilibrium coaching is called ‘functionalist’; subjective-equilibrium coaching is ‘engagement’; objective-transformational is called ‘revolutionary’; and subjective-transformational is named ‘evolutionary’. It is this latter approach that the authors favour; though they acknowledge a role for the more basic approach of functionalist mentoring/coaching. Part of the reason for valuing the evolutionary perspective is that it provides opportunities for ‘outsight’ as well as insight. They have no room for the revolutionary quadrant, which they see as the preserve of Lenin, Che Guevara, and in a contemporary manifestation the Islamists who seek to influence young Muslims to take a self-destructive and murderous approach to manifesting their faith.

Also in the first part is an exploration of learning theories relevant to one-to-one helping, with a three level model that owes a debt to Argyris (Argyris & Schon, 1974) and a superb depiction of Timothy Gallwey’s (1979) dialogue between Self 1 and Self 2. Then there is a chapter on dialogue, which acknowledges its debt to Buber (1994) and Bohm (1996). This makes an interesting distinction between ‘rapport’ and ‘report’, which parallels a later polarity between ‘story’ and ‘history’. There is also a striking example of how not to display empathy, provided by the description of the ‘Californian fuck-off’ – ‘Well, given your background, I can see where you’re coming from’!

Part 2 purports to distinguish coaching and mentoring and to describe the models associated with both. This seems to me to be the least satisfactory part of the book. The authors’ strong model from Part 1 means that they describe three types of mentoring (functionalist, engagement and evolutionary) and a similar three types of coaching. The question of whether there is any purpose in differentiating the two
processes is ducked and the authors seem to take different positions on this throughout the book, without ever addressing it formally. This approach also leads to rather a lot of repetition of issues in different chapters, though often with a new and worthwhile slant. In a sense the repetition serves to make each chapter sufficient in itself, in a kind of holographic way, which could be useful for the reader who dips into this long book. It is less satisfactory for those of us who like to read our books from beginning to end. The two chapters on mentoring and coaching models are helpful, although again there is some repetition of ideas from Egan (1990), Hawkins and Shohet (1989) and Jenny Rogers (2004). The ethical and power issues about NLP as a coaching approach are raised but not discussed – as we have sought to do in Clutterbuck and Megginson, 2005. There seems to be embedded in this book an unresolved issue about the place of goals in mentoring and coaching. Sometimes, especially in more theoretical discussions about dialogue or about non-directive, Rogerian approaches, goals are questioned; but elsewhere, particularly in the more pragmatic, applied sections, the alleged virtue of setting specific goals remains unquestioned.

Part 3 has a useful chapter on 'being a client'. This has a more personal tone than the earlier parts, and recommends congruence; self-disclosure; managing emotion and receiving feedback as areas of skill to be developed. There are then two long chapters – one about being a functionalist and the other about being an evolutionary coach or mentor. The first of these chapters covers the core skills of contract, listening, restating, questioning, summarising and giving feedback. It is testament to the accepted tenets of this trade that this list matches so closely the first slim volume on the topic that I produced (Megginson & Boydell, 1979), where the skills of coaching were specified as attending, giving and receiving feedback, drawing out, silence, suspending judgement, recognising and expressing feelings and paraphrasing. Our list from the 1970s also addresses some of the more advanced skills in the evolutionary chapter, which are mentor presence, managing emotion, empathy, challenge, immediacy and confrontation. This is not to criticise these chapters, which are full of good things, it is just to comment on the stability of our understanding of the field. Both chapters cover the basic skills (this is a criticism – there is too much repetition throughout this book), but they are also filled with good things, including a use for Chomsky’s (1957) surface and deep structure and a reference to David Grove’s (1996) ‘clean language’. For me, one of the most helpful and striking frameworks is a fine list of 11 ways of responding inappropriately to the statement, ‘I feel ordinary’. There are also cases to examine functional and evolutionary one-to-one helping. This part of the book ends with a chapter on training and development of mentors and coaches. Again the examples of activities are organised around the core model from Chapter 2, and I found the ones with a multiplicity of roles – beyond those of helper and client, to be the most interesting, novel and useful.

Part 4 seeks to contrast mentoring and coaching with counselling and therapy. It is a hard task, which is not helped by the overblown claims of some writers on counselling – the authors cite Weafer (2001) who warns that ‘contraindications to coaching where the client should be referred to a therapist, as “addictive or
dependency issues, marital issues, financial issues, family or personal issues’.’ As Brockbank & McGill wryly point out, ‘These do appear to comprise the human condition! One case in this chapter describes ‘counselling skills like listening, restatement, summary and empathy’. This just compounds the confusion alluded to above, as these are elsewhere described as skills of coaching and mentoring. The book then ends with some brief conclusions, with which I agree. In particular they suggest that their greatest contribution to the field is to offer a theoretical model for different types of coaching and mentoring intervention, and to work through the consequences of this typology for practice and skill development. There is also a very full set of references, which will be a valuable resource for other scholars and students in the field.

References:


