# E-Proceedings

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2018 COACHING CONFERENCE

# SYSTEMIC COACHING:

## WHOLE-PERSON | WHOLE-ORGANIZATION ENGAGEMENT

NEW YORK 17-19 OCTOBER, 2018

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
2018 COACHING CONFERENCE

**E-Proceedings**
**3rd Bi-annual Columbia International Coaching Conference**

Presented by

The Columbia Coaching Learning Association (CCLA) http://cclacolumbia.org/

AND

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October 17-19, 2018
Cowin Conference Center 525 West 120th Street, New York, NY U.S.A

Program Chair: Liane Kemp

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
2018 COACHING CONFERENCE

**From the Conference Institutional Director**

Dear Conference Delegates

I am proud to present the e-proceedings from the 3rd International Columbia Coaching Conference, built around the theme of *Systemic Coaching: Whole Person | Whole Organization Engagement.*

The conference was presented by Columbia University's Coaching Center of Excellence (including the Columbia Coaching Certification Program, the Columbia Coaching Learning Association, and the Columbia Talent Alliance).

Our bi-annual conferences aim to bring together scholars, professional coach practitioners, educators, and members of the broader talent management community to discuss theories, research, and practice, with the goal of improving the mulit-disciplinary field of executive and organizational coaching.

In addition, the conferences are designed to foster fellowship, collaborative relationships, and networking opportunities and our 3rd conference was no exception.

Our next conference will be held at Teachers College, Columbia University from October 14-16, 2020. We hope to see you there!

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**From the 2018 Conference Leadership Team**

We wish to thank all the presenters and delegates that made the 3rd International Columbia Coaching Conference such a wonderful event! In addition to some great keynote speakers, the conference owes its success to the people who present in one of five concurrent sessions (both morning and afternoon) on the first and second day.

This body of work reflects the expertise and dedication of many scholars and practitioners focused on executive and organizational coaching and adjacent fields.

Over 100 submissions were received across four conference categories:

- Coaching Demonstrations – focusing on "modeling" coaching practices with a "client" to show how theory and research can inform evidence-based practice.
- Experiential Learning Sessions – providing participants with an opportunity for continuing professional development through directly experiencing an area of coaching practice through creative, interactive formats.
- Panel Discussions – focused on exploring emerging topics relevant to research, theory, and/or the practice of executive and organizational coaching, from multiple forward-looking perspectives. Panel Discussions provide opportunities to discuss new research, work in progress, and/or emerging practices in an informal, group context.
- Paper Presentations – aimed at the scholarly end of the scholar-practitioner continuum and intended to contribute to the body of knowledge of the emerging field of executive and organizational coaching.

Each submission was blind-peer reviewed by two conference reviewers and 33 were selected to present at the conference.

The authors retain copyright in their works and have warranted that this is original work presented for the first time at Columbia University.

As always, this conference could not have happened without an amazing group of volunteers who contributed countless hours to ensure that the bi-annual Columbia Coaching Conference becomes 'the coaching conference' to attend. We would like to acknowledge the following people:

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# COACHING DEMONSTRATIONS

**Addressing the Agility Gap: One Approach**
**A Demonstration of Coaching for Leadership Agility to Help Drive Organizational Agility**

*Meryl A. Moritz, Meryl Moritz Resources LLC*
*Patty O. Keenan, Keenan Insights Inc.*

**Abstract**
Today's leadership coaching challenges nest inside of a much larger drama: the struggle of organizations to adapt to accelerating change and growing complexity and to meet that turbulence with an agile response to achieve sustained success. This tag-team demonstration will involve two coaches who will utilize multi-rater feedback (*Leadership Agility*® 360°) coaching of an executive client to identify his/her agility gap, generate insights and align actions to help the leader influence his team and beyond.

**Key Words:** Leadership Agility; Executive Coaching; Tag-team coaching; Multi-rater feedback coaching, Vertical Leadership Development

## Competencies

Not to be confused with the Level 5 Hierarchy presented by Jim Collins in *Good to Great,* researchers/co-authors Bill Joiner and Stephen Josephs (*Leadership Agility: Five Levels of Mastery for Anticipating and Initiating Change)* found that as a leader grows from one stage to another, the leader develops a distinct set of mental and emotional competencies/capacities that enable more effective responses to change and complexity. They are:

**Context Setting Agility**: entails stepping back, framing the situation and determining the best initiatives to take, given the changes taking place in the larger environment/system.

**Stakeholder Agility**: requires stepping back from one's own views and objectives to consider the needs and perspectives of those who have a stake in one's initiatives.

**Creative Agility:** involves stepping back from habitual assumptions and developing optimal solutions to often novel and complex issues.

**Self-Leadership Agility:** entails stepping back; becoming more aware of one's own thoughts, feelings and behaviors and experimenting with new and more effective approaches**.**

The demo will also focus on four ICF competencies, while evoking insight and understanding of the above agile leadership competencies in the client.

**Establishing the Coaching Agreement** (#2) Understanding what is required in the specific coaching interaction and coming to agreement with the prospective and new client about the coaching process and relationship.

**Coaching Presence** (#4) Being fully conscious and creating spontaneous relationships with clients, employing a style that is open, flexible and confident.

**Creating Awareness** (#8) Integrating and accurately evaluating multiple sources of information, and making interpretations that help the client to gain awareness and thereby achieve agreed-upon results.

**Designing Actions** (#9) Creating with the client opportunities for ongoing learning, during coaching and in work/life situations, and for taking new actions that will most effectively lead to agreed-upon coaching results.

**Demonstration Outline**

The objectives of this session are to:

1. **Examine the interplay between coaching and leadership development** through the lens of the Leadership Agility assessment. Debrief multi-rater feedback on a CEO's agility and illustrate how this can create value for him and the system. Our 10 years of experience with these debriefs of a leader's agility have provided us with ample evidence of their impact on clients who report having powerful insights; new thinking; and new actions with which to experiment. At the same time, the data serve as an invitation to the client to see and aspire to next stage vertical (leadership) development. In the weeks and months after delivering the agility assessment and co-designing actions to address perceived gaps, the leader's coach is often approached by stakeholders who want to provide anecdotal evidence of positive effects on the system of the leader's transition to the next stage of development.
2. **Provide a developmental frame to assess how leaders can best operate in VUCA environments.** Using the Leadership Agility framework, scholars, practitioners, and their clients can highlight agility gaps that could compromise leaders' and their enterprise's effective navigation of volatility,-uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, and solve for these gaps.
3. **Stimulate coaches to be agile in how they practice coaching.** High stakes times call for higher impact/new approaches. Tag team coaching is one such approach which requires a willing client, of course, and agility on the part of the coaches, and serves to multiply the quality and quantity of agile responses from the client.

Our philosophy is that coach agility is a prerequisite for coaching an agile leader or a 'would-be' agile leader. We don't get to rely on what worked in the past, what we know or thought we knew about leaders and the system in which they operate. We ourselves need to be able to demonstrate agility in self-leadership, creative problem solving, stakeholder management, and context setting to have a parallel, relevant experience and be true partners with our clients.

Attendees will engage with questions/challenges at predetermined Q&A junctures -- called Reflection Zones -- which will allow them to give voice to insights and integrate learning. We see these junctures as co-learning opportunities where all participants, we – the facilitators – included, learn from our peer coaches and the scholars who are studying/researching coaching impacts.

**Reflection Zone I: Your Stage Development**

- Where do you see *your* vertical development in the Leadership Agility® stages?
- From which stage were you operating 5 years ago? 10 years ago?

- How has your own stage impacted how you coach your clients?

**Reflection Zone II: Stand in the Client's System**

- At what stages do you see your clients operating?
- At what stage might the system or culture need the client to operate?
- How might you create awareness of any gaps/assist client in designing ways to address them?

**Reflection Zone III: Claim Your Learning**

How might you apply this development frame to the clients and systems you serve?

**Timeline**

0:00 – 5:00 Introduction and Context Setting

5:00 – 10:00 Reflection Zone I: Your Stage Development

10:00 -- 20:00 Coaching Demonstration using LA360° feedback

20:00 – 25:00 Reflection Zone II: Stand in the Client's System

25:00 – 35:00 Coaching Demonstration continues/closes

35:00 – 38:00 Reflection Zone III: Claim Your Learning

38:00 – 45:00 Audience's and CEO Debrief

## Implications for Practice

We envision this demonstration inspiring attendees to further investigate theories of adult stage and "vertical" development, such as Leadership Agility, in the interest of creating value for coaching clients and their systems. In addition, we imagine participants designing and implementing an agile coaching experiment with a few clients, possibly using a new approach/method of delivery (tag-team, peer, stop-action, etc.) to elicit new agile responses from the client, with the client's permission, of course. Perhaps members of the audience will take heart from the topic of agile leadership and decide to embark on becoming certified in a new instrument (LA360°™) or its related self-assessment (LA Accelerator™), both specifically designed to augment agile leadership coaching. Joining the scholar-practitioner Community of Practice that has sprung up around Agile Leadership coaching would enable newer entrants to the discipline to benefit from the evolving set of best practices and to cascade those benefits to their clients and their respective cultures.

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**Sparking a Coaching Mindset: Self-Awareness as a Foundation for Managerial Coaching**

*Jennifer Hall, Ph.D., BCC*

**Abstract:** *To grow a coaching culture within an organizational system, individual leaders must begin to embody a coaching mindset. In this coaching demonstration, the presenter will lead a fishbowl coaching session focused on helping an organizational leader understand the foundational elements of coaching and how she can best leverage her unique coaching style, contributing to a systemic coaching culture.*

**Key Words**: coaching mindset, coaching culture, leader as coach, coaching fundamentals, coaching assessment, managerial coaching

**Competencies**

This demonstration covers the following International Coaching Federation competencies:

*Creating Awareness*
Ability to integrate and accurately evaluate multiple sources of information and to make interpretations that help the client to gain awareness and thereby achieve agreed-upon results.

*Designing Actions*
Ability to create with the client opportunities for ongoing learning, during coaching and in work/life situations, and for taking new actions that will most effectively lead to agreed-upon coaching results.

*Active Listening*
Ability to focus completely on what the client is saying and is not saying, to understand the meaning of what is said in the context of the client's desires, and to support client self-expression.

*Powerful Questioning*
Ability to ask questions that reveal the information needed for maximum benefit to the coaching relationship and the client.

*Direct Communication*
Ability to communicate effectively during coaching sessions, and to use language that has the greatest positive impact on the client.

 

**Demonstration Outline**

Recognizing the benefits of one-to-one executive coaching, organizations are increasingly investing in development programs that equip managers with coaching skills. Coaching has become an essential leadership competency and a tool to increase employee engagement and productivity across the enterprise. According to Conference Board's 2016 Global Executive Coaching Survey, 50% of the companies surveyed reported that they are focused on developing coaching skills in managers (Abel, Ray, & Nair, 2016). 65% of the organizations surveyed by the Human Capital Institute and International Coach Federation (Filipkowski, Ruth, & Heverin, 2017) reported that they plan to expand the scope of managerial coaching in the next five years. Increased attention to coaching skills in organizations is unsurprising, considering that an individual employee's engagement is largely driven by the quality of their direct manager (Gallup, 2015). With the prevalence of managerial coaching and plans for growth, designing strong programming to support the acquisition of coaching skills in managers is an organizational imperative.

The process of scaling coaching for wide-scale adoption requires Human Resource and Learning and Development departments to provide high-quality training for leaders. Research by Dahling and colleagues (2016) indicates that it is not enough for managers to coach more frequently. Instead, successful employee outcomes depend in large part upon the *quality* of coaching skills used by their managers. In fact, coaching performed by those with weak coaching abilities can actually hinder employee goal attainment (Dahling, 2016). Moreover, as Lawrence (2017) discusses, managerial coaching is complex to master because it involves shifts in mindset. "A lack of skills is not the only factor that gets in the way of coaching," Lawrence writes. "To coach someone (as coaching is commonly defined) requires a particular mindset." Learning what this "mindset" entails and how it differs from traditional forms of management may assist in the adoption of coaching behaviors. It is, therefore, crucial to equip managers with training alongside shifting their attitudes and beliefs to deliver coaching successfully.

To create a coaching culture that works, it is essential that managers are equipped to coach *effectively*. In designing a program to prepare leaders to coach, Grant (2016) recommends that leader-as-coach training programs should utilize models that are individually relevant, easily applicable, and allow for "coaching agility" in the context of a variety of daily management interactions. The emphasis on coaching agility is particularly important in order for managers to feel comfortable putting their learning to practice in a way that feels genuine and natural. If the training is aligned both with the individual's and the organization's values, Grant (2016) suggests that the training has a better chance of being adopted.

 

This coaching demonstration draws upon a new coaching model and assessment to empower leaders to coach effectively. Using an intuitive, psychometrically validated coaching style assessment, Dr. Jennifer Hall will demonstrate how a coach can help a leader learn a simple model for coaching, build self-awareness around her own preferred coaching style, and set goals for leveraging additional strategies for increased leadership versatility. Because manager-as-coach training programs are offered most frequently by Learning and Development departments, Human Resources departments, and both internal and external coaches (Filipkowski et al., 2017), this session will be extremely applicable for those internal and external practitioners looking to build coaching skills in the leaders they work with.

**Session Objectives**

In this coaching demonstration, we will propose a simple framework, comprised of three coaching foundations, designed to help leaders quickly develop an intuitive understanding of coaching and begin applying coaching behaviors. In the demonstration portion, the presenter will model a proven approach to help the organizational leader understand her unique coaching style in the context of the coaching framework. The presenter will then support the coachee to develop an action plan for increasing her coaching effectiveness. After attending the session, attendees will be able to:

1. **Explain** the benefits to the organizational system of equipping managers with the coaching skills necessary to develop their direct reports;
2. **Describe** the primary components of a simple yet powerful coaching skills model;
3. **Identify** specific examples of coaching behaviors as either “Push” or “Pull”

**Session Outline**

[0:00 - 1:00] *Introduction*
Presenter will introduce the workshop format and objectives for the session.

[1:00 - 5:00] *Presentation: Coaching the system, one leader at a time*
Presenter will explain the theoretical rationale for focusing on mindset at the individual level to support systemic leader-as-coach initiatives, as discussed above.

[5:00 - 8:00] *Audience Discussion*
Presenter will then ask attendees, “For those of you who coach organizational leaders, what methods have you found to be helpful in developing your clients' coaching mindset? What challenges have you encountered?” Audience members will have the opportunity to respond to the question and share their experiences.

[8:00 - 10:00] *Introduction to the Coaching Mindset Index™*
The Coaching Mindset Index (CMI) framework will be presented as a tool for enabling organizational leaders to apply and promote coaching throughout a system. The presenter will introduce the concept of Push and Pull, the three Coaching Foundations, six Coaching Strategies (Appendix A), and four Coaching Styles of effective coaching (Appendix B).

[10:00 - 12:00] *Coaching Demonstration Orientation*
To introduce the fishbowl coaching demonstration, the presenter and her client will present the client's organizational context and why she has engaged the CMI to help her develop her own coaching acumen. She will also introduce the Individual Reflection Worksheet, a standard tool used in debriefing the CMI.

[12:00 - 18:00] *Foundation: Sharing Feedback*
Presenter will debrief the client's results on the first Coaching Foundation, *Sharing Feedback,* which includes the Coaching Strategies of *Compassion* and *Candor*. During the final two minutes of this segment, the audience will share reactions and observations of the process.

[18:00 - 24:00] *Foundation: Setting Goals*
Presenter will debrief the client's results on the second Coaching Foundation, *Setting Goals*, which includes the Coaching Strategies of *Performance* and *Development*. During the final two minutes of this segment, the audience will share reactions and observations of the process.

[24:00 - 30:00] *Foundation: Finding Solutions*
Presenter will debrief the client's results on the third Coaching Foundation, *Finding Solutions*, which includes the Coaching Strategies of *Advocacy* and *Inquiry*. During the final two minutes of this segment, the audience will share reactions and observations of the process.

[30:00 - 32:00] *Action Planning*
To wrap up the debrief session, the coachee will be asked to set one development goal for growing her coaching capacity. The presenter and the coachee will briefly discuss the implications of this goal and how she might go about achieving it.

[32:00 - 40:00] *General Q&A*
As we transition to the Q&A, the audience will be asked to share their responses and reactions to the discussion. To end the session, audience members will be invited to engage in an open discussion on any part of the workshop.

**Implications for Practice**

Through this demonstration, coaches will gain exposure to a powerful and concise framework for conceptualizing the coaching mindset and learn a process for helping organizational leaders understand their natural coaching styles. External coaches, internal coaches, and HR/OD professionals all will be better equipped to scale coaching throughout the organizational system with a one-to-one method for embedding a coaching mindset within individual leaders.

In the state of managerial coaching in organizations today, some level of training is necessary to prepare leaders to confidently and competently serve in a coach role for their direct reports. The demonstrated approach provides individualized coaching skill development and could be incorporated alongside group workshops within a systematic leader-as-coach program.

The advantage of using an model like the Coaching Mindset Index is the simplicity and common language that comes with using a generalizable framework. Concepts, when they are intuitive and memorable, can be easily accessed in real-time coaching situations and reflected upon on one's own or with a group. Moreover, by adding a level of personalization, the CMI makes coaching connected to a leader's unique set of strengths and areas for development. Similar to Grant's recommendations (2016), this coaching demonstration also suggests the importance of using a framework that has personal relevance and uses easily accessible language.

Practitioners should encourage versatility in the managerial coaching approach. Studies have shown both the effectiveness of coaching regardless of specific strategies used (de Haan, Culpin, & Curd, 2011) as well as the importance of using coaching strategies tailored to the individual's context (Berman & Bradt, 2006). Because coaching in a managerial capacity is a contextual practice, the ability to flex in style and utilize different strategies across situations is essential.

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**Appendix A: CMI Coaching Foundations and Coaching Strategies**

The CMI model is comprised of three foundations central to the coaching process: sharing feedback, setting goals, and finding solutions. Each foundation has two complementary strategies, one Push and one Pull. Push strategies represent a more direct or consultative approach to coaching while Pull strategies align with a more supportive or counseling approach.

*Table A1. CMI Coaching Foundations and Strategies*

| Foundations | Push Strategies | Pull Strategies |
|---|---|---|
| **Sharing Feedback** Providing information and observations about another's performance or behavior. | **Candor** The practice of using honesty and directness when providing feedback, especially difficult or potentially painful feedback. | **Compassion** The practice of using sensitivity and diplomacy when sharing feedback to protect the esteem and emotional well-being of coachees. |
| **Setting Goals** Identifying and consistently monitoring progress toward clear, actionable goals. | **Performance** The practice of motivating coachees to identify and achieve ambitious and measurable results in their work. | **Development** The practice of encouraging coachees to identify and pursue experiences and responsibilities that support their aspirations. |
| **Finding Solutions** Exploring and implementing productive approaches to challenges and opportunities. | **Advocacy** The practice of offering solutions to coachees by making suggestions and sharing expertise. | **Inquiry** The practice of helping coachees to find their own solutions by demonstrating curiosity, asking open-ended questions, and listening deeply. |

**Appendix B: CMI Coaching Styles**

Based on a respondent's unique blend of Push and Pull strategies, the CMI model indicates a Coaching Style that encapsulates a typical approach to the coaching process. The four styles are defined on a 2x2 grid, represented in a circle as the Coaching Styles Matrix (Figure A1). Descriptions for each style are found in the table that follows (Table A1).

*Figure A1: Coaching Styles Matrix*

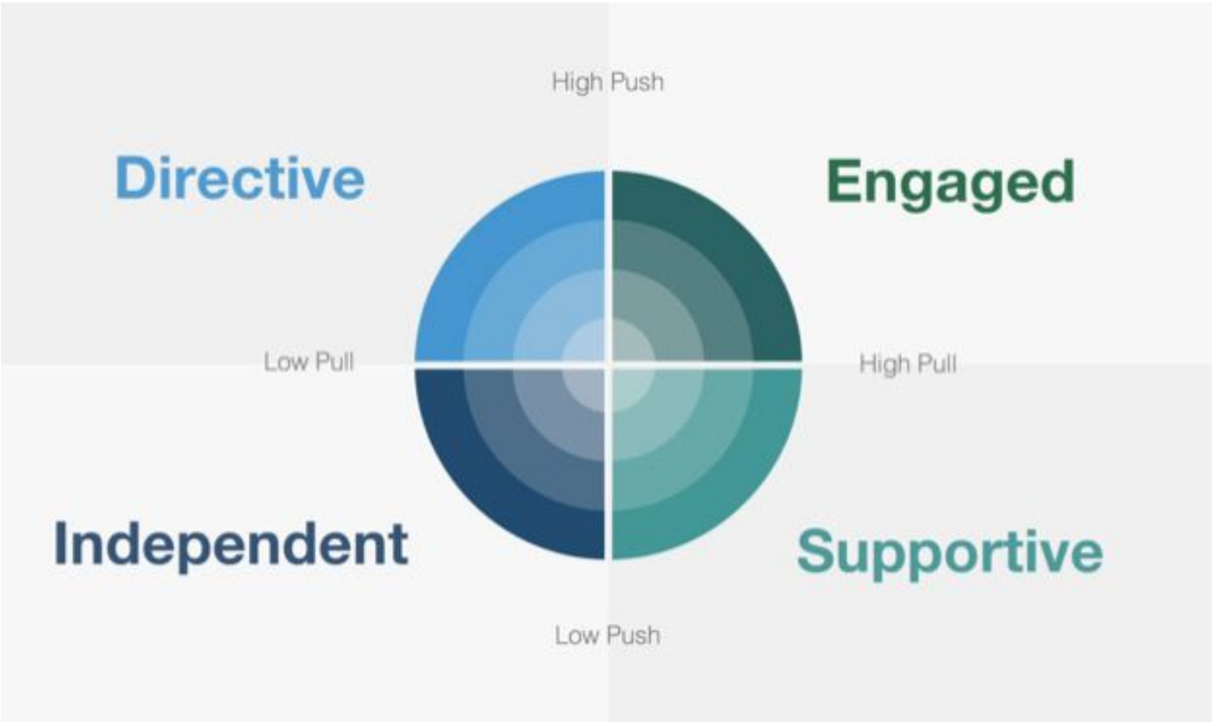

*Table A2: Descriptions of CMI Coaching Styles*

| **Directive** | **Engaged** |
|---|---|
|  A Directive coaching style is characterized by an above-average level of Push strategies and a below-average level of Pull strategies. Coaches who use a Directive style attempt to transfer their knowledge and skills to their coachees by sharing advice and experiences, communicating honestly and directly, and offering solutions to problems. |  An Engaged coaching style is characterized by above-average levels of both Push and Pull strategies. Coaches with an Engaged style are likely to invest significant time and energy in their coachees and to use a variety of coaching behaviors, ranging from more directive and results-focused to more inquisitive and compassionate. |
| **Independent** | **Supportive** |
|  An Independent coaching style is characterized by below-average levels of both Push and Pull strategies. Coaches who use an Independent style are likely to provide their coachees with a high degree of autonomy; they may be less active than other coaches in communicating expectations, solving problems, or providing feedback. |  A Supportive coaching style is characterized by a below-average level of Push strategies and an above-average level of Pull strategies. Coaches who use a Supportive style are likely to be perceived as warm, inquisitive, and invested in a coachee's individual development. They also tend to deliver performance feedback with a high degree of compassion. |

# EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING SESSIONS

***A systemic stance for speeding up the process of change while working with groups: Gestalt OSD perspective on group development***

*Dr. Rachel Ciporen; Core Faculty Columbia Coaching Program & Gestalt OSD Center*[*]
*Dr. Tanya Faude-Koivisto, PCC; Core Faculty Columbia Coaching Program & Gestalt OSD Center*
*Dr. John Carter, President Gestalt OSD Center*
*Dr. Veronica Hopper Carter, Gestalt OSD Center*
[*]*Gestalt Center for Organization and Systems Development*

**Abstract.** This experiential session introduces participants to Stages of Development (SoD) theory as a means for speeding up change processes at any level of system (individual, dyadic, group, organizational, etc.). This offering is designed for coaches interested in supporting systemic change. Participants will walk away with an understanding of SoD theory and increased ability to nuance their coaching interventions based on the SoD and level of system they seek to influence.

**Key-words**: Stage of Development, Group Coaching, Levels of System, Change.

## Session Objectives

At the end of the 90-minute session participants will be able to:

- *Identify* the three stages of group development (i.e., orientation, conflict and cohesion)
- *State* the intention behind their choice of intervention
- *Practice* creating a group level intervention

Organizations and organizational dynamics are extremely complex. By having a clear understanding of the different levels of system and stages of development one can seek to influence, interveners can more effectively design a holistic process aimed at systemic change. For example, if working with a group, the different levels one can seek to influence are the individual, dyadic and group level. The intervention will vary depending on what level of system and stage of development the coach chooses to intervene on. Hence an understanding of SoD theory and the application to different levels of system can expand the repertoire and effectiveness of systemically working coaches (e.g., group and team coaching, relationship coaching, organizational coaching, business coaching, etc).

## Session Outline

### 1. Set-Up and Theory Input

(Timing: 20 minutes)
Introduction to group Stages of Development change theory as choice-points for making interventions. Stages of Development theory is applicable at multiple levels of system (LOS).

## 2. Experiential Fishbowl Activity
(Timing: 70 minutes)

**2.1. Set-up.** A fishbowl will be created. Six participants will sit inside the fishbowl (i.e., the working group) in a circle. Other participants will sit outside the working group and act as coaches to the working group).

**2.2. Tasks for working group and coaches**
*2.2.1. Working group.* The working group will have 3 rounds of 10 minutes each (30 minutes of work in total) with the following task:

**A.** Identify and agree upon the three most important things coaches need to attend to when attempting to impact the group level of system.

**B.** If Part A is completed, rank order the list from most to least important.

*2.2.2. Coaches.* Coaches will observe the working group and notice what stands out for them (what is 'figural') with respect to a pre-assigned stage of development. At stop-action points coaches will work in groups of 3 and state, to their trio, the intervention each would make to the group level of system. The three stages of development are:

1. Orientation and awareness
2. Management of choice and conflicts
3. Cohesion and responsibility.

Facilitators will support the process and overall learning experience with specific focus on intention related to the group level of system and stage of development.

*2.2.3* During each of the working group sessions coaches will be guided to observe the working group for specific stage-related phenomena. They will be asked to keep track of possible interventions they would make at any point during the working group's interactions with each other.

**2.3. Timing**
70 minutes total:
- 3 rounds in total (10 minutes per round, 30 minutes of work in total). Each round will be broken down as follows:
    - The working group will have 10 minutes to work on the assigned task (see 2.2)
    - At stop-action points, after 10 minutes of work, participants outside of the working group (i.e., coaches) will work in groups of 3 for 6 minutes.
    - One coach in each group will state their intervention (focused on 'orientation and awareness'), one coach (focused on 'management of choice and conflict') and one coach (focused on 'cohesion and responsibility').
    - The working group will also have a task during each 6-minute "stop-action" period.

**3. Group debrief of activity**
(Timing: 10 minutes)
Participants will be given time to identify a key learning from the session as well as a client/organizational context where they would like to experiment with this new knowledge. They will then be asked to share their insight and implication for practice in pairs.

## Conceptual/Theory Input

### Stages of Development

This session is informed by Gestalt Organization and Systems frameworks with a focus on Stages of Development (Carter, 2004, 2008, 2016). John D. Carter, Ph.D. (J. Carter, personal communication, May 16th, 2011) recognized leader in the field of applied behavior sciences addresses a major tenant related to stages of development.

> "The best way to speed up the process of change without unintended consequences is to learn about and speed up the stages of development process. In fact, it is the only way with proven efficacy that speeds up the process of individual and group change."

As part of your everyday life, we are constantly learning (a) how to orient ourselves, (b) how to resolve the conflicts that arise from our awareness or orientation process, and (c) how we attain cohesion and harmony—how we center ourselves, ground ourselves and connect ourselves to the environment. Centering ourselves is how we connect ourselves to our most integrated and significant inner core to support mobilizing our energy to engage ourselves and others. Such interaction with self is called cohesion, and engagement with others, harmony. Grounding is being connected to a stable force externally like the energy of the earth or some other steady force. It is also possible to ground ourselves by connecting to an unchanging internal force, for example the Original Source, within.

This process invariably leads to being aware of multiple things that are called figures. Figures are the forces for change or sameness in our awareness, the energy that captures our attention. A sharp energy-mobilizing figure supports contact with self and others. Good figure/ground formation is how we creatively adjust to our environment and accomplish our desired outcomes. When contact occurs, there is a shift or change.

Conceptually, the processes described above are referred to as stages of development, which occur at every possible level of system: individual, two-person system, group, individual-group, inter-group, group-organization, or organization (Hopper-Carter, 2004).

According to SoD theory, the ongoing natural process of change is represented by the following three stages of development:

1. Orientation and awareness.

2. Conflict and Choice.
3. Cohesion and responsibility.

Stages of development are natural processes of change that exist in all humans systems. An understanding of Stages of development theory helps practitioners attend to processes and the use of self to make intent a reality (Cheung-Judge, 2012). Awareness of this natural process is a bit like having the wind at your back. Individuals tend to be hardwired with their own bias and perceptual frames of reference. Stage of development theory supports using these and other frames of reference more effectively and can be used in conjunction with other theories and frameworks.

The primary conceptual focus of our experiential session is on stages of development because the stages are always present within every phase of development. <u>Stage</u> of development is a process that moves from one stage to another, can be cyclical and repetitive and ultimately ends with a shift to the next phase of development. <u>Phase</u> of development is a linear and sequential process. Phase of development is a one-way journey from birth to death. Stages and phases of development can be viewed from the perspective of beginning, middle and end. The stages of development exist within every phase. Phases of individual development, for example, are childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Stages of development can also be applied to other group phase theories. For example, Tuckman (1965) differentiates what he describes as the phases of forming, storming, norming and performing in his group development model; the three stages of development described in our model exist within each of Tuckman's phases.

Both natural and orchestrated change can occur within every stage of development. One orientation is to ask if this observed phenomena is part of the natural change process or an orchestrated change. If the change is natural, one only needs to attend to where the natural process is blocked or interrupted and free up the blocked energy. If the change is orchestrated, one needs to attend to the aspects of the situation that need attention to mobilize the individual's or system's energy to take action and support contact.

Most groups in current organizational contexts do not move beyond the second phase of group development, and many do not move beyond the first phase. Phase one groups are still able to be effective and complete work. The more a group understands about how they move through the stages of development the more ability the group has to speed up the process of change.

For a group or individual to learn about their stage of development processes they must slow down and become aware of their behavior in each stage – the who, what, how, when and where aspects of their process. These aspects of the stages of development processes are within the individual's or group's control. There is the ability to increase behaviors that support change and decrease or eliminate behaviors that inhibit change.

**Orientation/Awareness**

In the Orientation/Awareness stage of development, we scan our internal and external environment and assess the "I want" and "we need" of the individual or group. Our perspective or habitual ways of making meaning determine what we include and what we exclude in our scan.

**Conflict/Choice**

In a scan of our internal or external environment, we create choices for ourselves that result in conflicts that need to be resolved. Conflict occurs when two things attempt to occupy the same space at the same time. Anytime we have two or more things attempting to occupy the same space at the same time, we create tension, dis-ease, conflict, and the need to make choices. Choice occurs when one must select one of multiple alternatives.

Most of the time, we have choices and we choose how to orient ourselves and how we want to resolve the differences created by our perspective. I can choose to see the glass as half full, half empty, or just enough to be fulfilling. This is the power of thought. We move toward the pictures we create, and most of the time we can choose the picture we want to give our attention to.

From the choices and conflicts we create, we make meaning of the data: that is, what is the work that needs to be done (the adjustment, the correction, the creative adjustment that needs to take place), and we assign the work that needs to be done. In assigning the work, there are only 3 places interpersonally where work can take place and where it can be assigned: I do the work, you do the work, or we do the work together. Many times, conflicts occur related to who has responsibility for the work that needs to be done.

**Responsibility/Cohesion**

We orient ourselves. We create conflicts and choices, and resolve them to create cohesion and harmony, allowing us to mobilize our energy, act, and creatively adjust to our environment. All of this is in the service of meeting our needs and accomplishing desired outcomes.

As stated above, anytime we have two or more things attempting to occupy the same space at the same time, we create tension, dis-ease, conflict, and the need to make choices. Dis-ease in the human body not given appropriate attention eventually leads to disease. Therefore, it is important to attend to the tensions and dis-ease we experience and to find some resolution that creates harmony. If I am hungry, I eat. If I am thirsty, I drink liquid. As an example, eighty percent of the time when people in the western world think they are hungry, they are actually and in need of water. This error in thinking is a result of insufficient scanning and a poor sensory awareness process.

Resolution of tension and conflict usually results in cohesion, some agreement, alignment, common ground or shared figures and perspectives. This resolution then allows us to have clarity about responsibility and accountability. When we are unable to creatively adjust, we experience disharmony, dis-ease, and conflict, and we are again confronted with choices to make. When we are unable to efficiently and effectively resolve the conflicts and make choices we have to re-orient ourselves and moving through the stages begins anew.

Understanding stages of development supports us in assessing what the individual or system has the potential and capability to accomplish. We do not expect the same behavior from a group that is focused on orientation that we would expect from a group that is focused on conflict resolution. We would not expect the same thing from a first phase group as we would expect from a mature group. Our expectations of a socialized employee are different than our expectations of a newcomer.

Understanding and attending to stages of development will increase the intervener's capability to support systems at any level to:

- Orient better and faster
- Manage conflicts and choices more effectively and efficiently with fewer unintended consequences
- Reach decisions, common ground, harmony and inner cohesion and the mobilizing of energy that supports self and others getting work done.

The more a group understands about how they move through the stages of development, the greater their ability to speed up the process of change.

## Implication for Practice

We tend to have habitual ways that we make meaning of phenomena in our environment. Creating awareness of these habitual meaning-making patterns is an essential responsibility of an executive and organizational coach. This experiential session will help refine coaches' awareness by helping them notice specific patterns related to how those being coached (individuals, groups or teams) tend to manage the predictable stages groups and individuals must navigate. It is movement through the stages of development that leads to good figure/ground formation, mobilization of energy, action and change.

Groups interrupt the natural and orchestrated change process when there is a lack of understanding and awareness of how they move through stages of development, which is a cyclical process. The key to learning about the stages of development is to slow down, learn, and then speed up without increasing unintended consequences.

Specifically, understanding and applying SoD theory when working with groups can have the following implications:

- Stage of development is aligned with natural human process and supports a system's healthy development - both between its members and within its larger environment.
- Stages of development is a cyclical process and visible at any moment in time.
- Speeding up the process of change is directly related to movement through stages of development.
- Stages of development supports interveners to more easily help a group identify its work.
- Stages of development aids the intervener in identifying interruptions to contact/change.
- Awareness of stage phenomena aids interveners in anticipating and supporting a group's longer term development through phases.
- Stages of development can be used to enhance the utility of any phase of development model.
- Attending to stages of development while being intentional about what level of system a coach will intervene on can support systemic change.

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# A "Guiding Star" is Born: The Motivating Power of Visuals

*Dr. Yaron Prywes, Lecturer Social-Organizational Psychology Program, Department of Organization and Leadership, Teachers College, Columbia University*

**Abstract.** Research about the motivating power of visuals suggests that coaches equip clients with an actual image to refer to. This session teaches participants a method to translate language-based goals into a meaningful visual format. It is for coaches who want a creative tool to help ensure that insights verbalized, and plans created during sessions "stick" in-between sessions. Each participant will take-away a unique, useful product.

**Key words:** Coaching tool, visionary image, motivation, creative action planning

## Session Objectives

**Learning Objectives.** By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- *Design* a stimulating 1-page image to capture three key elements of a client's coaching journey
- *List* the steps taken to help clients identify their life's purpose in a concise manner
- *Describe* how the "Guiding Star" method is informed by research from the fields of advertising, persuasion, and motivational psychology

### Session Outline

1. **Hook and Problem Identification** (15 minutes)

Presenter welcomes and engages participants with 3 motivational posters. The first is sincere, the second is funny, and the third is cynical. He asks participants questions including. "Why are motivational posters popular (ever-present) yet often ineffective?" Presenter explains that the purpose of this session is to provide coaches with a method to create a meaningful, visual product for clients to use in-between sessions. He explains this tool helps solve one aspect of a current problem identified in coaching research: "Little is known about how to engineer deliberate practice outside of coaching meetings with our clients" (Nowack and Radecki, 2018). Presenter shares images of typical action plans currently deployed, which are "word heavy" (see Figure 1). He asks, "Might supplementing wordy action plans with personalized visuals improve client goal attainment in-between sessions?" Presenter briefly shares three key studies from the fields of advertising, persuasion and motivational psychology that suggest the answer is likely "Yes." [He also acknowledges that findings from Cognitive Behavioral coaching research also likely supports this session's premise, but has chosen to focus on research that is likely to be new to more participants].

 

Figure 1.
*Typical Word-Heavy Action Plan*

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN January 2015

| **Leadership Strengths**: What strengths differentiate you as a leader? How do you know? | **Leadership Development Areas**: What areas do you need to work on to take your leadership to "the next level"? How do you know? |
|---|---|
| 1. **Takes Initiative and Innovative**<br>• Takes Initiative (competency #12 on 360) received high marks (4.36). 10 raters indicated importance for my success.<br>• Received "Explorer" scores on the personality factor Originality, which reflects the degree to which I am open to new ways of doing things. I scored a 55 on the Change subscale, which indicates that I generally accept changes and innovation<br>• Received "Flexible" scores on personality factor Consolidation, which reflects the way I push toward goals (scale goes from flexible/balanced/focused).<br>• Numerous people interviewed used phrases like "Scott has a lot of initiative", "On the technical side he is really creative and has innovative ideas.", "Is very assertive", "Makes decisions quickly"<br><br>2. **Collaborative Team-Builder**<br>• Numerous people interviewed identified collaboration and team-building as strengths. Direct and indirect reports used phrases like "I see him as a mentor", "I feel he is a good mentor to me", "He's one of my favorite people on the team". Others used words like "friendly", "tries to reach out and get to know people." Numerous people identified Trustworthiness as a strength (i.e., "He tries to go the extra mile to do the right thing.", "he is trusted", "We trust Scott", "He has integrity") | 1. **Be More Diplomatic**<br>• Virtually everyone, including both myself and my boss rated this a one of the most important skills for my position (#8 on 360). It's also an area for which my peers feel that I need to improve (Competency #8 Build Collaborative Relationships received average scores of 3.27)<br>• ·Several people interviewed used comments like "Scott is overtly blunt" which can rub some people the wrong way<br>• I scored a 44 on the Accommodation subscale around Other's needs which indicates that I could be more aware of how my actions could impact others<br><br>2. **React Slower**<br>• People interviewed gave quotes around my working to quickly in too many situations. - "I wonder if he gets into trouble by going to fast" or "He's efficient but he may not please everyone" or " He moves quickly, but this opens him up to mistakes" or "He assumes to much"<br>• On the need for stability I scored a 56 which indicates that I can often be reactive. This was driven off my higher than average scores on both worry and intensity |

2. **Session Outline and Connection to Conference Theme** (10 minutes)
Presenter shares session agenda, and draws connection to conference theme via the "whole person" notion. He does this by noting that text-heavy client action plans are by definition not directed at the whole-person. In other words, human beings process information in multiple ways -- "text" being only one. Action plans crafted in word-processing documents (i.e., Microsoft Word format) are thus limited. The visual nature of the guiding star method, provides a second avenue. It is suggested that the guiding star method, in combination with text-based action plans, is a more "holistic" approach. In addition, because visuals have been found to arouse the client's implicit motivational system, it is argued that this holistic approach would likely help clients pursue behavior change. Therefore, overall, utilizing both text and visual channels when crafting an action-plan is likely a more effective way to appeal to a client's "head, heart, and hand".

3. **Case Study** (10 minutes)
Presenter shares a coaching client story with corresponding "Guiding Star" image that was created. Presenter identifies three elements of a Guiding Star, so that participants are aware of the steps required to create one.. The three elements are: (1) a visual image, (2) cognitive reminders, and (3) a concise life purpose statement. See Figure 2 below.

Figure 2.
*Example Guiding Star Image.*


4. **Life Purpose Exercise** (30 minutes)
Presenter guides participants in a process to identify their own life purpose (Source: Pedro Langre, live lecture "The Tree Methodology", April 30, 2014). He invites one participant to front of room to demonstrate how a coach may partner with a client to refine their purpose statement.

5. **Application / Creation Segment** (15 minutes)
Participants finalize their own unique Guiding Star. Specifically, they identify an image to add, as well as 3 cognitive reminders (to help them steer clear of old habits and adopt new behaviors). Time permitting, presenter shares "tips" on how clients and coaches may best use tool in-between sessions.

**6. Closing and Questions** (10 minutes)
Presenter draws one final connection to the systemic coaching conference theme by referring to Kurt Lewin's famous formula: B = *f* (PxE). Specifically, the guiding star is a tool which

 

empowers clients to manipulate their external environment (E) -- by putting up their Guiding Star image by their office desk for example. The Guiding Star is a tool that ultimately aims to help clients stay motivated and focused on their development behaviors (B). Presenter displays a visually-pleasing "Questions and Thank you" slide and then fields questions. He allocates 1 minute for participants to privately capture their insights and action commitments as a result of attending the session, before concluding the session.

## Conceptual Theory-Input

This session draws on three research domains:

1. **Advertising.** Medical literature on placebo effects suggests that beliefs about the quality of a drug can impact the drug's efficacy. A 2013 randomized clinical trial found an advertisement to objectively increase the physiological efficacy of an allergy drug. This illustrates the power that visual images can have on our beliefs and body.
2. **Persuasion.** Dan O'Keefe's textbook *Persuasion: Theory and Research (2016)* notes that narratives persuade others via *identification* with a narrative's characters, and *transportation* – that is, when a reader gets caught up in a story. This research illustrates how "affective" processes are stimulated by persuasive narratives.
3. **Motivational Psychology.** Research demonstrates the motivating power of visionary images. In 2017, Maika Rawolle's team successfully administered guided visualizations to arouse implicit motives. Visionary images are: (a) picture-like, (b) identity-relevant, (c) positive, and (d) reflect long-term perspectives.

Taken together, this research suggests that creating a visual image about a client's coaching journey will be a positive complement to traditional action plans. This is because visuals can engage clients' beliefs via affective processes. They can arouse the implicit motivations of clients, and may transport them in different ways. In this sense, visuals may help clients persuade *themselves*, that their behavior change is necessary and possible. Finally, research suggests that these effects will likely occur if the "Guiding Star" picture is identity-relevant, positive and includes a long-term perspective.

## Implications for Practice

This session has several practical implications. First, both coaches and clients will have a concrete product that may increase client efficacy between coaching sessions. See example image below.

Second, coaches will co-create a coaching journey "narrative". This image-based narrative complements action plans that have been traditionally "word-heavy". Both coaches and clients can benefit from referring to the Guiding Star image in-between sessions. For example, coaches can refer to and share this image when discussing a case during supervision. Clients can refer to this image if they feel their motivation wane. Finally, both coaches and clients can update the image as progress is made and further insights occur. Thus, the Guiding Star is a "living document" that follows them and is reflects their coaching journey.

 

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## Coaching Supervision: Developing a Reflective Practice for Systemic Coaching

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*Lynne DeLay, CEO, One World Leaders*

**Abstract.** Executive and organizational coaches working with leaders, teams, and groups are immersed in complex, evolving organizational systems. A coach's ability to show up confident, competent, creative, and compassionate for their clients depends on their capacity to review and reflect on their work. This experiential session, using live supervision sessions and dialogue, aims to illustrate coaching supervision as a reflective practice helping coaches be attentive and present to themselves, their clients, and organizations as systems.

**Key Words:** Coaching Supervision; Reflective Practice

### Session Objectives

Being an effective systemic coach means being attentive and present with the leaders we coach and reflecting on our work through three lenses—Self (how is my coaching client's situation affecting me?), Others, (what is quality of my client relationship and my relationship to the client organization?), and the System (What is happening within the system/s the client operates in, and what effects are being felt by the client?). Coaching Supervision creates the reflective and relational space for coaches to look through these three lenses to learn and develop from a systems perspective in service of their clients and organizations. In this experiential session, through live supervision sessions, participants will have the opportunity to give and receive coaching supervision and to experience, through a reflective dialogue, how to view their work through a more systemic lens.

**Learning Objectives:**
By the end of this session participants will have:
- Identified key effects of coaching supervision and reflective practice on raising the quality bar for coaches, clients, and organizations
- Been introduced to an integrative coaching supervision model (Tri-Lens) related to reflective practice for learning and development that builds capacity to view coaching work from a systems perspective
- Experimented with coaching supervision conversations to deepen insight and broaden awareness of how best to engage coaching clients within organizational systems
- Evaluated their coaching work through a systemic, reflective practice

### Session Outline

**1. Framing & Introduction** (10 minutes)
The facilitators will provide brief framing comments on the emergence and importance of coaching supervision within the coaching field as a reflective partnership and practice with and for coaches, internal and external, and organizations. Linkages to trends in organizations (e.g. VUCA contexts, shift to team-centric organizational structures, self-managing agile teams, group coaching as an emerging trend in leadership development, etc.) will be made to build the business case for

coaching supervision.

**2. Introduction of Integrative and Systemic Supervision Model** (10 minutes)
To frame and anchor the experiential supervision sessions for participants, the Tri-Lens Supervision Model will be presented to highlight how coaching supervision and reflective practice support the deepening of Self as Coach (whole-person), enhancement of client relationships, and attunement to the system.

**3. Supervision Session Demonstration and Debrief** (25 minutes)
Using a real client case, the facilitators will demonstrate an abbreviated coaching supervision session taking the role of supervisor and supervisee. The demonstration will model for participants the experience of a coaching supervision session and how they can use a supervision model (Tri-Lens Supervision Model) to understand coaching work from a systemic perspective. The demonstration will also prepare the participants for their own experiential coaching supervision sessions showing how to shift the focus of the supervision dialogue between three key lenses for attention and presence – Within (Self as Coach), With Others (Clients and Supervisor), With the System (Organization/Ecosystem). The main goal of the demonstration is to illustrate what reflective practice looks and feels, and how the supervisor/supervisee partnership creates a generative space for inquiry into the coach's work. In addition, it will raise awareness around how supervision provides a developmental and supportive function for the coach, leading to deeper, more impactful coaching experiences for clients and their organizations.

To set the stage for the debrief, participants will be encouraged to observe the session from the perspective of the coach (supervisee), coach supervisor, and client.

**4. Experiential Coaching Supervision Sessions with Debriefs**
(Two 12 -minute rounds – 30 min)
Participants will self-arrange into pairs and agree on taking one of two roles for the exercise—coach and coach supervisor. Participants will have the opportunity to be in each role through the two rounds. A handout will be provided to give guidance for the exercise with questions and/or reflections for each role. In order, the rounds will shift the focus of the supervision dialogue between three key lenses for attention and presence – Within (Self as Coach), With Others (Clients and Supervisor), With the System (Organization/Ecosystem). The debriefs between rounds will capture in brief impressions from the supervision sessions that underline the interplay of the relationship of the coach with self and with client and supervisor within the larger context of the organization and external business environment.

**5. Final Q&A & Closing** (15 minutes)
Participant questions and comments based on their observations and insights from the demo and the experiential coaching supervision sessions will be captured. Participants will also identify meaningful follow-up actions they can take back to their coaching practices as a result of attending the session. The facilitators will close by providing a summary of the impact of reflective practice on the coach, their clients and organizations, particularly as it relates to effective systemic coaching.

## Conceptual/Theory-Input

Integral to all supervision models is the supervisor/supervisee relationship. This relationship is the "core factor," (Holladay, 1995), the space within the larger system of client and organization, in which the supervision work takes place. This "working alliance" (Inskipp and Proctor, 2001), is the generative partnership where the process of supervision is engaged around three main functions—Developmental, Resourcing, Qualitative (Hawkins and Smith 2006).

Informed by previous models, the Tri-Lens Supervision Model (Giglio, 2017) is an Integrative Coaching Supervision Model intended to provide supervisors and supervisees three lenses for attention and presence – Within (Self as Coach), With Others (Clients and Supervisor), With the System (Organization/Ecosystem). Relational in structure and application, this model incorporates three key system vantage points, with multiple interplays and depths, from which to review and reflect on the coach's client work.

Underpinning the Tri-Lens Supervision Model is the shared capacity in the supervisor/supervisee relationship to reflect together "on action" and "in action" on the coach's work (Schon, 1983). These reflective shifts in attention and presence happen during supervision sessions with the co-present capacity, led by the supervisor, to shift from individual perceptions to "the observer [supervisee] seeing the system from a profoundly different view; a view that includes himself/herself as part of the system." (Scharmer, 2016)

This experiential session is designed to highlight for participants how the framing and flow of coaching supervision allows for a reflective space where all systems can enter and be engaged by the coach and supervisor, with the coach emerging renewed and better resourced for future coaching interventions.

## Implications for Practice

Organizations are adapting and evolving within the wider business ecosystem where change and disruption are constants. Executive and corporate coaches, including internal coaches, are engaging with these dynamic organizational systems within the broader environment, and they are concurrently present with leaders at all levels as helpers, guides, and confidants. As coaches of leaders, teams, groups, and systems do the important work of "evoking excellence in others" (Flaherty, 1999), coaching supervision (individual and group) will play an increasingly critical role in furthering the development, resourcing, and quality of coaches and coaching. In this current and emergent context, reflective practice within a supervisory relationship is increasingly being viewed by organizational stakeholders responsible for internal and external coaching programs as an essential component to any coaching intervention to maintain quality as well as to provide development and support for coaches.

This experiential session brings to light the essential role of coaching supervision. Beyond coach training and mentoring there is the continued need, and professional responsibly, to grow and mature in our craft. Through the co-created, reflective space between the supervisor and supervisee, we can deepen our knowledge of Self and broaden our understanding of systems, all in service of our clients.

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**Institutional Curiosity Unlocked: How Action Learning Coaching Can Change the Whole Organization**

*Mies de Koning MA MCM, The New York Public Library*

**Abstract.** This session will introduce Action Learning Coaching as a tool that can change a whole organizational system. The focus of this session is the programmatic application of Action Learning at The New York Public Library. Ideal participants are coaches that are interested in group dynamics, leadership development and creating coaching cultures. Participants will explore how Action Learning Coaching can be scaled by coaches to change managerial culture and staff engagement, to support whole system change.

**Key Words:** Action Learning Coaching, Whole System Change, Leadership Development, Coaching Cultures, Group Dynamics.

## Session Objectives

At the end of the 90-minute session participants will be able to:

- *Knowledge-Based:* Repeat the historic and theoretical origins of Action Learning and contemporary applications in consultancy, coaching and organizational development.
- *Application-Based:* Illustrate a presenting problem that is appropriate for Action Learning Coaching and the ideal (hypothetical) group of participants, in order to plan and design effective Action Learning programs.
- *Comprehension-Based:* Discuss and describe opportunities to further develop and refine the Action Learning methodology for programmatic application by coaches, to support whole system change.

## Session Outline

- Introduction of business case (5 minutes).

  Explanation of the business case of The New York Public Library: In April 2016, The Library's HR department implemented Action Learning Coaching programmatically as a tool for organizational and leadership development. Between July 2017 and June 2018, six Action Learning Coaches led approximately 115 sessions.

  The Learning and Development Department now aims to further adopt and scale Action Learning programmatically as a method for leadership and organizational development throughout the New York Public Library, to equip managers to be the driving force of employee engagement and change throughout the whole organization.
- Theoretical and historical background of Action Learning (20 minutes)

  The epistemological position and theory of Action Learning were developed by Reginald Revans (1982) in the United Kingdom. Revans applied the method to support organizational learning, problem solving and the improvement of management. He first published his formula for action learning as a critique on conventional instructional methods in his book *'Action Learning, New Techniques for Management'* (1980).

At the World Institute for Action Learning, Marquard (2018) further developed Action Learning Coaching. In the session the facilitator will specifically expand on the distinction between Action Learning Facilitation and Action Learning Coaching in Marquard's method (also see Conceptual/Theory input on page 3).

The facilitator will invite group discussion and exploration of three statements that explain the Action Learning philosophy and can be related to basic ground theories of systems psychology. 1-There can be no learning without action, and no action without learning. 2-The ultimate power of a successful general staff lies, not in the brilliance of its individual members, but in the cross-fertilization of its collective abilities. 3-Unless your ideas are ridiculed by experts, they are worth nothing.

- Presenting group problems for action learning *(20 minutes)*.

  The facilitator will outline the requirements for appropriate presenting problems in Action Learning. The ultimate group size and participant type for Action Learning Coaching will be explained. In pairs, the participants will be asked to come up with an example of an appropriate presenting problem for Action Learning and design the ideal group to coach towards solving this problem, keeping the goal of whole systems change in mind.
- Demonstration *(25 minutes)*

  The facilitator will include eight participants in an active demonstration of the initial stages of an Action Learning Coaching session. For the observers of this demonstration the focus of the coaching will become a clear takeaway; which is to enforce positive reciprocal transactions between team and organizational context.
- Scaling action learning to influence whole system change *(15 minutes)*

  The participants will be asked to share their observations and reflections on the demonstration with a particular focus on the central question: *How can Action Learning Coaching be scaled and adopted programmatically as a method for leadership and organizational development, to equip managers with the capacity to be the driving force of employee engagement and whole system (organization) change?*

  Participants will be invited to explore: 1-The requirement for effective analysis (based on a substantial theoretical framework) that will allow organizations to qualitatively isolate the effect of the sessions on the overall managerial culture. 2-The implications of a coach using Action Learning Coaching, at scale, to support change at the organizational level. 3-How Action Learning can be positioned, and which group of participants should be targeted, in order to equip managers to drive employee engagement and support whole system change.
- Closing *(5 minutes)*

  The facilitator will invite questions, comments, action commitments and closing reflections from the participants.

**Conceptual/Theory-Input**

This session will build on recent academic publications about creating coaching cultures in organizations (Hawkins 2012). Vail (1996, in Marquard, 2018) pointed out the need for contemporary managers to have a high aptitude for both action and reflection, both can be developed through Action Learning.

Whilst the term “Action Learning” origins from the work of Reginald Revans in the 1940’s, it has been used broadly both in academics and in practice to describe a wide variety of experiential processes and mechanisms, in different contexts. Revans’ Action Learning Sets, further developed by Marquard (2018), require guidance provided by a certified coach to optimize and deepen the learning that results from highly structured group sessions.

The Action Learning Coach ensures in each session that participants process the idea that any perceivable behavior, including the absence of action, has the potential to be interpreted by other people as having some meaning. Participants again and again experience that any individual behavior is influence and the opportunity of influence is at their fingertips at any time.

The dynamics in the Action Learning team are viewed by the coach as an example (representation) of the dynamics of the whole system/organization. The focus of the coach is to enforce positive reciprocal transactions between team and context.

Vinsana (2008) elaborates on such mechanisms in his writings about “transfer of organizational issues as a deliberate choice” and “the pervasiveness of context”.

## Implications for Practice:

Our organizations, and the coaches who support them, operate in an era of unprecedented Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity. To address this challenge The New York Public Library’s Learning and Development Department has applied Action Learning Coaching on a large and continuous scale. Between July 2017 and June 2018, six Action Learning Coaches led approximately 115 sessions. The hypothesis was that this programmatic approach would have a constructive effect on the functioning of the organization as a whole, and more specifically managerial culture and the level of employee engagement.

Action Learning enables an organization to cross-fertilize collective abilities to solve problems and build leadership capabilities; building a coaching culture that enhances whole person and whole system engagement. Research and experience in the field suggests that organizations are also looking for ways to scale coaching. Action Learning Coaching provides an effective approach to this challenge.

Further, to support the development of an evidence base for the efficacy of this approach, the New York Public Library aims to conduct an analysis (based on a substantial theoretical framework) that will allow it to qualitatively isolate the effect of the sessions held on the overall managerial culture.

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## Let's Sculpt it! Experiencing the Role of Organizational Context in Coaching

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**Abstract** This session explores the role of context in coaching. It offers a Group Sculpture experiential activity - a type of systemic constellation work – based on a case study on ethical dilemmas, to help visualize and experience the important role of context in coaching. The session's aim is raising awareness on the often felt and invisible contextual factors in coaching and to generate reflection with participants on how to identify and embrace context in coaching.

**Keywords** Whole systems coaching; systemic coach education; experiential learning.

### Session Objectives

In this session, the presenters will assist delegates to acquire conceptual tools to analyze the role of context(s) in coaching. This will be done by encouraging delegates to transform external elements – which are either overlooked or experimented as obstacles - into dynamic supports and levers of a coaching intervention. This will in turn increase the impact of coaching interventions by leveraging context in coaching.

By the end of the session participants will be able to do the following things. These objectives are separated out into Knowledge Based, Comprehension Based and Application Based outcomes and are also linked to the session activities overleaf:

- *Knowledge-Based:* delegates will be able to list the various contextual aspects/ factors that contribute to an understanding of the impact of context on coaching as part of an ethical dilemma

- *Comprehension Based:* delegates will be able to assess and analyse under-discussed role of contexts in coaching through embodied learning (physical experimentation)

- *Application-Based:* delegates will be able to apply the insights gained from exploring context in coaching into their own coaching practice

### Session Outline

To achieve the above learning objectives the session consists of the following activities:
1. An opening and brief overview of the session (5 minutes)
2. A short presentation of the theoretical basis (*Knowledge Based*) and practical value (*Application Based*) for making visible the various contextual factors in coaching engagements and its link to a whole systems approach to coaching (10 minutes)
3. An introduction of Group Sculpting activity, including its influences from Family

Therapy (Satir, Gomori, Gerber, & Banmen, 1991), Systemic Constellation Work (Cohen, 2005), Social Presencing Theater (Presencing Institute, n.d.), its underlying premises, its intentions and the activities involved (5 minutes) (*Knowledge Based*)

4. Enact group sculpture activity (*Comprehension Based*) in the following five steps:
    1. Presentation of the case: While Horse Coaching (10 minutes)
    2. Explanation of the Sculpting Activity to 8 volunteers (5 minutes)
    3. Enactment of the sculpture (15 minutes)
        a. Each actor assumes a place and position in the sculpture one after the other, employing proximity, facing and location to make visible the perceived dynamics present in the case;
        b. The group takes a period of time to find the configuration that best exemplifies the current reality using more of an intuitive felt sense;
        c. Individually and as a group, from this felt sense of the current reality the actors each express in a word, phrase how it feels to be in this sculpture;
        d. Then sculpture intuitively and kinesthetically moves into an envisioned and aspired future possibility, repeating a – c.
    4. Debrief with actors and observers (20 minutes)
    5. Wrap up the activity (5 minutes)
5. Reflect on experience in light of objectives and intentions for the session & draw out practical implications for coaches, coach educators and supervisors (12 minutes) (*Application Based*)
6. Closure (3 minutes)

**Conceptual/Theory Input**

All too often the critical factors of a successful coaching intervention are restricted in their scope to the issues pertaining the dyad formed by the coach and the recipient of the coaching service--the coachee. These issues typically range from the coach's attitudes, methods, and tools, to build effective rapport with the coachee, to the factors supportive of coachee's engagement in the process (Rogers, 2012), thus reducing the coaching equation to a binary relationship.

What often gets overlooked and unattended are the multiple stakeholders involved, and the role of the context in which coaching takes place, such as the sponsoring organization (Western, 2012). What we refer to as the context of a coaching intervention encompasses the broader system – beyond the coaching dyad – including the people, the multiple stakeholders, the team, the organization and its culture, explicit and implicit norms and values, the professional coaching associations, and the broader cultural, economic, sociological and political context.

The absence of attention to these contextual factors overrides their dynamic role in coaching, running the risk on not only diminishing the effectiveness of the coaching intervention, but also of leading to incorrect diagnosis. Indeed, as put by Tobias (1996), problems diagnosed as "people issue" that will be "solved" with a coach often reveal a simplistic individualization of the problem, with a neglect of other factors and influences. In such cases, coaching can lead to phenomenon of scapegoating the individual and not addressing the larger systemic dimensions of an individual's performance and behavior (Senge, Hamilton, & Kania, 2015).

Given this dominance of dyadic perspectives at the expense of more dynamic complex perspectives, the experiential group sculpture activity of this session aims to make visible these felt but invisible influences and to illustrate the importance of context in the coaching process. The assumption is that by making visible this invisible but highly influential context, many more generative pathways of actions are possible. The experiential activity proposed involves an experiential group sculpturing exercise--a type of systemic constellation work (Cohen, 2005), which draws upon a coaching case of an ethical dilemma experienced by a coach, using the placement and arrangement of participants to represent the contextual factors present.

Below is a more detailed description of the group scupture activity outlined in five steps.

**Step 1:** Introduce the rationale for the experiential activity.

Step 2: Read the case study “White Horse Coaching.”

**Step 3.** Provide a short overview of the principles, intentions, and instructions to a group of volunteers for the Group Sculpture Activity, which are as follows:

a) Each actor assumes a place and position in the sculpture one after the other, employing proximity, facing and location to make visible the perceived dynamics present in the case;
b) The group takes a period of time to find the configuration that best exemplifies the current reality using more of an intuitive felt sense;
c) Individually and as a group, from this felt sense of the current reality the actors each express in a word, phrase how it feels to be in this sculpture;
d) Then sculpture intuitively and kinesthetically moves into an envisioned and aspired future possibility, repeating a – c.

**Step 4.** Facilitate a discussion to include both the actors and observers to reflect and discuss any insights into the case, especially as they pertain to the identification and role of contextual factors in coaching.

**Step 5.** Summarize the key points of the reflection and tie them back to the intentions of the activity. We augment this reflection and meaning making activity using a model from Garvey, Stokes & Megginson's (2018) that offers three sources of context - Psychological, Philosophical and Sociological (see Figure 1).

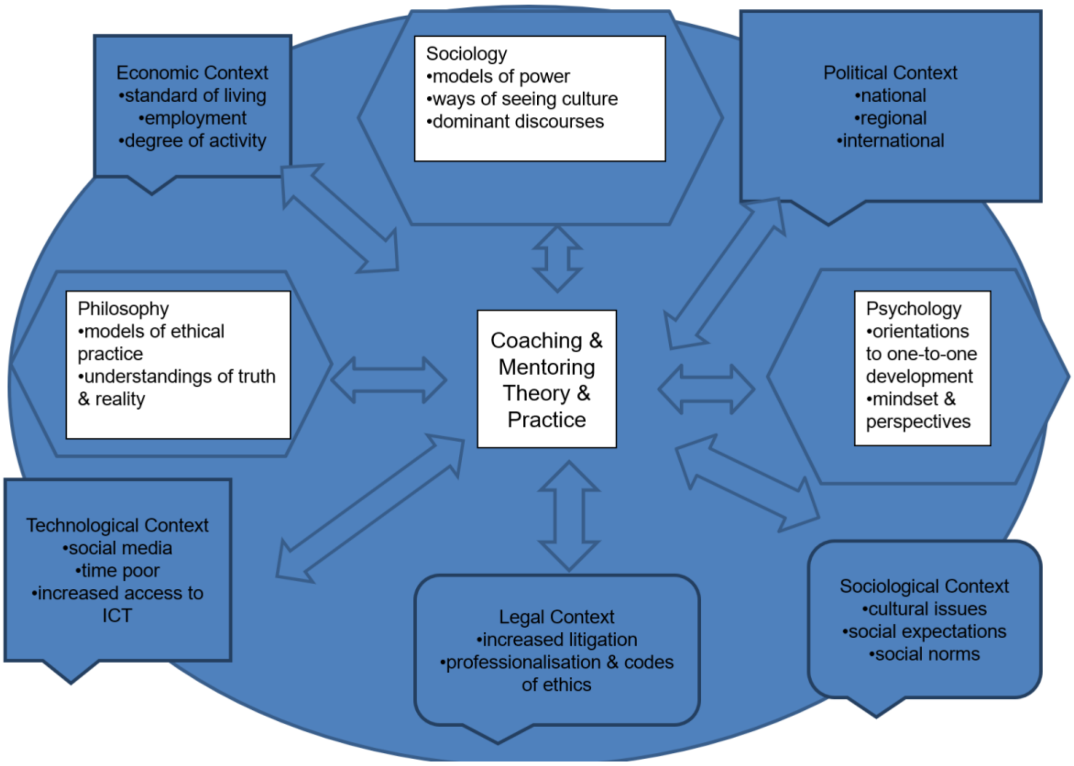
This visual and embodied representation aims to first raise awareness on the often felt and invisible contextual factors in coaching and to generate reflection on how to identify and embrace context in coaching. It is primarily aimed for coaching educators and supervisors but it could be useful for coaches working in organizations.

## Implications for Practice

The intent of the activity is to raise participants' awareness of the power and importance of organizational context and to be able to name and differentiate between different sorts of contextual influencers. It uses a particular coaching case of a particular ethical dilemma experienced by a coach in an organization involving the coach, the client and the client’s manager. Named the White Horse Case, it is derived from empirical research material that the case’s authors collected. We employ a group sculpturing activity to provide a systemic perspective of the broader system and the larger context in which such cases exist to better inform understanding and possible actions to take.

Figure 1.

Copyright Garvey, B, Stokes, P and Megginson, D (2018) "Coaching & Mentoring Theory& Practice", Sage, Chapter 17




The model from Garvey, et al. (2018) on three sources of context - Psychological, Philosophical and Sociological (see Figure 1), which serves to help make sense of the various pressures and influences on the ethical dilemma presented in the White Horse Case and enacted in the group sculpture activity, can serve coach practitioners in three ways. One, by seeing the case through the Sociology lens it draws our attention to the power dynamics and vested interests involved in a relationship with a coaching professional body. Two, applying the Psychological lens is likely to encourage focus of the impact of context on the dyad itself and the psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995) between coach and coachee. And three, while applying the Philosophical lens it is likely to draw attention to how the context influences personal and organizational values and ethics.

Ultimately, it is important that participants understand the reciprocal nature of context; in the White Horse Case, it can be argued that context both constitutes the case and is constituted by the case. In other words, the political context and policy in which the organization is located contributes to the political climate within the organization but, at the same time, the political climate in the organization has an influence on the external political context. It is also important that the dynamic nature of the sculpture is debated particularly by the criteria the participants chose as relevant to the future they envisioned. By this token, a parallel can be drawn with the dynamic and iterative nature of context itself. In this sense, the reciprocal and dynamic nature of context can be linked with the work of whole systems thinkers such as Ken Wilber (Wilber, 1996) who advocates attending to both relevant information about the external world of natural and social systems as much as to the individuals' personal and interpersonal worlds and, particularly, to the integration of the two.

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# Needs Supportive Coaching & the Coaching Ripple Effect - Elevating Individual & Whole System Engagement

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**Abstract.** Organizations operate in times of unprecedented uncertainty, complexity and change. To meet those challenges, they are seeking out new and efficient ways of effecting change at the individual, team and organizational level. Drawing on Self Determination Theory, Positive Psychology and the Coaching Ripple Effect, this session aims to expand a coach's capacity to facilitate whole person and whole system engagement. Participants will explore how to use Needs Supportive Coaching for greater individual and systemic impact.

**Key Words:** Needs Supportive Coaching, Self Determination Theory, Positive Psychology, Coaching Ripple Effect

## Session Objectives

We operate in times of unprecedented uncertainty, complexity and change. Turbulence is becoming part of our everyday experience, causing greater demands to do more, to a higher quality, with less. To remain competitive, and to ensure long-term sustainability, organizations need to effect positive change that enhances engagement at multiple system levels. Despite the exponential growth in the amount of coaching research over the past ten years, there is still a lack of awareness about the relevance of different bodies of research and how they might be incorporated into an evidenced based coaching practice. This experiential session will provide an overview of Self Determination Theory (SDT) and outline how it may enhance coaching practice through its focus on the psychological processes active in coaching, and the psychological factors that impact human motivation. We will introduce the concept of Needs Supportive Coaching (NSC) and its links with Broaden & Build Theory (B&B) in order to demonstrate how the development of autonomous motivation may support positive coaching outcomes and enhance whole person engagement. Drawing on research into the Coaching Ripple Effect (CRE), its links with SDT, the theory of positive emotions and emotional contagion, we will explore how coaches may take a multidimensional perspective on the coaching process, in order to support both whole person and whole system engagement. In developing the capacity to facilitate change at the individual, group and system level, coaches may help support leaders to meet the requirements of a new era in organizational complexity.

By the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Name the central tenets of Self Determination Theory and Broaden and Build Theory.
- Discuss the fundamentals of Need Supportive Coaching from a systemic perspective.

- Use Self Determination Theory, Broaden & Build Theory and the Coaching Ripple Effect to plan and design coaching interventions to maximize both individual outcomes and systemic impact.

## Session Outline

**Opening Reflection Exercise - Motivating & Demotivating stories (10 mins)**
Drawing on Adult Learning principles and the concept of Double Loop Learning, the facilitators will ask the participants to:

- Think and write about a time when they felt very motivated, and conversely, a time when they felt very demotivated.
- Attempt to identify the underlying principles – that is, what was it about each of the situations that made it particularly motivating or demotivating? (Put aside for later)

**Exploration of Volunteer Stories (10 mins)**
A volunteer will be asked to share their motivating and demotivating stories. Addressing each in turn, the facilitators will explore the underlying principles, the interconnections in the stories, and how the volunteer makes sense of the situations. Core themes will be identified.

**Introduction and Discussion of Self Determination Theory (15 mins)** The facilitators will:

- Introduce the central tenants of SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000), including internal and external motivation and the satisfaction of the three psychological needs of Autonomy, Competence and Relatedness.
- Categorize earlier themes as representing the satisfaction of an individual's psychological needs.
- Explore the concept of NSC (Stone, Deci & Ryan, 2009) and the part coaching may play in the socio-cultural conditions required for optimal functioning and human flourishing.
- Describe the link between SDT and positive emotions, providing a brief overview of Fredrickson's B&B (2009).

**Paired Conversations (15 mins)** In pairs, the participants will:

- Share their reflections on the volunteer stories, what they triggered for them and how they make meaning of the situations.
- Identify and discuss any similar themes and patterns that came up in their motivating and demotivating stories, making links to SDT.
- Explore what NSC might look like and what outcomes one might expect.

**Share reflections with group (10 mins)** The participants will be asked to share their reflections with the broader group. Core themes and patterns will be identified and explored. The facilitators will provide an overview of the fundamentals of NSC.

**Introduction and Discussion of the Coaching Ripple Effect & Whole System Engagement (15 mins).** The facilitators will:

- Introduce the groundbreaking research on the CRE (O'Connor & Cavanagh, 2013).
- Provide an overview of some of the potential links between the CRE and SDT to support change at multiple levels in the system.
- Make links to research on B&B relating to emotional contagion and upward spirals of positivity.
- Share the latest research on NSC and its links to employee engagement in an organizational context (Spence, G. & Niemiec, C. in press).
- Invite participants to explore (from a systemic perspective) how SDT, B&B and NSC might facilitate whole system engagement.

**Reflections on Next Steps (15 mins).** Participants will work in pairs to identify how they might incorporate and apply concepts from SDT, B&B and the latest research on the CRE and NSC into their coaching practice. The facilitators will invite closing reflections from the participants and will make closing remarks on supporting whole person and whole system engagement.

**Conceptual Theory/Input**

**Self Determination Theory.** SDT is a theory of motivation developed by Deci & Ryan (2000) that provides a practical framework for understanding the factors that promote motivation and healthy psychological functioning. It is one of the most cited theories in psychology. It has a broad evidence base across industries and a diversity of applications including education, health care, well-being, sport, goal setting, organizational development and more recently, coaching.

SDT identifies the three psychological needs of 1) Autonomy 2) Competence, and 3) Relatedness. We act autonomously when we believe our behavior is volitional, owned and self endorsed rather than controlled. Competence is experienced when we use our capacities to achieve outcomes we value. Relatedness refers to the need for caring, warm and mutually supportive connections.

Research suggests that social contexts such as workplaces can provide support for, or thwart, the satisfaction of these needs (Stone, Deci & Ryan, 2009). When an individual perceives these needs as supported, they: 1) are more engaged, motivated and satisfied in their work; 2) have higher levels of self esteem, performance, psychological and physical well being; 3) have lower levels of anxiety, stress and emotional exhaustion; and 4) are less likely to suffer burnout and work-life conflict. Coaching may form an important component in the socio-cultural context, providing needs support that allows for the emergence higher levels of motivation and engagement.

SDT also proposes that motivated behaviors vary in the degree to which they are autonomous or controlled. Deci and Ryan (2000) developed a continuum of reasons for acting from extrinsic to intrinsic (Extrinsic – "because I have to", Introjected – "because I should", Identified – "because I want to" and Intrinsic "for the love of it"). Across a variety of important life domains, supporting psychological needs and autonomous motivation are associated with higher levels of: task persistence - more sustained effort over time; task performance and goal attainment; task interest, enjoyment, and creativity; relationship quality; psychological well being; and physical health. Given the clear link between many factors important to workplace experience, autonomous motivation can be seen as a foundational consideration for workplace engagement.

Importantly, satisfaction of the three psychological needs also facilitates a process known as "internalization". That is, the process of endorsing important behaviors even though they are not enjoyable or inherently satisfying. The theory proposes that we move towards more self-determined action over time via the process of internalization and integration.

Our motivational underpinnings greatly impact how much effort and energy we direct towards goal attainment. This is important in the context of coaching as coaches may be able to facilitate helpful shifts in the coachee's underlying motivation towards external goals (such as those imposed by organizations), through exploration of the deeper relevance of those goals, and how they might represent the values and interests of the developing self - thereby supporting whole person engagement. This process may simultaneously encourage alignment with the goals of their teams, groups and organizations - thereby supporting whole system engagement.

Importantly, simple changes in the behavior of the leaders and managers within an organization, can lead to significant changes in an individual's perception of "need support". These behavioral changes may be small, but there impact can be far reaching.

**Broaden & Build Theory.** Interventions that enhance positive emotions such as NSC, positive leadership and effective management can potentially help undo the effects of negative emotions, broaden cognitive and behavioral capacities, and build our personal resources.

Fredrickson's (2001, 2009) B&B posits that positive emotions: 1) Broaden our thought action repertoires; and 2) Build our enduring personal resources. Research has found that positive emotional experiences build:

- *Intellectual Resources* - enhancing learning, problem solving, creativity, accuracy of judgment, decision-making and performance on complex tasks, increasing possibilities for effective action, and expanding our view of the world, our relationships and interactions.
- *Social Resources* - enhancing interpersonal effectiveness, interconnectedness and co-ordination, solidifying and helping us make new bonds, increasing social connections and social support.
- *Psychological Resources* - building resilience, optimism, goal striving and enhancing coping strategies.
- *Physical Resources* - developing coordination, increasing strength, improving cardio vascular health, sleep quality, immunity from illness and disease.

Further, when the coach facilitates the expression of positive affect as an integral part of the coaching dialogue, emphasizing strengths and possibilities, and solutions and strategies, this increases well being, enriches relationships, enhances performance and increases productivity, goal setting and hope (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005).

Research shows that positive emotions are contagious. Emotional Contagion is a type of social influence in which a person or group influences the emotions (positive or negative) of another. Shared positive affect can trigger a beneficial upward spiral of positive emotions, inspiring increased cognitive flexibility and higher connectivity, which in turn, are linked to more productive outcomes and optimal functioning (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). Leaders and managers are able to create emotional spaces that bring out the best in their people, promoting human flourishing. Human flourishing is characterized by exploration, excitement, creativity, and the use of intuition, the building of social connections, enhanced knowledge and increased levels of resilience.

Positive emotions facilitate the stimulation of ideas, encourage trust, and support the achievement of shared goals. They broaden the scope of one's self-perception, which blurs the distinction between self and others. When we broaden our thought action repertoires, we literally take in more information, we look at the bigger picture – this not only affords us more opportunities for effective action, but importantly it helps us think in terms of "we" not "I". This can result in feeling a greater alignment with, and for, our organization and it's visions, purpose, goals and strategies. Importantly, positive affect assists the concordance of personal goals and values with the emerging outcomes of a group, while boosting personal meaning and transcendence so that strengths and goals are enacted in the service of something bigger than self (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) thereby supporting whole system engagement.

From a systems theory perspective, attractors within a system may affect group and system dynamics resulting in either a point attractor or a limit cycle (Lorenz, 1963). These close possibilities and contribute to trapping us into rigid patterns of thinking that may lead to limiting behavior, lower energy and lower performance. Engaging in behaviors such as NSC, leadership and management may help dissolve those attractors, or create alternative positive attractors that encourage more effective behaviors and interactions in the system. Enhanced organizational positivity that occurs through emotional contagion, and supported through NBC, may evolve into an organizational norm that evolves attractors, which open possibilities for effective action and creates a positive and expansive emotional space.

Broadening our attention, thinking and action, and building physical, intellectual and social resources, can then, fuel workplace success, enhancing organizational effectiveness and fostering employee growth. Indeed, research findings indicate that positive workforces perform better, and have a material impact on business outcomes, including profitability.

**The Coaching Ripple Effect.** When organizations use coaching as a change methodology, there is often a focus beyond individual level change. Organizations are often looking for climate or cultural change, or at least, are hoping that through supporting their leaders to develop, they will be simultaneously supporting the staff that they work with. While the impact of coaching beyond the leader coached might be assumed, it has previously not been tested.

Research by O'Connor & Cavanagh (2013) into the CRE has found that when coaching a number of individuals in a given system, the impact of positive change in the leader, has an effect on those most connected to those coached, through the positivity of their interactions with the coached individuals. The impact goes beyond direct reports. The increase in well-being of others, is directly related to the number of coached leaders a given individual is connected to in the system, as well as the frequency and positivity of their interactions.

Coaching provides the space for leaders to develop, increasing their autonomy and competence with regard to leadership. This translates to changes in the interaction and positivity that they exhibit in a given system, which allows them the capacity to support and encourage the development of others. This shift, in turn, creates greater organizational relatedness and encourages others to identify opportunities for autonomy and competence, allowing basic needs to be met at a system level, through interactions that support continued shared growth and organizational engagement. Leadership development through coaching creates a basic needs supportive environment through the positivity and emotional contagion of interaction in the system.

Through establishing a climate that supports positive interaction and encourages growth, leadership coaching can provide a process through which autonomy is encouraged in others. This allows these autonomous individuals to further spread the impact of change through the self-directed nature of their engagement with the system. Through their autonomously driven positive interaction, they create relatedness, which from a systemic perspective, creates positive behavioral attractors, increasing well-being in others, and supporting further spread of positive change that allows for greater organizational engagement.

This spread of change, supportive of wellbeing and engagement through coaching and leadership, may be further enhanced by including a specific focus on the basic need of competence. Developing competency around network and system thinking, and the ability to accurately identify important connections in systems, allows leaders to strategically consider the impact of their interactions in supporting the needs of those they interact with, from a more holistic perspective. It is important to consider how they change processes, encourage interaction, and support initiatives, that allow for high levels of positive interaction increasing the spread of change. A focus on competence is also a leverage-able process that may increase well-being, contributing further to the needs supportive systemic climate.

While enhancing leadership through NSC allows for greater opportunity for autonomy and competence, both in the leaders the coaches work with, and those the leaders are connected to, it is the positivity and quality of interaction that allows for greater connectivity and relatedness throughout a system. This facilitates the emergence of positive upward spirals creating the CRE, and positively shaping organizational climate, workplace engagement and performance.

## Implications for Practice

In our complex and uncertain world, turbulence is becoming part of our everyday experience causing greater demands to do more, to a higher quality, with less. To remain competitive, and to ensure long-term sustainability, requires organizations to effect positive change that enhances motivation and engagement at multiple system levels. This is creates both a challenge and a tremendous opportunity for executive coaches.

There has been an exponential growth in the amount of coaching-specific and coaching-related research over the past ten years. Despite this, there is still a lack of awareness about the relevance of different bodies of research and how they might be incorporated into an evidenced based coaching practice. Relevantly, coaching practice and research have advanced without specifically drawing on relevant and established theories of human motivation.

Coaching is concerned with the enhancement of human functioning, the success of which depends on how well coachees' can manage their feelings, thoughts and actions (Grant & Cavanagh, 2011). The process of personal and professional change may be challenging, and as such, coachees may be ambivalent, even resistant to development. Personal autonomy and motivation are critical because "positive and lasting results most likely occur when a client becomes actively engaged and personally invested in change" (Ryan, Lynch, Vansteenkiste & Deci, 2001, pg. 194.).

Given this, it is critically important for coaches to understand and work with psychological processes that have an impact on motivation and readiness to change. SDT provides a useful set of ideas for guiding coaching practice. Many of these ideas have been extensively researched, and their utility established across a range of contexts. NSC underpinned by SDT, aims to support the development of autonomous motivation and facilitate the process of integration and internalization that may enhance whole person engagement.

NSC also provides a mechanism for the experiencing of positive emotions, which in turn, leads to many positive outcomes, not least the capacity for optimum functioning and human flourishing. Though the process of emotional contagion, coaches may also facilitate wider system change.

Despite the fact that coaching is an established and increasingly popular change methodology used to facilitate individual and cultural change, published research has tended to focus heavily on individual level outcomes. The impact of coaching at the level of the group, team, organization or system had largely been ignored until the ground-breaking research by O'Connor and Cavanagh (2013), which explored the systemic impact of one-on-one leadership coaching on the broader organization identifying a significant CRE.

Moreover, the findings on the CRE highlight a number of important implications for the way we design, target and measure coaching in an organizational context. There are also important implications for how coaches, leaders and managers think and behave when embedded in complex evolving networks. Understanding these implications can assist coaches to support leaders in meeting the requirements of a new era in organizational complexity.

Separately, SDT, B&B and the CRE offer scientifically rigorous approaches to coaching that are based on strong theoretical footings. Taken together, they are uniquely placed to make a significant, evidence based contribution to the development of a systemic approach to coaching that not only facilitates whole person and whole system engagement, but simultaneously supports individuals, groups and organizations to positively transform and change

The implications of this research are still emerging. It is recommended that additional insights from practicing coaches shared at this session will inform further research, and enhance the development of more systemic coaching practices.

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# Purpose and Presence at the Heart of Transformative Leadership

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**Abstract.** Unlocking purpose and presence creates possibilities for leaders to reconnect with who they are, bring their whole selves forward, and notice their interdependence with surrounding systems. Purpose and presence together nurture the alignment of head, heart, and hand, offering grounding for leaders to step into transformative work with intention and compassion. Coaches are uniquely positioned to deepen presence and unearth purpose by holding space for leaders to be radically themselves and rediscover their human potential.

**Key Words:** Purpose and Presence–Based Leadership, Experiential Learning, Whole Self and System Awareness

## Session Objectives

At the end of the session, participants will have experienced the process of reconnecting with self to discover the purpose that pulls the whole self forward while noticing the role and power of presence in discovering and manifesting this purpose across varying systems. Participants will also have practiced holding space with compassion to deepen their own awareness and that of their clients, equipping them to share this learning with their respective systems.

Participants will be able to:

- Define what purpose and presence are and the possibilities they create in aligning head, heart, and hand
- Describe approaches for deepening discovery, observing the interdependence between self and surrounding systems, and noticing the ways in which purpose manifests in different systems
- Illustrate practices to invite clients to deepen their whole-self-awareness and draw upon their purpose and presence to step into their respective systems as the leaders they wish to be

## Session Outline

### 1. We Become Present and Share Our Intention (10 minutes)

We share our intention and purpose of the session. We will engage in a brief grounding experience to enable participants to become present in the space and begin engaging with themselves and one another.

### 2. We Explore Purpose and Presence as Concepts (15 minutes)

We will share what we mean by purpose and presence and the research and spiritual teachings that ground our beliefs and approach to this work. We will offer what makes these concepts important now in nurturing coherence (the alignment of head, heart, and hand), including the business imperative and the human imperative we see, and how these concepts are readily accessible to participants as coaches and for their clients.

**3. We Invite Participants into Discovery (40 minutes)**

We will guide participants through a series of exercises to give them the experience of accessing and noticing purpose and presence in different ways. We acknowledge that participants may be coming into this work from many perspectives—some engaging in deeper discovery of familiar questions, others stepping into these types of questions for the first time—and we invite them all to step in wholeheartedly. One exercise will invite participants into an immersive storytelling experience that illuminates patterns related to purpose as they get out of the head and bring the heart forward. Another will invite participants to reflect on who they are at their core, the gifts they are meant to share, and the future that they see emerging through them. Another exercise will invite participants to respond to prompts related to purpose and presence by noticing deeply and listening actively to what is happening in the soma. We will guide participants to explore the common threads that emerge from their experiences and discuss the resonance of the exercises. We will also ask participants to share their discoveries with the group to practice putting language around what and how they notice when it comes to purpose and presence.

**4. We Design What's Next (25 minutes)**

We will guide participants to step into what it means to live and lead with purpose and presence—to take the work they have done in the space of head and heart and bring it fully to the hand by describing what actions they can choose to take to get to a place of greater coherence. We will ask participants to consider what they notice about their purpose and presence in the broader context of where they are and consider questions such as: What, if anything, changes from one system to the next? What remains constant? What systems facilitate their coherence? What systems resist it? We anticipate a range of responses that can help participants deepen their whole-self-awareness. We will also engage participants in conversation about what commitments they wish to make to further their own learning and to share this experience with their respective systems (clients, colleagues, etc.).

## Conceptual Theory/Input

This work draws upon and integrates several theories and models, all of which examine human purpose and presence in different ways and how these concepts manifest for individuals and collectives. With their different perspectives, these sources also speak to common themes that are significant when considering the awareness of and relationship between whole self and whole system. These themes include:

- Awareness of and connection to something larger (i.e., larger than the existing embodied self, larger than the existing embodied system) that is continuously evolving
- Sense of belonging to a larger whole that comes when this awareness and connection is felt that is deeply tied to purpose and presence (and is more expansive than notions of fitting in or belonging to a group)

 

- The need to be intentional about doing inner work while simultaneously living in the world in order to come to the deeper awareness, connection, and belonging that in turn creates the possibility of sustainable change
- Recognition of our capacity to change and to create something new and different—and the role of choice and intention in leading self and system change
- The significant role of the heart and compassion in deepening presence and unlocking purpose

We have highlighted below some of our most influential sources. Our work seeks to pull the thread through what is common among them to offer participants an integrated perspective, while holding the space for them to experience and consider varying practices to deepen presence and unearth purpose.

- Peter Senge, C. Otto Scharmer, Joseph Jaworski, Betty Sue Flowers (2004): “It’s common to say that trees come from seeds. But how can a tiny seed create a huge tree? Seeds do not contain the resources needed to grow a tree. These must come from the medium or environment within which the tree grows. But the seed does provide something that is crucial: a place where the whole of the tree starts to form. As resources such as water and nutrients are drawn in, the seed organizes the process that generates growth. In a sense, the seed is a gateway through which the future possibility of the living tree emerges.” Senge et al examine the interrelationship among parts and wholes, selves and systems, and the greater level of awareness that becomes possible when you deepen your presence such that you can let go of old ways of seeing in order to see from the whole and notice the future that is emerging. To begin noticing what lies at the core of a human being in terms of who they are and what they feel pulled to offer, we draw upon the “U” movement and practice of presencing they describe: “We began to appreciate presence as deep listening, of being open beyond one’s preconceptions and historical ways of making sense...of letting go of old identities and the need to control… Ultimately, we came to see all these aspects of presence as leading to a state of ‘letting come,’ of consciously participating in a larger field for change. When this happens, the field shifts, and the forces shaping a situation can move from recreating the past to manifesting or realizing an emerging future.” The movement offers surrender and “letting come” as avenues into discovery—as if to say, what if you begin with the deep-seated awareness and belief that you belong absolutely and without question? What becomes possible? What emerges? Presencing creates possibilities for coaches and their clients to notice more deeply what exists and what is unfolding within and around them. This way of holding space offers coaches and clients an opportunity to see from the whole and observe patterns that emerge with new eyes that make change possible.

- Brené Brown (2017): “True belonging is the spiritual practice of believing in and belonging to yourself so deeply that you can share your most authentic self with the world and find sacredness in both being a part of something and standing alone in the wilderness. True belonging doesn’t require you to *change* who you are; it requires you to *be* who you are.” Building upon her research into vulnerability, shame, and wholehearted living, Brown examines the human need for connection and belonging and the paradox that exists between standing alone and being deeply connected. Her work reminds us that we are on two parallel and simultaneous journeys—the inward journey of discovering the whole self and the outward journey that is taking place as the whole self engages with various systems. Her work offers simple and powerful ways to bring the whole self forward in engaging with surrounding systems while understanding and appreciating basic human needs. Brown grounds her work in this statement from Maya Angelou: "You are only free when you realize you belong no place—you belong every place—no place at all. The price is high. The reward is great." Sharing Brown's work offers coaches a way to normalize some of the discomfort clients may experience in being vulnerable, in letting go and letting come, and in discovering who they are and how they can show up as their true selves regardless of context.

- Simon Sinek, David Mead, and Peter Docker (2017): In their book *Find Your Why: A Practical Guide for Discovering Purpose for You and Your Team*, Sinek et al state: "Every one of us has a WHY, a deep-seated purpose, cause or belief that is the source of our passion and inspiration." Building upon Sinek's work in *Start with Why* that examined the power of being purpose led for organizations, *Find Your Why* reinforces the importance of unearthing purpose for individuals and organizations and offers coaches a set of practical approaches and exercises to share with clients. Their work also speaks to the concept of "nesting" purposes within a system: "The reason to articulate a Nested WHY is the same reason an organization would want to articulate the big umbrella WHY--because it gives people a sense of identity and belonging. It allows teams and groups to identify with the people they work with every day. It helps them understand their unique contribution as a distinct group to the larger vision." For example, a team's purpose nests within and aligns with an account's purpose that nests within and aligns with an organization's purpose. Coaches could use this guide to engage clients in conversation about the relationship between their individual "why" and the many "why's" of the broader system.

- Doug Silsbee (2018): "When you allow yourself to Sense the largest possible Context, what your Identity might be within this, and for what your Soma most deeply longs—then and only then might a new way of stepping forward be revealed. Only then might you recognize your real contribution as a leader, grounded in staying present in this dynamic world, hurtling towards an as yet unwritten future. I suggest that facing the reality of this view of the Context can inform every aspect of your leadership. This is Sensing your Context, writ large. This is the Context, really, in which you get to listen for what matters to you, and to choose what organizing principles will shape your leadership." In his work exploring the potential of presence-based leadership, Silsbee offers an integrated model that can help equip coaches and leaders to navigate complexity and step into transformational change. His Nine Panes model offers a way for coaches and their clients to be intentional about the different dimensions they inhabit in Context, Identity, and Soma and the ways they manage energy by receiving it through Sensing, processing it through Being, and expressing it through Acting. By considering the multiple dimensions in the model, coaches can support their clients in expanding their perspectives and seeing with new eyes—making visible what was once invisible. With this greater clarity of vision, coaches and their clients can create the space and offer choice for new actions to emerge. Getting in touch with the different dimensions we inhabit also offers another way to unearth the purpose that lives in each of us and deepens our awareness of the choice and possibility to share our unique gifts. As a call to the reader, Silsbee writes, "You are a character in this Grand Story. You have been written into this story by intelligences not your own. You arrived here, and you are reading these words. Not only are you a character in this story, but you are also an author of it. Everything in the Nine Panes is at play, right now, in the very moment you are reading this. At the core, the Panes enable choices. Choices about how to make meaning of your particular moment in this Grand Story. Choices to declare who you are and what you stand for in each particular moment—choices to act in authorship, knowing that what you have to contribute is unique in all the world. Nobody else in all the world can do what is uniquely yours to do. Nor can anyone else tell you what that might be. It's really, truly, up to you."

## Implications for Practice

Purpose and presence offer coaches and their clients a way into seeing themselves and bringing themselves forward as whole people within whole systems who are consistently being influenced by and influencing the systems they move through. Equipping coaches with the concepts, language, and practices to unlock purpose and deepen presence with clients creates the possibility for authentic leadership to manifest in a meaningfully different way. Engaging in this work enables coaches and their clients to begin to bridge the valley that sometimes exists between intent and impact, between head, heart, and hand. Coaches and clients willing to enter into this type of discovery will find guideposts that serve them regardless of context—and a degree of self-awareness they may not have previously experienced.

We believe that unlocking purpose and deepening presence for a leader can spark an extraordinary cascade effect. One leader stepping fully into who they feel called to be and what they feel called to do—aligning head, heart, and hand—is an embodiment of effective leadership. Such a leader shares and steps into a clear vision, brings a broader perspective that considers the whole, pulls others into the work and the system in a way that enables them to make meaningful contributions, all the while being true to who they are. Such a leader has the potential to change the system around them in meaningful ways. An organization of leaders who are aligning head, heart, and hand has the potential to make a profound impact, both on its own performance and the systems and communities that surround it.

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# Revealing Invisible Systems and Enabling Organizational Agility with STATIK (Systems Thinking Approach to Introducing Kanban)

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**Abstract.** Attendees will experience how coaches and practitioners of Lean Kanban facilitate a Systems Thinking Approach to Introducing Kanban (STATIK) workshop. The STATIK approach guides participants through the collaborative process of revealing invisible systems of work and expressing them as visual Kanban systems which will then serve as the foundation for catalyzing change, enabling agility, and increasing the effectiveness of work teams, team-of-teams, divisions, senior leadership teams, and the organization as a whole.

**Key Words:** Coaching Tools, Systems Thinking, Organizational Agility

## Session Objectives

Session participants will be introduced to the principles, practices, and agendas of Lean Kanban and get an appreciation for how it can be introduced at every level of the organization from individuals, work teams, team-of-teams, divisions, senior leadership teams, and the organization as a whole through the application of the Systems Thinking Approach to Introducing Kanban (STATIK).

By the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Name the first General Practice of Lean Kanban and explain the importance of this practice for organizations performing complex and creative knowledge work to service their customers
- Describe the organizational focus and goals of each of the three agendas of Lean Kanban
- Explain the intent and outcome of a STATIK workshop
- Employ a tool from the Fit-for-Purpose Framework to visualize an organization's strategic performance against the expectations of its target, and non-target, customer segments
- Employ a tool for eliciting an organization's sources and nature of demand
- Employ a portfolio kanban board to visualize the progress and risks of an organization's strategic initiatives
- Plan next steps for learning about and integrating Lean Kanban practices and principles into their own coaching practice

## Session Outline

**1. A Brief Introduction to Lean Kanban** (15 mins)
Workshop leaders will introduce the key principles, practices, and agendas of Lean Kanban and share examples of kanban system implementations at different levels of the organization.

**2. Integrating Systemic Team Coaching, The Six Conditions of Team Effectiveness, and Lean Kanban** (10 mins)
Workshop leaders will describe how Lean Kanban relates to Systemic Coaching (Hawkins 2017) and The Six Conditions of Team Effectiveness (Hackman 2002) (Wageman, Nunes, Burruss, Hackman 2008).

**3. Experiencing a STATIK Workshop** (50 mins)
Workshop leaders will guide participants through the steps of the Systems Thinking Approach to Introducing Kanban. Some steps will be conducted as table exercises while other steps will be described or simulated by the workshop leaders. Specific components of a STATIK workshop are as follows:

i. **Understand fit for purpose (Table Exercise)** Workshop leaders will introduce a tool from the Fit-for-Purpose Framework to visualize an organization's strategic performance against with the expectations of its target, and non-target, customer segments. Participants will work in groups (i.e. dyads, triads, table) to experience and practice facilitating the use of the tool.
ii. **Understand sources of dissatisfaction** Workshop leaders will describe the goals and activities of this step in the STATIK workshop and share examples of outputs from actual STATIK workshops.
iii. **Analyze sources of demand (Table Exercise)** Workshop leaders will introduce a demand analyst tool that is useful for eliciting an organization's sources and nature of demand. Participants will work in groups (i.e. dyads, triads, table) to experience and practice facilitating the use of the tool.
iv. **Analyze capability** Workshop leaders will describe the goals and activities of this step in the STATIK workshop and share examples of outputs from actual STATIK workshops.
v. **Model the workflow** Workshop leaders will describe the goals and activities of this step in the STATIK workshop and share examples of outputs from actual STATIK workshops.
vi. **Identify classes of service** Workshop leaders will describe the goals and activities of this step in the STATIK workshop and share examples of outputs from actual STATIK workshops.
vii. **Design the kanban system (Table Exercise)** Workshop leaders will introduce a portfolio kanban board technique that is useful for visualizing the progress and risks of an organization's strategic initiatives. Participants will work in groups (i.e. dyads, triads, table) to experience and practice facilitating the use of the tool.
viii. **Socialize design & negotiate implementation** Workshop leaders will describe the goals and activities of this step in the STATIK workshop and share examples of outputs from actual STATIK workshops.

Materials required: One large easel pad per group/table of participants, several post-it note pads (3 x 3 inch) per group/table, several markers per group/table.

**4. Reflection and Next Steps** (15 mins)
Workshop leaders will guide participants through a table exercise to reflect on what was learned during the session and commit to specific personal development actions inspired by the experiential learning session.

Materials required: One large easel pad per group/table of participants, several post-it note pads (3 x 3 inch) per group/table, several markers per group/table.

## Conceptual/Theory Input

Hawkins (2017), a pioneer of leadership team coaching, defines the four levels of leadership team coaching as: Level I - Team Coaching; Level II - System Team Coaching; Level III - Systemic Team Coaching; and Level IV - Ecosystemic Team Coaching. Additionally, Hawkins proposes that team coaches must learn and introduce lean mindsets and practices in order to successfully promote 'outside-in' and 'future-back' intentions and behaviors across the whole organization.

Informed by more than a decade of collective experience from a dedicated community of thought leaders and practitioners, Burrows (2014) defines the three agendas of Lean Kanban as the Sustainability Agenda, the Service Orientation Agenda, and the Survivability Agenda and details the Systems Thinking Approach to Introducing Kanban (STATIK).

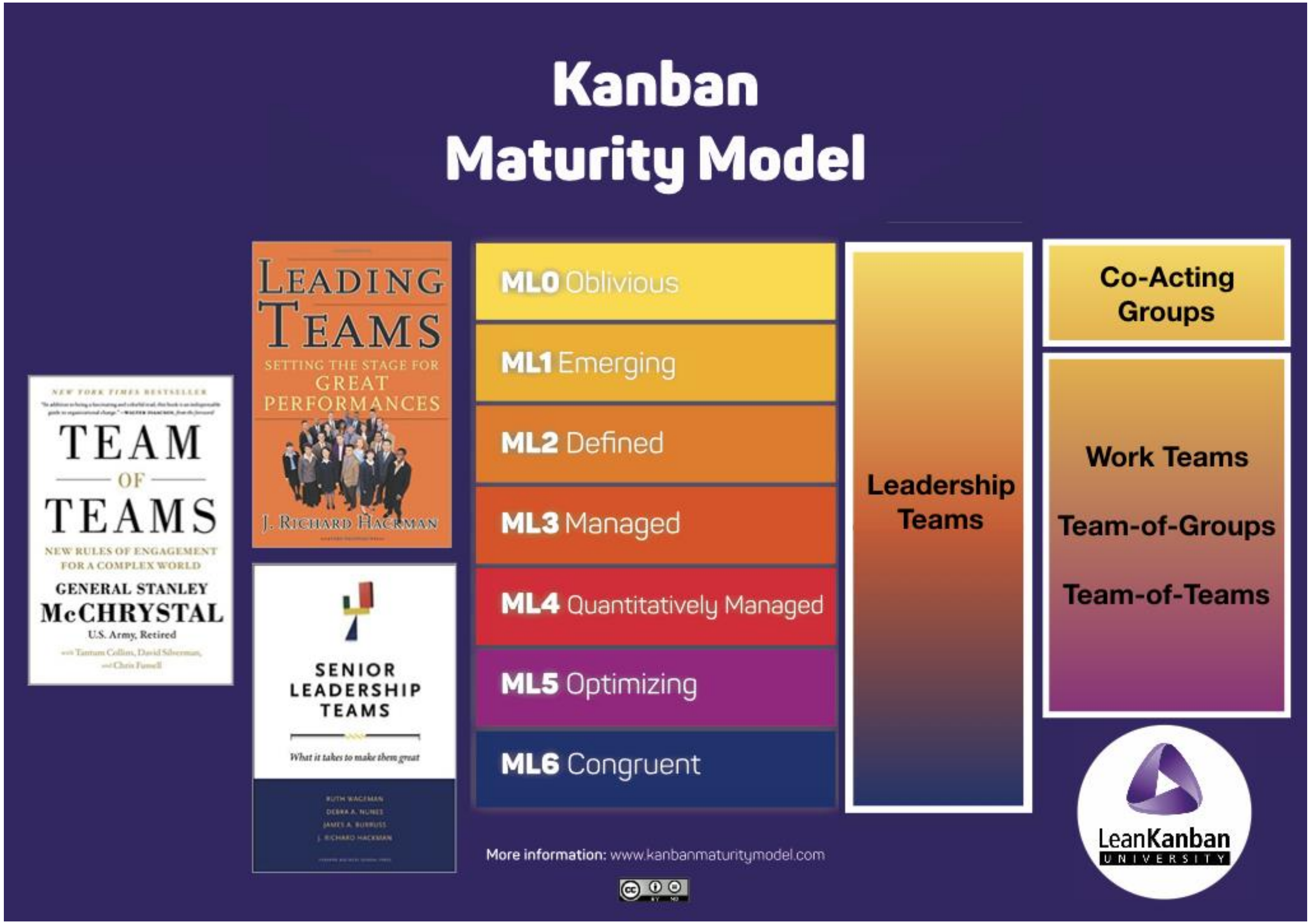
This experiential session will integrate Hawkins' four team coaching levels with the three agendas of Lean Kanban and the Kanban Maturity Model (Anderson, Bozheva 2018) (see Figure 1) and demonstrate the role that STATIK plays in promoting 'outside-in' and 'future-back' thinking while setting the stage for enabling organizational agility. Further, the critical role Lean Kanban serves in enabling the effectiveness of work teams (Hackman 2002) and senior leadership teams (Wageman, Nunes, Burruss, Hackman 2008) will be highlighted (see Figure 2).

Figure 1

*Alignment of the Kanban Maturity Model to Hawkins' Four Levels of Leadership Team Coaching*

Figure 2

*Alignment of the Kanban Maturity Model to Hackman and Wageman's Six Conditions of Team Effectiveness*



## Implications for Practice

Coaches and practitioners of Lean Kanban have been informing organizations on strategy and execution for nearly two decades (Anderson 2012) (Anderson, Bozheva 2018) which coincides with the emergence of professional leadership team focused coaching (Hawkins 2017), yet the integration of these important bodies of knowledge and experience appears to be limited despite the fact that the intentions and goals of these movements are highly congruent.

As the field of professional coaching continues to evolve, the opportunity for coaches to expand their own capabilities by synthesizing proven practices and systems thinking tools from the neighboring yet less familiar domain of Lean Kanban is timely and maybe even overdue. This session will invite attendees to reflect on the capabilities that they bring to their coaching practice and present resources for extending their learning of Lean Kanban as a means to better serve their clients in the areas of strategy and execution in order to satisfy the growing demands and expectations of professional and highly effective executive, team, and whole organization coaches.

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# Systemic Coaching Supervision: A New Paradigm for Coach Development in Complex Times

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**Abstract.** A core challenge for coaching is to develop new paradigms that help us, and our clients, navigate our complex, uncertain and unpredictable world. This experiential session will integrate the latest research, theory and practice; using a live group supervision session, to demonstrate how coaches may transform their practice and remain fit for purpose through greater reflexivity, equanimity, objectivity and perspective. Participants will explore a developmentally focused, reflective supervision dialogue that enhances individual and systemic outcomes.

**Key Words:** Systemic Coaching Supervision, Reflective Practice, Use of Self, Developmental Approach, Individual, Peer & Group Supervision

## Session Objectives

In our complex, interconnected and rapidly changing world, the demands placed on our leaders and organizations have grown exponentially. If we, as coaches, are to support leaders in meeting those demands, and remain fit for purpose, we need to engage in ongoing professional development and self-reflection. Essential to our effectiveness and transformation is the ability to take multiple perspectives on client issues and the coaching process. Coaching supervision provides an opportunity for coaches to step back from their work and take a broader view. The focus is on helping a coach improve the quality of their coaching, grow their coaching capacity and supporting themselves and their practice. This session will provide an overview of some of the contemporary definitions, main functions, types, uses and benefits of coaching supervision from an individual, client and industry wide perspective. Participants will explore the Seven Eyed Model of coaching supervision through discussion and a group supervision demonstration. The Model is a basic framework for systemic supervision that allows the coach and the supervisor to explore a situation from multiple, interrelated perspectives. We will introduce the Cycle of Developmental Supervision based on the premise that the primary purpose of supervision is to help coaches to “see” more than they can currently see. Aligning with a Complex Adaptive Systems view of supervision, the Cycle uses a dialogical approach that recognizes the centrality of “self” in coaching outcomes. The Cycle aims to increase reflexivity, objectivity, equanimity and breadth of systemic perspective, reflecting an evolution of complexity in thinking and coach maturity. Links will also be made with research on the Coaching Ripple Effect to support whole person and whole system engagement.

By the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Name the main functions, types, uses and benefits of coaching supervision from an individual, client and industry wide perspective.
- Use the Seven Eyed Model of coaching supervision to support their development, and in individual, peer and group supervision.
- Describe how systemic coaching supervision supports whole person and whole system engagement.

- Discuss the importance of a systemic, developmental approach to coaching supervision, and its increasing relevance in our complex, unpredictable and interconnected world.

**Session Outline**

**Opening Reflection Exercise (15 mins)**
Drawing on Adult Learning principles, the facilitators will ask the participants to reflect on the following questions:

- What is your definition of coaching supervision?
- What has been your personal experience with coaching supervision?
- What do you see as the main functions, uses and benefits of coaching supervision?

Participants will discuss in small groups. They will be asked to share their reflections with the broader group. Core themes and patterns will be identified.

**Introduction, Discussion and Exploration of Coaching Supervision (10 mins)**
The facilitators will provide an overview of some of the contemporary definitions of coaching supervision, including those of professional associations such as the Association of Coaching Supervision (AOCS), the European Coaching and Mentoring Council (EMCC) and the International Coach Federation (ICF), along with those of leading academics in the field such as Bachkirova, Stevens and Willis (2005) and Hawkins & Shohet (2006).

The key functions of supervision will be explored. Reference will be made to the three functions identified by Hawkins & Shohet (2006), Proctor (1997) and EMCC.

While definitions and models of supervision vary, supervision typically has three major functions:

1. Professional development of the coach;
2. Practical and psychological support for the coach in carrying out their role; and
3. Promotion and maintenance of acceptable standards of work and good practice.

Most definitions emphasize multiple functions, including the quality and focus on transforming practice.

Participants will be invited to discuss the connections between the definitions, functions and the core themes identified in the opening reflective exercise.

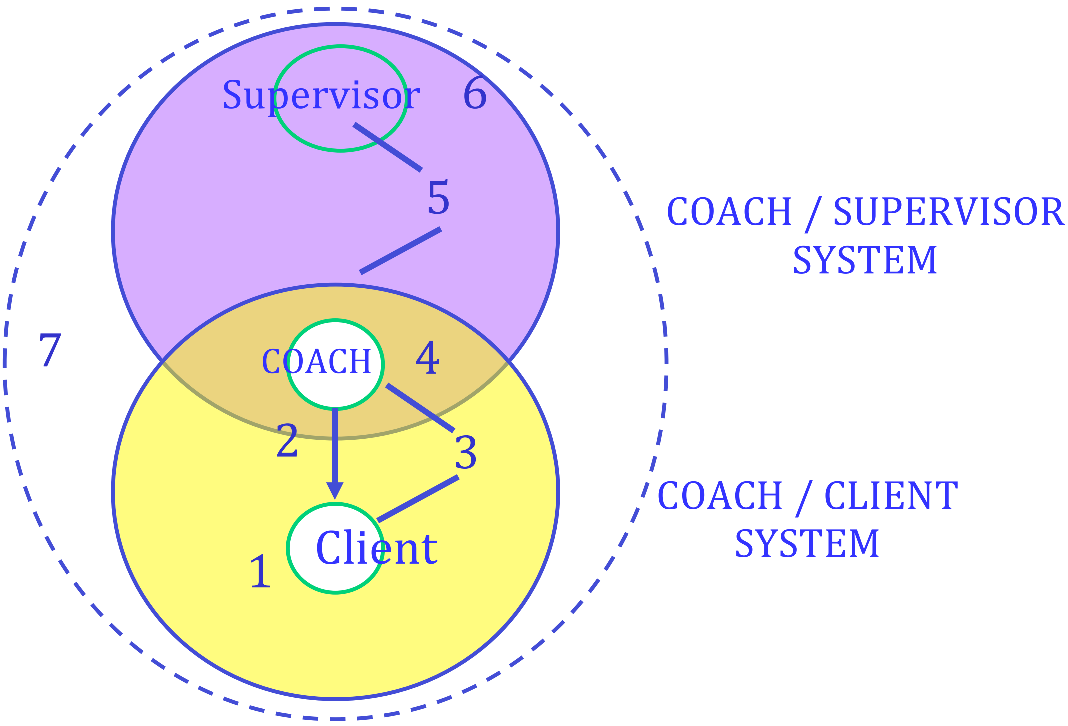
The facilitators will outline the different types of supervision commonly used, including individual, peer and group. In one-on-one or individual supervision, a coach works with a supervisor, whose role is to assist the coach in reflecting on their practice. In peer supervision, two or more coaches seek to assist each other in reflecting on each of their respective practices. Group supervision offers a more formal approach to peer supervision using an experienced supervisor to act as a guide and resource to the group.

Participants will be invited to share their perspectives of the three main types of supervision, including the advantages and disadvantages of each.

**Group Coaching Supervision Session and Debrief (55 mins)**
The facilitators will provide an overview of the Seven Eyed Model (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006) of coaching supervision as an example of one approach to undertaking coaching supervision from a systemic perspective.

The Seven Eyed Model is based on two complimentary systems that emphasize the interpersonal aspect of coaching and supervision. The first system is the coach-client relationship and the second system is the coach- supervisor relationship. These two relational systems are embedded in a wider organizational and systemic context. See Figure 1, below.

*Figure 1.*
*The Seven-Eyed Model of Coaching* Supervision *(Hawkins & Shohet 2006)*



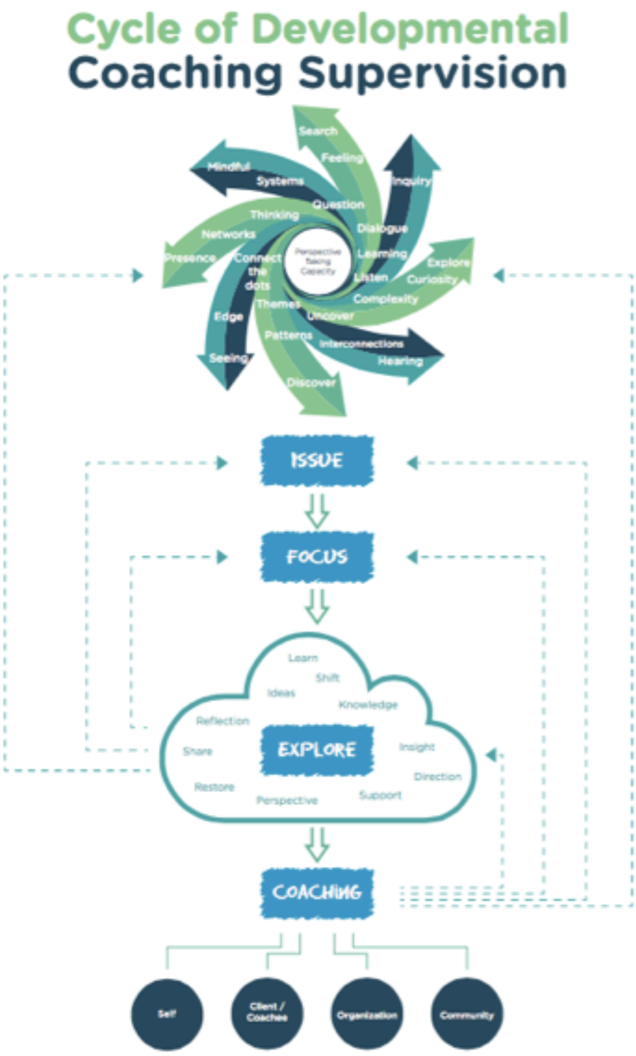

The seven "Eyes" or lens of the Seven Eyed Model include:

1. The Coachee and their Context
2. The Coach's Interventions
3. The Relationship between the Coach and the Coachee
4. The Coach's Awareness
5. The Supervisory Relationship
6. The Supervisor Self-Reflection
7. The Wider Context

The Model is more about a ***way*** of looking rather than ***what*** to understand about the coach's work. The Model provides a framework that not only allows the coach and the supervisor to explore a situation from a number of different perspectives, but also the relationship between each.

The facilitators will introduce a developmental dimension to supervision that supports the belief that the primary purpose of supervision is to help coaches to see more than they can currently see.  This developmental dimension is represented as a Cycle of Developmental Supervision (Wright, 2017). See Figure 2. below.

*Figure 2.*
*Cycle of Developmental Supervision (Wright, 2017)*



The Cycle of Developmental Supervision aligns with a Complex Adaptive Systems perspective on coaching (Cavanagh, 2013) that acknowledges the complexity, unpredictability and emergent nature of the coaching and supervision process. The Cycle draws on, and emphasizes the importance of, self-reflection, reflexivity, concepts related to Use of Self as Instrument (Bachkirova, 2016), enhanced Perspective Taking Capacity, Systemic Thinking (Cavanagh, 2006), Dialogical approaches (Issacs, 1999), Adult Development (Kegan, 1994) and Coach Maturity (Clutterbuck & Megginson, 2011). Links are also made with research on the Coaching Ripple Effect (Cavanagh & O'Connor, 2013) to support whole person and whole system engagement.

Participants will be divided into seven groups. Each group will be asked to focus on one of the seven "Eyes" of the Seven Eyed Model. They will be provided with a handout that includes an overview of the Seven Eyed Model and a more detailed description of the "Eye" they have been asked to focus on.

The facilitators will introduce members of the Association for Talent Development NYC's (ATD) Coaching Supervision Groups who will draw on a real client coaching issue to demonstrate a systemic, developmental approach to coaching supervision in action. The participants will be orientated to the demonstration through the provision of a simple framework used by the group.

Participants will be asked to observe the demonstration from the perspective of the coach and the supervisors, notice what emerges in the dialogue within this reflective space, and where this takes the coach in terms of their thinking and perspective on their coaching issue.

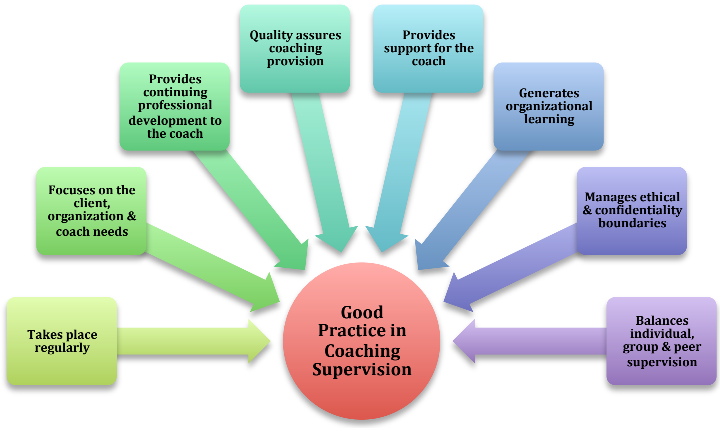
Following the short demonstration each of the seven groups will be asked to:
- Discuss their observations on the demonstration, including identifying questions they may have asked from the stance of the particular Eye they were asked to focus on;
- Describe how a systemic developmental approach to coaching supervision supports whole person and whole system engagement;
- Explore why coaching supervision will become increasingly important, as our world, and the challenges we face, become ever more complex; and
- Discuss how they might use the Seven Eyed Model to support their own development, and in individual, peer and group supervision.

Each group will be invited to share their observations, reflections and perspectives with the larger group.

**Reflections on Next Steps (10 mins)**
The facilitators will share global perspectives on coaching supervision, including its uses and benefits. This will include an overview of the outcomes of the recent research undertaken by the ATD NYC with the support of ICF NYC and AOCS.

The facilitators will provide an overview of the key components of good practice in coaching supervision.

*Figure* 3.
*Good Practice in Coaching Supervision (Adapted from Hawkins & Shohet 2006)*




The facilitators will invite questions, comments and closing reflections from the participants and make closing remarks on the importance of a systemic developmental approach to coaching supervision in an era characterized by increased volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity.

## Conceptual Theory/Input

### Definitions of Coaching Supervision

This experiential session will discuss a number of the contemporary definitions of coaching supervision, including:

*Supervision is the formal opportunity for coaches working with clients to share, in confidence, their case load activity to gain insight, support and direction for themselves and thereby enabling them to better work in the service of their clients.* Association of Coaching Supervisors

*Coaching Supervision is a formal process of professional support, which ensures continuing development of the coach and effectiveness of his/her coaching practice though interactive reflection, interpretative evaluation and the sharing of expertise.* Bachkirova, Stevens and Willis 2005

*Supervision is the interaction that occurs when a mentor or a coach brings their coaching or mentoring work experiences to a supervisor in order to be supported and to engage in reflective dialogue and collaborative learning for the development and benefit of the mentor or coach, their clients and their organization.* European Coaching and Mentoring Council

*Coaching Supervision focuses on the development of the coach's capacity through offering a richer and broader opportunity for support and development. Coaching supervision creates a safe environment for the coach to share their successes and failures in becoming masterful in the way they work with their clients.* International Coach Federation

**Functions of Supervision**
The three functions of supervision identified by Hawkins & Shohet (2006), Proctor (1987) and EMCC will be explored.

*Table 1.*
*The three functions of supervision identified by Hawkins & Shohet (2006), Proctor (1987) and EMCC*

| Proctor (1987) | Hawkins & Shohet (2006) | EMCC |
|---|---|---|
| ***1. Formative -*** relates to supervisee learning, skills development and professional identity development. | ***1. Developmental -*** addresses the skills, understanding and capabilities of the supervisee through reflection and exploration of the supervisee's work with their clients. | *1.* ***Developmental –*** is concerned with the development of skills, understanding and capacities of the coach/mentor. |
| ***2. Restorative*** *(Supportive*) **-** considers the impact of the work on the supervisee and the necessary psychological support and scaffolding required to offer professional support. This function can help mitigate the stresses and impacts of the work and promote practitioner wellbeing. | ***2. Resourcing -*** provides emotional support enabling the coach to deal with the intensity of working with clients. Coaches will be affected emotionally by being present and empathetic with their clients. To be effective coaches need to attend to themselves. | ***2. Resourcing –*** provides a supportive space for the coach/mentor to process the experiences they have had when working with clients. |
| ***3. Normative -*** refers to accountability, developing best practice principles, ethical and legal considerations, compliance with organizational procedures and professional standards for the wellbeing of clients. | ***3. Qualitative -*** provides quality control in working with people. Even experienced coaches have issues they do not see, communication they have not heard and challenges they are not communicating. | ***3. Qualitative –*** is concerned with quality, work standards and ethical integrity. |

**The Seven-Eyed Model**
The Seven Eyed Model of coaching supervision (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006) will be used to provide a basic framework for systemic supervision. It is the longest established and most widely used supervision model. It is based on a systems understanding of the way things connect, interrelate and drive behavior. Developed to include all the different aspects that can be explored in coaching supervision, it focuses on the interrelationship between the internal and relational life of individuals. Single eye-vision, which focuses on one aspect of the coaching process will inevitably lead to partial or limited perspectives. The Model suggests a

way of engaging in an exploration that looks at the same situation from many different perspectives.

**The Cycle of Developmental Supervision**

The Cycle of Developmental Supervision (Wright, 2017) introduces a developmental dimension to supervision that emphasizes the importance of helping coaches' notice what they cannot currently see, in themselves, their clients, their client organizations and each of the respective systems of which they form part.

Further, it acknowledges the complexity, unpredictability and emergent nature of coaching and supervision in framing the reflective supervision dialogue as a Complex Adaptive System from which adaptive outcomes emerge.

The Cycle draws on, and integrates, a number of leading theoretical perspectives on coaching, reflective practice, coach development and supervision, including:

- Bachkirova (2016) emphasizes the importance of self-reflection, reflexivity, and the Use of Self as Instrument. Acknowledging the centrality of the practitioners "self" in the achievement of coaching outcomes, Bachkirova (2016) identifies three main conditions for the good use of self, including: understanding the instrument; looking after the instrument; and checking the instrument for quality and sensitivity.

- Cavanagh (2006) draws on Adult Development Theory, Complexity Science, Positive Psychology, Mindfulness, Dialogue and Systems Theory to emphasize the importance of developing our "Complexity of Mind", expanding our capacity for systemic thinking, our ability to take and integrate multiple perspectives, and our capacity to create a positive emotional space that allows for the emergence of generative dialogue.

- A dialogical approach to the supervision conversation is key. During dialogue (Isaacs, 1999) we develop the capacity to suspend our particular perspectives in order to co-create joint understandings and strategies for action. Shared meanings and collective pools of knowledge may be constructed, which may produce new and often unexpected syntheses or perspectives - challenging current understandings and practices, generating insight, and enabling greater and more creative responsiveness to the system and its environment.

- Kegan's (1994) Adult Development Theory (ADT) focuses on the level of complexity with which a coach makes meaning of the world around them. Consistent with other constructive developmental theories, ADT is concerned with the construction of reality and the development of that construction to more complex levels over time, increasing our systemic breadth of perspective. ADT posits that one of the ways we are able to transform or develop is through the process of moving things in our perception from Subject to Object. The theory outlines a mechanism for growth and explains how transformative shifts in meaning making are achieved through incremental reflection and insight. This makes a useful theory to use in both coaching and coaching supervision.

- Through observations in a variety of contexts, including Coach Assessment and Selection Centers, Clutterbuck & Megginson (2011) have devised a conceptual framework of Coach Maturity that reflects the evolution of complexity in a coach's way of thinking about themselves, their clients and the context in which they operate. They have identified 4 coaching mindsets, which appear to represent a progression for many, if not all, coaches, including the Models Based Mindset, Process Based Mindset, Philosophy (or Discipline) Based Mindset, and the Systemic Eclectic Mindset.

- To support whole person and whole system engagement further, links will also be made with the groundbreaking research by Cavanagh and O'Connor (2013) that examined the systemic impact of one-on-one leadership coaching on the broader organization using Social Network Analysis – identifying a significant "Coaching Ripple Effect".

**Global Research, Theory and Practice**
The latest global research, theory and practice as it relates to coaching supervision (Bachkirova, 2016, Grant, 2012, Hodge, 2014) including a summary of the recent research undertaken by ATD NYC will be provided.

## Implications for Practice

Coaching supervision is a growing international trend that is seen as a key differentiator in the market place. It is recognized as an essential component of both internal and external coaching – a necessity not an optional extra. Increasingly, clients are requiring supervision as part of their hiring criteria and quality assurance process (Bachkirova, 2016, Grant, 2012, Hodge, 2014).

Supervision provides an opportunity for coaches to work with other professionals in order to review their specific cases from a personal, professional and systemic perspective – allowing a coach to step back from their work and take a broader view. It provides insight, reflection, direction, support and the sharing of expertise. The focus is on helping a coach improve the quality of their coaching, grow their coaching capacity and supporting themselves and their practice.

It has been suggested that quality supervision provides the link between theory and practice, and as such, is the core of all continuous personal and professional development. When done well, it serves the coach, their client, their client organization and development of the coaching profession (Hawkins & Shohet, 2011).

Further, a number of the contemporary Codes of Ethics (including Association for Coaching, Association for Professional Executive Coaching & Supervision, EMCC, ICF and Society for Coaching Psychology) require that we act within the boundaries of our competence. When navigating those boundaries, it is important to balance our ethical responsibility and accountability with the need to engage in experiential and transformative learning so as to enhance our professional development. This highlights the importance of reflective practice and supervision in managing this tension.

Critics of coaching supervision, particularly those who misunderstand its functions, uses and benefits, contend that as coaching is not counseling or psychotherapy, coaches do not need it. Bachkirova (2008) has argued however, that it is perhaps even more important in a coaching context for the following reasons:

- As executive and organizational coaches have more than one client, there is a greater need to see, integrate and manage multiple stakeholder perspectives.
- Many coaches are less equipped to identify mental health issues in coaching, so would benefit from another perspective, another "pair of eyes".
- As coaches are not required to undertake compulsory counseling (or other professional development) prior to coaching others, they are perhaps less prepared to identify the effect of their personal processes.

Moreover, in our knowledge driven, competitive and rapidly changing economy, the demands placed on our leaders and organizations have grown exponentially. If we, as coaches, are to support leaders in meeting those demands, we need to enhance our ability to take multiple perspectives on client issues and the coaching process. We require a bigger, systemic perspective. Indeed, Clutterbuck and Megginson (2011) suggest that a systemic approach to the coaching dynamic is essential to increasing coach effectiveness and maturity since the coaching context extends beyond the individual client to the human and organizational systems in which they operate. This is mirrored in a number of the contemporary Codes of Ethics (including, the Association for Professional Executive Coaching & Supervision, EMCC and Society for Coaching Psychology).

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# The Purposeful Connection: The Intersection Between Resilience, Mindfulness, and Purpose In the Workplace

*Karlin Sloan, CEO, Sloan Group International*

**Abstract.** This session is designed to introduce systemic perspective, practices and assessment tools that can be applied in developing coaches' core competencies to engage and empower clients. Of particular focus, how simple mindfulness practices are used as an applied systemic methodology in an increasing number of coaching approaches and leadership development initiatives today (such as Google, Intel and Aetna) to help increase resiliency by reducing stress, maximizing productivity and deepening overall professional fulfillment.

**Key Words:** Coaching Tools, Professional Fulfillment, Client Productivity, Stress Reduction Techniques, Assessments for Coaching

## Session Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will possess practical mindfulness practices to increase individual and group resilience. They will also have knowledge of research that has been done in the mindfulness and resilience fields, innovative practices in utilizing and incorporating mindfulness practice to transform behaviors, and be able to design preliminary coaching conversations to expand a client's understanding of their "whole-person" ability to be resilient at work.

Learning objectives include:

- *Knowledge:* this session will assist you to integrate specific resilience practices into your own work and that of your clients.

- *Comprehension:* this session will support you in your ability to restate and explain the relationship between resilience, mindfulness, and purpose in the context of one's workplace and how we can combat the burnout cycle.

- *Application:* this session will provide an experiential opportunity to experience simple practices that enhance the ability to be present, self-regulated, and resilient at work .

## Session Outline

1. **Settling-in and Introduction by Host?** (5 minutes)

2. **Why Are We Here?** (15 minutes)

After a short experiential introduction to the topic of the session and the agenda, we will discuss the immediate and common motivators coaches, clients, organizations and society at large have begun embracing a deeper need for resilience, and how to achieve that end result through easily integrated practices. We will ground participants into the session by having them begin exercising mindful awareness through a quick mindfulness exercise.

1. **The Models: Resilience at Work™ and Mindfulness at Work™** (10 minutes)

The Resilience at Work™ and Mindfulness At Work™ model designs are based on years of research and experience working with multitudes of professionals and executive leaders in developing their ability to be resilient through times of constant change and challenge. The Mindfulness model is comprised of inner and outer mental processes that move participants through centering, action, observation, and assessment. This model expands the workplace mindfulness practice from one of singular process (meditation) to one that incorporates tangible, performance-based structure that is most aligned with one's natural mental state in their workday; thereby increasing likely usage and maximizing potential benefit.

2. **The Research: How Purpose and Mindfulness Support Resilience at Work** (15 minutes)

With a foundational perspective in place for the session, we will examine understandings of resilience and mindfulness in more detail, beginning with a review of the definition of resilience; the connection between stress, the burnout cycle, and resilience; a model of resilience; and the benefits of mindfulness practice. This section will establish a framework in which mindfulness can be understood and engaged in the context of one's workday. We will then explore research that has been done in the field of resilience and mindfulness, with particular attention to the exponential growth of research that has been done in the past decade including our own ten-year global study. The research presented begins to provide credible argument for the validity and importance of creating resilience through mindfulness practice.

3. **Best Practices and Participant Experience** (35 minutes)

As core objective of this session, participants will be taken through two or more mindfulness practices that can help decrease stress, increase performance and deepen overall professional fulfillment anytime in their workday or that of their clients. These practices will be demonstrated in the context of common workday scenarios where resilience, and thereby mindfulness practice, is needed most. This discussion will provide important perspective of the do's and don'ts in mindfulness practice that many practitioners unconsciously overlook; creating detriment as opposed to the benefit the practice was intended to create.

4. **Organizational / Whole Systems Case Studies** (5 minutes)

We will connect the above best practices to organizational case studies that address the individual within a whole systems context.

5. **Question & Answer / Closure** (10 minutes)

The session will end with a summary of session key points and an opportunity to receive answers to any questions they may have in relation to apply mindfulness practice to increase resilience capability.

## Conceptual/Theory Input

### Resilience

The resilience model is based on the systemic biopsychosocial model described by psychiatrist George Engel. He suggested that to understand medical issues, one needs to consider the physical, psychological and sociological factors that contribute to the illness. Our proprietary research has suggested that we can think about resilience in the same way. How we care for our bodies, think about ourselves and those around us all contribute to our ability to be resilient.

In order to get our teams and organizations to function at their peak, and to address the issues being faced in the present moment, it is up to all professionals take a look at their own ability to bounce back from adversity, to overcome and work through challenges, and to use those times to learn, grow, and break through to better ways of being. Resilience means an ability to adapt quickly to change, and deal with rapid shifts in our workplace landscape.

Workplace mythology says that some people have the ability to thrive under stress, and others don't — that we are either born tough or weak, and our circumstances dictate how we turn out. Research shows, however, that the attributes of resilience can be developed and expanded. It shows that those attributes can help us not only to change and prevail, but to be productive and powerful at work.

Simply put, what one focuses on broadens and builds, and when one focus on positive explanations for whatever happens to them, that empowers them to take any circumstance and make it work. Those people with the highest levels of resilience are able to see incredible difficulties as temporary, and to reframe them into learning experiences. They care for themselves and their own physical well-being, and have practices that carry them through changes. When one is willing to cultivate health and well-being on every level, it makes them more effective, more enduring, and more fulfilled in their work.

In order to understand resilience, we must first examine the three domains of resilience. The presented resilience model demonstrates that it is all about our relationships; our relationship to ourselves, to others, and to what happens in our environment as a whole.

The first domain of resilience is maintaining a positive relationship to ourselves — from belief in our capacity to make a difference in our world, to taking good physical and emotional care of ourselves. When we are confident in our own individual ability to address whatever comes our way, we are more likely to succeed. Belief is half the battle.

The second domain of resilience is maintaining positive relationships with others. Research by Genos International and others in the Emotional Intelligence field has demonstrated that those who possess more emotional intelligence are more effective in building teams, inspiring high performance, and generating adaptive, innovative thinking. When others feel valued, listened to, cared for and understood, they perform better than when they do not. Being more conscious of how you and others feel is the first step in maximizing positive emotions and therefore maximizing your own and others' performance.

The third domain of resilience requires having a positive relationship to our environment - whatever surrounds us at work or in life. Being empowered requires we expand our ability to see things from a broader, wider, deeper perspective. We need to use our analytic and strategic thinking to shift how things work and to find new ways to achieve. Professionals with a positive relationship to their external environment are goal-oriented, future-minded, purposeful and proactive. They are able to reframe whatever comes at them no matter what the scenario.


**Mindfulness**
According to UCLA's Mindfulness Awareness Research Center (M.A.R.C.)., mindful awareness is the moment-by-moment process of actively and openly observing one's physical, mental and emotional experiences. Most commonly, mindfulness is modeled through systemic meditative, yoga or other mental focus practices to slow the mind in creating greater clarity, focus, while reducing stress. Jon Kabat Zin defines mindfulness as a trainable skill which enables us to be more present in the moment, aware of what is going on inside and around us non-judgmentally. And sociologist Ellen Langer references mindfulness as the simple act of actively noticing things — with a result of increased health, competence, and happiness.

While each of the aforementioned, among others, approach the practice of mindfulness with distinct conceptual/theoretical perspectives, the shared perspective is one of expanding awareness through an active practice of being "present," and by doing so, increase one's ability to recover from stress, change and challenge; in other words, be resilient. From this reference point, the Mindfulness At Work model referenced in the session extrapolates this shared perspective as an underpinning of a performance-based model most applicable and best serving in a professional environment. The presented 4-part mindfulness model consisting of "being," "doing," "experiencing," and "reflecting" elements provide a simple, yet practical application of mindfulness practice in the context of one's workday.


**Implications for Practice**

This experiential session will provide a well researched basis for using brief, practical exercises to develop mindful awareness. This session will provide participants an insightful and foundational perspective for combining two coaching competencies into one transformative engagement for clients. Participants will walk away with not only a much greater capacity to speak to this systemic cross road between resilience, purpose and mindfulness but also directly experience the applications of these tools for themselves so they can reference them both from a conceptual/theoretical and personal standpoint. This session will provide direct, tangible outcomes that coaches can immediately begin to implement in their coaching work post-conference.

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# PANEL DISCUSSIONS

## Building a Whole-Organization Approach to Coaching at S&P Global Ratings

*Holly Kulka, Chief Compliance Officer S&P Global Ratings*
*Soon Marie Rabb, Vice President of People, S&P Global Ratings*
*Alison Sullivan, Analytical Manager, Corporate Ratings*
*Rachel Fichter, Chief Learning Officer S&P Global Ratings*

**Abstract.** Our panel of executives from S&P Global Ratings tells the story of how we are systematically building internal coaching capability to develop our leaders and enable organizational change. Using a case study format, we describe why leadership became a business imperative for us and how we embedded coaching into a continuous learning experience called CREATE Leaders. Coaching has emerged as one of the most important enablers of mindset shifts and behavioral change.

**Key Words:** Internal Coaches, Continuous Learning, Human Resource Development, Leadership Development, Coaching at Scale, Systemic Coaching

### Panel Discussion Outline

The panel describes how S&P Global Ratings is building internal coaching capability to enable leadership development as a core component of its talent strategy. The starting point for the discussion is the Ratings business strategy, which was developed in 2017 to gain competitive advantage from the digitization of the credit ratings business. The talent strategy, as a key driver of the business strategy, has four components: (1) strategic workforce planning, (2) employee value proposition, (3) talent acquisition, and (4) leadership development. The goal of the leadership development component is to build a cadre of leaders who can enable strategic change in the organization by helping them to shift their mindsets from an enterprise-centric, command and control performance *management* approach to a people-centric, collaborative, and non-hierarchical, performance *development* approach, which is viewed as fundamental to the success of a digitally-enabled company. In this context, coaching and feedback are understood as critical leadership competencies. The panelists present the design of the leadership development initiative, a comprehensive and continuous learning experience (over the course of 12 months) for 300 leaders representing multiple levels of leadership. CREATE Leaders (an acronym for: change, resilience, execution, accountability, trust, and excellence) is comprised of the following elements:

- Intensive on-site training co-facilitated by senior executives; focused on triggering mindset shifts as the foundation for behavioral change and developing coaching and feedback skills using a consistent coaching framework/model
- Monthly group coaching for leaders facilitated by external/internal coaches
- 360-degree developmental feedback as the foundation for individual development planning
- Coaching certification for the entire team of human resources professionals
- On-demand content and asynchronous discussion within coaching groups and across the entire cohort of leaders delivered through an online platform
- Use of gamification (i.e., the allocation of points to individuals for completing on-demand content) to recognize outstanding learners and evaluate progress within the modules

- Video testimonials to share success stories of managers who began coaching their employees more effectively
- Action learning projects to build tech savvy skills

CREATE Leaders, grounded in adult learning theory (e.g., Kolb, 1984; Mezirow, 1997; Raelin, 2007; etc.) and best practices based on cognitive neuroscience, promotes the view that learning is part of a leader's job. Therefore, it is not a program, but a set of ongoing developmental experiences. CREATE is work-based to make the learning more relevant at the time of need. Group and peer coaching play a key role by offering leaders an intimate and safe forum to share their experiences as they experiment with the application of new coaching and feedback skills. It also allows them to see what good coaching looks like as modeled by the external and internal coaches who guide them.

The results of CREATE have been promising to date, although there is room for improvement as we continue to build a coaching culture. In the first three months, of the 867 hours of coaching capacity created, 567 hours were used resulting in a 65% utilization rate. And, although the organization is very new to the use of social learning concepts (e.g., online discussion and video posting), participant engagement is strong. For example, close to 50 videos were posted by leaders in which they shared coaching stories, and the online discussions have anywhere from 50 to 100 comments each. More importantly, there is a palpable buzz in the hallways of S&P's offices at 55 Water Street. People openly discuss CREATE with each other and share their key mindset shifts, in particular how they have shifted from the notion that "feedback is for corrective purposes" to "I give predominantly strengths and future-focused feedback." Leaders have also learned the power of asking open questions—this is consistently noted as a key insight during group coaching sessions.

Critical to the success of the initiative—and, more broadly, to execution of the talent strategy—is the development of the entire People team as internal coaches. While they collaborated in the early stages with external coaches, it was clear that in order to sustain the learning it would be necessary to build internal coaching capability. In early 2018, approximately 25 HR Business Partners and Learning Partners from around the globe participated in a three-day version of Columbia's *Internal Coach Intensive* program. Four post-program virtual sessions delivered by expert faculty helped to reinforce the learning, and an internally run bi-weekly virtual "coach connect" meeting enables an ongoing discussion of relevant coaching topics. Team members are also encouraged to practice their coaching skills in pairs on a regular basis. A "coaching credo" with key performance indicators was established to measure the progress of the internal coaches. As the value of the coaching becomes increasingly evident, a longer-term goal to build a coaching culture in S&P Global is emerging, in which coaching and talent development are fully integrated.

The panel addresses the conference theme, *Systemic Coaching: Whole-Person and Whole-Organization Engagement* by showing how S&P Global Ratings is laying the foundation for a "coaching at scale" model to execute its business strategy. This includes: one-on-one coaching for selected leaders; managerial coaching skills development; group coaching sessions in which leaders take turns practicing peer coaching and then collectively reflect on their experiences; establishing internal coaching capability; the targeted use of external coaches; and linking the performance development cycle to coaching. More broadly, across S&P Global, a formal process for managing internal and external coaching engagements—from selection to onboarding and community building—is currently under development. Using a case study format and through the lenses of our executive sponsors, HR team, and leaders as participants, we describe our efforts to date to build a coaching culture and to amplify engagement at all levels in the organization.

**Session Objectives**

- Offer insight into how organizations can use coaching in a systemic way to build leadership capability
- Consider strategies to develop internal coaching capability
- Understand how coaching can be aligned to business strategy
- Learn how organizations can build a "coaching at scale" model
- Discuss how executive sponsors perceive coaching as a learning mechanism
- Hear the perspective of the leader as participant

**Panel Roles**

Our panel will consist of a moderator and three panelists who are each involved in the initiative and bring different insights and perspectives:

- Moderator: Dr. Rachel Fichter, Chief Learning Officer, S&P Global Ratings
- Panelist 1: Holly Kulka, Chief Compliance Officer; executive sponsor of the leadership development initiative and member of the S&P Global Ratings Executive Committee
- Panelist 2: Soon Rabb, Vice President of People, S&P Global Ratings; member of the S&P Global Ratings Executive Committee
- Panelist 3: Alison Sullivan, Analytical Manager, Corporate Ratings; participant in CREATE Leaders

**Target Audience**

We address two key target audiences: 1) human resource development and talent professionals who are exploring how to build coaching capability in their organizations and would like to learn more about how to embed coaching into leadership development initiatives, and 2) external coaches who are interested in helping organizations establish a "coaching at scale" approach. These two groups make up a large share of the CCCP conference audience.

**60 Minutes: Panel**

After a brief introduction of each panelist, the moderator will provide an overview of S&P Global Ratings, explaining who we are and what we do as a company to set the stage for the case study. Next, our Chief Compliance Officer will describe the post-2008 financial crisis events that led to our decision to focus on leadership development. The moderator will present the components of CREATE Leaders to give the audience a sense of the continuous learning experience. This will include showing several artifacts, such as videos with executives and an overview of the learning platform. The Vice President of People will dive deeper into the topic of coaching and share why she made the decision to invest in developing the coaching skills of the People team. She will explain how coaching has become the vehicle to ensure the sustainability of the learning. From there, we move to a discussion of what is working well so far. One of our CREATE participants will share what she has gotten out of the CREATE coaching experience and the moderator will show several of the "selfie" videos that were posted by participants in which they describe the impact they have felt to date. Our Vice President of People will also outline how we are formally measuring the success of our coaching efforts and, more broadly, the whole CREATE experience. We then discuss our lessons learned. Our CREATE participant will present her views on what we should be doing differently, and our Chief Compliance Officer will explain how we can improve our coaching efforts to enhance the overall CREATE experience. We conclude the panel with an overview of the next leg of our journey, including new efforts at the S&P Global level that have been sparked by the work in Ratings.

**25 Minutes: Audience Interactive Q&A**

The moderator will open up the floor to invite the audience to contribute questions and reflections, with a microphone passed around. The moderator will help guide the questions to the whole panel or to specific panelists and encourage discussion among audience members. The moderator may also ask for audience best practices to amplify engagement that have not yet been considered by S&P Global. The goal is to share opportunities to enhance the "coaching at scale" initiative.

**5 Minutes: Synthesis and Wrap-Up**

Moderator will ask each panelist to share a 1-minute final reflection with the audience. The moderator will leave the group with her own reflection including an aspiration for the future and an invitation to the audience to continue engaging each other in dialogue on the topics discussed.

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[First paragraph in each section is not indented] This category of the conference is intended to showcase new and emerging topics relevant to both the conference theme, and the practice of executive and organizational coaching, bringing together multiple perspectives.

Wherever possible, please make connections to the conference theme of “Systemic Coaching: Whole Person | Whole Organization Engagement (please refer to the “Call for Proposals” document for more detail on the conference theme). Indicate how this panel discussion will extend or make an original/innovative contribution to the conference.

Provide an overall outline of the planned flow of the panel discussion, including:

- Introduction: Explain what is going to be presented/discussed.
- Session Objectives and Focus: Learning objectives of the presentation should be spelled out in detail. Explain the purpose and rationale for your panel.
- Key roles: Outline the key roles for the moderator, the panelists and the audience. Explain who is going to present what information, who the presenters are, and provide a brief biographical sketch of their background and credentials.
- Approximate timing and format of each panel member expressing a perspective related to the focal topic.
- The approach for engaging panelists in reflective conversation, including simple questions to be explored. Also include planned approaches for inviting the wider audience into the conversation in terms of what they experienced during the panel discussion, what emerged for them during panelist reflective conversations.
- Additional questions and/or observations.
- A discussion about implications for practice and/or further research.

As this is a conference for scholars and practitioners, your session should provide learning opportunities/continuing professional development for coaches, while also modeling various ways that theory and research can inform evidence-based practice.

# **References** [Level 1 Heading]

(No specific word limit, but note that the word count of your references is included in your total word count)

The reference list must start on a new page and include all citations noted in the body of your paper. Use the APA 6th edition for tips for structuring various data sources, with the exception that references are to be single-spaced versus double-spaced.

Feldman, D.C., & Lankau, M. J. (2005). Executive coaching: A review and agenda for future research. *Journal of Management, 31(6),* 829-848.

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**Coaching the System: Industry Perspectives on Scaling Coaching Cultures**

*Jonathan Kirschner, Psy.D, AIIR Consulting*
*Geetu Bharwaney, DSc, AIIR Consulting*
*Christopher Cotteta, AIIR Consulting*
*Phoebe Flint, AIIR Consulting*

**Abstract.** As the intensity and scope of coaching increases in organizations, the dynamics of the organizational system play a greater role in determining coaching success. What are the critical components of systemic coaching programs? How can an integrative approach to coaching cultivate strong leaders, impact organizational culture, and drive business results? A panel of HR and coaching leaders from some of the world's top organizations discuss how they have designed and implemented systemic coaching programs.

**Key Words:** coaching culture, human resource programming, systemic coaching, organizational culture, culture change

**Panel Discussion Outline**

**Topic:** It is widely recognized that executive coaching adds value at the individual level, and organizations are looking to coaching as a solution for some of the biggest challenges facing their businesses. Studies have demonstrated that coaching is a way for organizations to reap monetary returns and accelerate the performance of their leaders (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006; Kombarakaran, Yang, Baker & Fernandes, 2008; McGovern et al., 2001; Parker-Wilkins, 2006). Research jointly conducted by the Human Capital Institute and the International Coach Federation demonstrates that when organizations have strong coaching cultures, they are more likely to report higher levels of employee engagement and revenue growth (Filipkowski, Ruth, & Heverin, 2017). Consequently, leading organizations have been focused on how to expand coaching throughout the organization.

As defined by the HCI and ICF, a coaching culture includes: general support for coaching across an organization, a variety of coaching modalities (i.e., internal coaches, external coaches, and manager-coaches), access to professional coaching for leaders at all levels, allotment of budgetary resources towards coaching, and the use of accredited programs for coach training. With only one in four organizations meeting these standards of a strong coaching culture (Filipkowski et al., 2017), the challenge facing most organizations is how to go about designing, launching, and scaling coaching programs that are systemic in nature. Conceptualizing coaching as a core feature of organizational culture necessitates a systemic approach, which includes forming an integrative coaching strategy, inspiring widespread appreciation for coaching, and gaining support from senior leaders who can serve as champions for coaching programs (Riddle & Pothier, 2010).

As organizations move their focus from the individual to the systemic, they recruit a wider variety of methods and approaches under the umbrella of coaching (Riddle & Pothier, 2010). Utilizing a diverse array of coaching modalities, such as internal coaching, managerial coaching, peer coaching, and team coaching, practitioners are broadening their suite of services to affect a greater number of leaders earlier in their careers (Beattie et al., 2014; Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006). Organizations might also encourage leaders to incorporate coaching conversations into interactions with employees, ranging from impromptu casual chats to formal performance reviews (Grant, 2016). This type of leadership coaching, combined with other coaching modalities, have the cumulative effect of building corporate cultures that are developmentally-oriented, empowering, and results-focused (Riddle, 2016).

This panel, comprised of business leaders representing a diverse array of industries and organizations, will discuss how coaching programs at their organizations evolved and how their respective business contexts drove the expansion of coaching. Attention will be paid to the strategic aims that influenced the design of coaching programs and the critical components of systemic coaching programs.

**Session Objectives:** This panel discussion taps into the wealth of practical experience of our panelist bench. Panelists will be asked to:

- Describe how a coaching culture creates value at all levels of their respective organizations;
- Discuss approaches associated with scaling coaching throughout a system;
- Share first-hand examples and outcomes of successful, systemic coaching initiatives

**Session Agenda and Moderation Approach:** The panel discussion follows a structured format to address two key themes related to systemic coaching. The discussion will first address the strategic aims and unique organizational features that create the context for systemic coaching programs. The second theme will turn the discussion toward the various ways in which systemic coaching initiatives have been successfully implemented. Each theme begins with an audience poll, which anchors the subsequent discussion to the panel agenda and captures audience engagement. The moderator will then open the conversation for panelist input, guiding the discussion around several central questions relevant to the theme. Each theme will conclude with an opportunity for audience members to ask questions and/or share insights. The session will finish with closing remarks by the panelists and the moderator presenting implications for practice and research.

 

**Key Roles:** Our proposed structure includes a moderator and five panelists representing a diverse range of industries and expertise.

*Moderator*

**Dr. Geetu Bharwaney, AIIR Consulting**: Dr. Bharwaney is an executive coach and trusted advisor to CEOs and executives. She is an expert practitioner with a proven track record of designing and delivering results-oriented development programs aimed at improving individual, team and organizational performance. She is a qualified international assessor for the EMCC, a specialist in developing emotional intelligence, and the author of *Emotional Resilience: Know What it Takes to be Agile, Adaptable and Perform at Your Best.* Her passion is in creating long-term sustainable behavioral change through the quality and impact of coaching, mentoring and leadership development in complex business contexts, globally.

*Panelists*

**Erica Barnes, Anthem**: Coaching at Anthem involves a wide array of modalities including programmatic coaching, traditional coaching, and onboarding coaching. Strictly viewed as a developmental intervention, coaching is never remedial and is even required for all incoming leaders in Anthem's onboarding process. Erica, in her role as Director of Talent Management, oversees these various coaching programs and is focused on increasing the capacity of the internal coaching bench to serve the whole organization. With a selective application process and a rigorously designed training program, Anthem's internal coaches provide quality leadership development to meet the organization's growing need for coaching. Erica holds an MBA from Cornell University, earned a certificate in executive coaching from Lore International Institute, and is a member of the Conference Board's Coaching and Leadership Development Council.

**Dr. Niloofar Ghods, Cisco:** In an industry marked by constant change and disruption, Cisco understands the importance of developing adaptable and innovative leaders. The coaching program, led from strategy to delivery by Niloofar and her team, aligns with a whole-organization movement to a strengths-focused culture and is viewed as a way to promote effective leadership. Coaching has gathered tremendous energy from high-level promoters, and Cisco is focused on scaling coaching across all levels of leadership. This has been enabled by leveraging Cisco's proprietary technology to deliver coaching at scale in a cost-effective manner. Niloofar earned her dual doctorate in Clinical and Industrial-Organizational Psychology from CSPP/Alliant International University, has served on the Leadership Council of the Society of Consulting Psychology, and was an affiliate of The Institute of Coaching at Harvard Medical School.

 

**Martin Scott, Comcast:** Comcast's current coaching strategy has evolved from using coaching on an ad hoc basis to regularly integrating it into participants' growth and development experience. With an emphasis on high-potential leaders and individuals transitioning to new senior leadership roles – and on training all leaders as coaches – the coaching program at Comcast is driven by a desire to support leaders in their current roles, prepare them for the next step in their careers, and create business impact across the organization. In his role as Vice President of Leadership Acceleration at Comcast, Martin leads all executive development, director and above high potential development, executive onboarding and in-role professional/leadership development for executives. Martin is an ACC-accredited coach with ICF and holds a master's degree in organizational dynamics from the University of Pennsylvania.

**Dr. Nandi Shareef, Uber:** At Uber, coaching has grown into a multi-level business strategy aimed to tackle many of the challenges Uber faces as a rapidly scaling tech organization. Not only is coaching viewed as a developmental intervention for high potential talent, but it is also a core competency that all leaders must possess. Uber's coaching program focuses on democratizing coaching and embedding it into the culture of the organization with a combination of high potential coaching programs and coaching skills training across the organization. Managing coaching programs horizontally as People Development's Head of Delivery Excellence, Nandi ensures consistency, quality, and excellence in the implementation of all coaching initiatives at Uber. Nandi earned her Ph.D. in Organization Development from Benedictine University and MBA from Hampton University.

**Christine Vaccola, Sanofi:** Sanofi's current portfolio of coaching includes an internal coaching bench backed by professional training, coaching programs for identified leaders, and an emphasis on managerial coaching for first and second line managers. As a member of the first cohort of internal coaches at the organization and now Head of global talent programs, Christine understands the importance of the time, training, and consistency required to build an effective coaching program. The global approach to coaching entails standardization, strategy, and a vision for how all leaders throughout the organization will interact with coaching throughout their careers. Christine earned a masters in Human Resource Management and Services from the University of Scranton and is an ACC certified coach with ICF.

**Timing**

[5 minutes] *Introduction*

The moderator provides a brief introduction to the topic, objectives, and agenda of the panel discussion. In the spirit of practical, focused, and collective learning, this introduction also serves to describe the roles the moderator, panelists, and audience will have throughout the session. Specifically, the moderator will inform audience members that they will have the opportunity to engage with the panel by participating in online polls on their mobile devices and contribute their own perspectives and questions during two open forums.

[10 minutes] *Panelist Introductions*
Each panelist has the opportunity to briefly introduce themselves and describe their organization's approach to systemic coaching. Introductions will aim to position coaching in relation to the needs of each organization's strategic priorities. Specifically, panelists will address the following questions in a structured, focused manner:

- Role in his or her organization
- Importance of coaching to advancing strategic business objectives
- Maturity of the organization's coaching program
- Scale of coaching in the organization (i.e., how many people get coaching?)

[1 minute] *Moderator Introduction to Theme 1: The Context for Systemic Coaching*
At this point, the moderator transitions into a deeper conversation focused on how the business context shapes coaching programs. She will invite panelists to identify and discuss the key strategic drivers for systemic coaching initiatives and the most salient contextual factors influencing their design and delivery.

[2 minutes] *Audience Poll*
The first short poll will provide audience members with an opportunity to personally reflect on their own experiences with systemic coaching strategies. The question, which will be introduced by the moderator and displayed on a screen by the panel, will ask the audience, "What is the most compelling reason for implementing coaching at the systemic level?" Answer choices will include: "attract and retain talent," "increase employee engagement," "drive large-scale culture change initiatives," "strengthen leadership pipeline," "maximize human potential," "foster innovation," and "support continuous performance management."

[20 minutes] *Panelist Discussion*
Panelists will discuss what motivated their organizations to introduce systemic coaching and the supporting factors that drove their effectiveness. The discussion will cover both external factors, such as competition, as well as internal factors, such as corporate culture, that influenced the planning, launch, delivery, and maintenance of coaching programs. Guiding questions include:

- What strategic aim of the organization is supported by coaching? How did coaching emerge as the method for achieving that aim?
- What was the business case you used when proposing coaching programs to senior stakeholders? How did you then "sell" the idea to rank and file employees?
- What features of your organization either constrained or enabled the design of your systemic coaching programs?

 

[7 minutes] *Audience Perspectives*
After summarizing 3-5 main insights from the panelists, the moderator will open the floor for audience members to ask questions and add insights to the discussion.

[1 minute] *Moderator Introduction to Theme 2: Systemic Coaching in Practice*
The second theme will address the practical ways in which systemic coaching programs have been implemented by the panelists' organizations. Attention will be paid to the specific features of these systemic coaching initiatives as well as how they were successfully integrated within the larger organizational system.

[2 minutes] *Audience Poll*
Audience members will again be prompted to answer an online poll using their mobile devices. The question will be: "Think about your organization or one you work with. Other than external executive coaching, which modality is the most prevalent?" Answer choices will include: "internal coaching," "manager as coach training," "peer coaching," "team coaching," and "group coaching."

[20 minutes] *Panel Discussion*
The panelists will discuss successful components of their coaching programs and how they are systemic in nature. Panelists will also discuss what they do to ensure coaching transcends levels and functions within their organization and how they have integrated coaching into the larger organizational system. Guiding questions include:

- What are the critical components of a successful coaching culture at your company?
- Was developing a coaching culture a major revolution or a stepwise evolution for your organization? What were some of the first steps your organization took to introduce coaching at the systemic level?
- How do you ensure quality and accountability in coaching across a system? How do you track, evaluate, and reward progress?
- What are the current gaps in your organization's coaching program that you want to see addressed in the next 1-2 years?

[7 minutes] *Audience Perspectives*
After summarizing 3-5 main insights from the panelists, the moderator will open the floor for audience members to ask questions and add insights to the discussion.

[10 minutes] *Final Remarks from Panelists*
Each panelist will be asked to share an insight from the panel and their view on the future of systemic coaching.

 

[5 minutes] *Closing*
The panel will finish with a moderator-led presentation of suggestions for practitioners and future directions for researchers in furthering the understanding of systemic coaching. The main points we will cover reflect the ideas in the following section.

**Implications for Practice and Research:** With the growth of attention on systemic coaching, this panel discussion can offer several helpful insights for advancing the work of both practitioners and scholars. First, before beginning any intervention, practitioners must take stock of their organization's capacity to support systemic coaching initiatives. To maximize the likelihood that programs will be accepted, practitioners should design with the system in mind. Riddle and Pothier (2010) indicate that factors like centralization of the talent development practice, the maturity of talent development structures, and whether the organization views leadership as individualistic or contextual are critical systemic considerations. These considerations must be weighed alongside the organization's overall business objectives to bring a systemic coaching initiative into focus.

It is also critical to get the buy-in of senior stakeholders. Whether driven at the upper echelons of leadership or by a collection of dedicated evangelists, coaching programs require the sponsorship of key leaders. These early adopters can communicate the value of such programs, encourage their peers or reports to take advantage of coaching opportunities, and serve as coaching role-models (Grant & Hartley, 2013; Riddle, 2016). Just as it is important to find voices to advocate for coaching programs, it is also important to collect data to support the effectiveness of interventions. Although it can be difficult to capture impact of coaching, practitioners would do well to build a compelling case for expanding coaching using statistical evidence when possible, and anecdotal evidence at a minimum.

Lastly, it is important for organizations to grow their internal coaching capacity to save costs and deliver coaching to more individuals. With proper training and organizational support, internal coaches can provide individual coaching to leaders and lead coach training for managers complemented by an understanding of the organization's culture and context (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006).

Like other scholars, we call for more research into the specific processes that make coaching effective across modalities and cultures (Beattie et al., 2014). Which approaches have the most impact on the adoption of coaching in organizations? Which highly effective approaches may be easier to implement, or may circumvent potential obstacles? What are the measurable effects of systemic coaching initiatives? Leveraging research can help HR departments position the potential benefits of coaching to gain stakeholder buy-in. This kind of research can also indicate the critical inputs and factors that influence outcomes, which can support with designing programs that are evidence-based and maximize the likelihood of success.

 

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# Developing a Leadership Culture: The Realities of Manager as Coach

Our aim is engaging the manager as coach in developing a leadership culture. We believe building coaching capability will engage the workforce, drive business performance and talent development. Our systemic approach to building coaching capability at scale includes strengthening coaching skills in our managers and developing greater coaching capabilities in our internal coaches in support of manager development. Our offerings include: Manager and HR training programs, one-one coaching, peer coaching, intact team coaching and resources.

**Outline of Panel Discussion**

We will have a panel of JPMorgan Chase senior leaders and human resources professionals who will share our systemic approach to building coaching capability, including

- The importance of manager as coach in developing a leadership culture
- Approaches for developing coaching capability in managers
- Ways to continue ongoing internal coach development
- Learnings from various coaching offerings (e.g., individual, peer/team, HR, Manager)

Target Audience:

- Organizations seeking to build manager coaching capabilities at scale
- HR/ Leadership Development and Training groups considering developing greater coaching capability
- Individuals interested in understanding how coaching manifests in a business context within a large global organization

**JP Morgan Chase (JPMC) Organizational Profile**

- Leading global financial services firm with assets of $2.5 trillion
- Presence in over 100 markets
- Over 250,000 employees
- We serve millions of consumers, small businesses and many of the worlds most prominent corporate, institutional and government clients.
- We are a leader in investment banking, financial services for consumers and small businesses, commercial banking, financial transaction processing and asset management
- Leadership Edge (HR Function) our organization’s centralized Management and Leadership development experience is designed to foster great leaders and deepen a strong leadership culture at all levels of management across each line of business, function and region

# Title: Organizational Culture and Coaching: The role of organizational culture in creating a productive space for coaching to flourish

*Afnan, M, Abushaheen Saudi Aramco*

*Christian, J, Hobson Saudi Aramco*

*Anthony, Arden Saudi Aramco*

**Abstract:**

This panel discussion explores the influence of organizational culture on effective coaching, arguing that cultural nuances matter for coaching. It illustrates this point by presenting the evolution of our internal coaching journey, shaped by a variety of unique cultural elements, to support leadership development and meet organizational aspiration. It flushes out the various components of the systems in which coaching is situated, and how these interact to inform the leadership's thinking and behavior.

**Key Words:** Organizational Culture, Leadership Orientation, Internal Coaching, and Systemic Coaching

## Panel Discussion Outline

Introduction

Saudi Aramco is a fully-integrated, global energy and chemicals enterprise and a world leader in exploration and production, refining and distribution, and the world's top exporter of crude oil and natural gas liquids. The Company manages reserves of 332.9 billion barrels of oil equivalent. In 2017, Saudi Aramco produced over 3.7 billion barrels of crude oil and about 12.4 million standard cubic feet per day of natural gas. And to move these valuable resources, Saudi Aramco has over 20,000 km (>12,000 mile) pipeline network. This is about the distance of a roundtrip flight from London to Tokyo. Coaching in Saudi Aramco operates in service for the leadership team, which equates to approximately 4,000 leaders among more than 70,000 workers.

The following panel discussion explores a 4-year-old coaching journey of our internal coaches who were brought together from different backgrounds to support leadership development to meet organizational aspirations. This will be done through first illustrating the key systems that drive thinking and behaviors in the organization, including an overview of organizational culture, leadership culture, and organization aspiration. Second, there will be a discussion of our coaching approach, including highlights from our coaching practice. Finally, a reflection on our coaching experience, specifically lessons learned that shape the future direction.

Session Objectives:

- Explore a practical case study of coaching with a system in mind
- Gain insights on the role of organizational culture as a hidden force in driving leadership's thinking and behavior
- Expand view of cross-cultural systemic approach to coaching

Purpose:

- Bringing outside perspective and experience of western culture
- Share lessons learned to inform theory, research and the practice of systemic coaching cross-culture

Panel flow, focus and Key roles:

20 min: Introduction – includes introducing the panelists and getting a sense of the audience

Panelists:

Afnan Abushaheen

Afnan is a Leadership Development Coach working in Saudi Aramco's Talent Assessment and Coaching (TAC) group. She is responsible for providing targeted post-assessment developmental coaching for participants in Saudi Aramco's Leadership Assessment Centers. She holds a bachelor's degree in Organizational Psychology from Lancaster University in the U.K. She is currently pursuing accreditation as a professional coach.

Christian Hobson

Christian is the Head of the Management Development Division at Saudi Aramco. He is responsible for the design and implementation of the corporate talent management process, including talent assessment, development, and coaching. He holds a master's degree in Occupational Psychology from Nottingham University in the U.K. and he is a Chartered Psychologist with the British Psychological Society.

Tony Arden

Tony is the head of Saudi Aramco's internal coaching team. As such, he is responsible for orchestrating the team's "journey to world class." He holds a master's degree in Coaching and Mentoring from Oxford Brookes University and a honors degree in Psychology from the Open University in the U.K. He has gained awards from the Return on Investment Foundation and as an evaluator, as well as being a certified professional in Learning & Performance.

40 min: through the moderator the panelists engage in a reflective conversation discussing the key objectives of the session

**Panelist 1 (Afnan): Organizational Context**

**1.1 Organization Culture Orientation**

Studies of organizational culture within Saudi Aramco by McKinsey and Booz & Co. (2010) found that our organizational culture is shaped by five key cultural traits, which represents the sources of behavioral strengths and challenges. These traits are first, engineering orientation with a strong belief in measurement, data, process, and analysis, which leads to technical excellence. Second, it has a robust command and control foundation resulting in effective and disciplined execution. Third, there is a sense of pride in the organization's legacy, leading to confidence and dedication by the employees and leaders. Fourth, employees and leaders see the organization as a caretaker that generates a sense of community. Finally, there is the appreciation for consensus and compliance, with an aversion to risk. As successful as we have been, we would need to consider the potential downside of these traits, and shift our behaviors to continue being successful.

I will refer to the influence of these traits during illustrating examples of coaching behavior observed in coaching engagement and how they have made it challenging.

#### 1.1.2 Leadership Culture

Culture predicts an organizational culture, it might be worth taking a step back and provide some context around the culture in which the majority of our leaders were raised. The Saudi culture from which the management comes, tends to shows a preference for a social distance between hierarchical levels (high-power distance), structure and predictability (uncertainty avoidance). As expected from an energy organization, the majority of our leaders come from an engineering background, having been educated in western universities. The emphasis on western education through organizational funding is not the typical case in other organizations (Noer, 2005). As a result, Saudi managers' education and business philosophy can be described as more westernized, which could indicate a shift in mindset.

### 1.2 Business Drivers

Prince Mohammed Bin Salman introduced the Kingdom's Vision 2030, which expresses the Kingdom's long-term goals and expectations. The vision is built on three themes. One of them is a thriving economy, which implies expanding the investments in additional sectors and moving away from solely depending on oil and gas for generating the Kingdom's revenue. Such a goal requires diversifying our business, which in turn needs a commercial mindset that our internal study indicates we need to invest more in. The vision places an external pressure on our leaders to change.

Therefore, we have an external pressure imposed on leaders to change to meet Vision 2030. Internal company studies indicate a need to shift behavior to meet imminent business challenges. As a result, coaching has been introduced to drive behavioral change. Yet the described organizational cultural traits and leaders' values could make it challenging for coaching to flourish.

## Panelist 2 (Christian): Coaching Strategy

This section will illustrates our coaching practice and where it fits into the Saudi Aramco Talent Management process

### 2.1 Leadership Development Approach

The development process of our leaders is based on developing the competencies of Think Business, Execute for Results, Engage Stakeholders, and Self-Accountability at different levels during the leaders' career path. As this is operationalized, leaders are assessed on these competencies, and following their assessment event, they receive coaching. Thus, coaching in the organization is provided for leaders, managers, executives, and key talents, mainly following their assessment for transition. Our coaching practice has been strongly connected with assessment.

### 2.2 Coaching Approach

Coaching as a concept inherits modern western leadership values, mainly U.S. values of participation, accountability, and free choice (Ali, 1995). These values are from a different spectrum to the cultural values described earlier of high power distance and uncertainty avoidance.

The start of our coaching journey could be described through the following coaching competency model that illustrates how a coach should operate in the Saudi context. It was adapted from Noer, Leupold & Valle's 2007 study on the coaching skills of Saudi managers. The original model consists of three dimensions: supporting, challenging, and assessing. Our version replaces the assessing dimension with observing, given the fact that the clients go through leadership assessment before they engage in coaching. Further, it will add more value to the coaching process if the coach observes a pattern of behavior and shares it with those being coached, as it could stimulate a behavioral change opportunity. The model is modified based on our business needs. Below are the definitions of the model components

Care: Creating association with the client, showing care and support.

Ethics: Managing confidentiality to create a safe space for those being coached to open up and share information with the coach following ICF/EMCC ethical guidelines.

Results: Coaching is planned and executed with a focus on specific, desired results in the context of elevating leader and organizational performance.

Support: Developing a trusted and respectful relationship with those being coached.

Challenging: Stimulating those being coached to confront obstacles, and to think of the situation in a different way that could stimulate behavioral change.

Observing: Looking for patterns of behavior throughout the coaching engagement.

The double question marks: Reflecting back the coach's observations to those coached in a non-judgmental way. Further, Arabic question marks are written in the opposite direction to the western question marks, creating a 'mirror-image' theme that seeks to challenge self-limiting beliefs (or stereotypes) that: "In our [Arab] culture, we don't DO negative feedback."

There are cultural differences that matter, which can make it difficult to apply a western approach to coaching; however, we share a lot in common as well that we might not realize.

### 2.3 Systemic  Approach to Coaching

Reflecting on our coaching experience from a systemic perspective in relation to the expectations of coaching engagement and the role of the coach, perceptions and patterns of leadership behaviors observed, help to illustrate the components that drive leaders' thinking and behavior. As the coachee walks into the first coaching session, their expectations — of coaching as another training program in which the coachee will be taught leadership concepts — will modulate in relation to the assessment results that can be applied back at work. This point is influenced by command and control foundation, in which individuals expect they will always be told what they need to do. Therefore, bringing the point of coaching as a participation process clashes with the coachees' expectation. Further, coachees expect advice giving, teaching, and guidance of the coach, i.e., the coach's role is perceived closely to the teacher's role, which could be attributed to hierarchical thinking (Roth, 2017). Furthermore, the majority of our coachees in the organization are coming from an engineering background, therefore, they perceive coaching as a soft skill activity that does not lend itself to an objective, analytical approach.

As we moved further in the coaching engagement, there were patterns of leadership behaviors observed by the coaches. These patterns seem to be rooted in the belief system that the coachees have, which made the journey challenging. Examples of these patterns follow:

1. Power Distance: the power distance culture could make it difficult to do the following: establish a supportive relationship with a coach who is not seen as at the same level of the coachee; and accept feedback from different layers in the organization, especially the lower layer. The coachee is unwilling to be clear and direct, often appearing to say what the boss wanted to hear, even in absence of having the boss in the room.

2. Unwillingness to Confront: our leaders in general tend to be reluctant to confront behavior that is blocking someone from achieving an objective, rather they prefer to indirectly inform the individual of a need to change the behavior. This behavior is attributed to the fact that culturally it is difficult to separate confronting the behavior and confronting the individual as a person. And this is all in service of protecting someone's feelings from getting hurt. In a coaching context, the expectation is that the coachee will not be comfortable with a coach challenging his/her perceptions, rather than the coach will stay in the support dimension throughout the coaching engagement, as this could hurt the established relationship

3. Confusion about the behavior: leaders find it difficult to articulate the core behavior that needs to change, or name their emotions during a described story. They tend to provide a detailed version of the story, and they become attached to that version. This observation could be attributed to the fact that the leaders are coming from a collective society in which individuals always see and think of themselves as part of the group, which make it difficult to separate themselves from others, and distinguish between their own behaviors, emotions, and those of others, with a disregard to their ability to influence the way the story could happen.

4. Uncertainty avoidance: Leaders are inclined to avoid risk taking. As they share their problems, they expect a ready sole solution. Therefore, going into the exploration process and considering multiple options clashes with their engineering mindset for x problem = y solution. Further, as they are in the exploration process, they tend to show interest in knowing if other leaders within the organization faced the same circumstance, what approach he/she took, what were the achieved results. Furthermore, they are interested in knowing if the coach had a similar experience and how the coach responded in the same situation. The engineering orientation created a need for predictability, and the pattern of consistency could be conceived as a greater unwillingness to depart from the norm, and a tendency to adopt a collectivist approach.

5. Short-term orientation to time: leaders may resist with long-term planning; reliance on intuition-based (rather than logic-based) decision making (House, 2004), which could lead to resistance to engaging in a provoke thinking with a consideration of a long-term goal.

6. Strong emphasis on relationships and face (image/respectability). We have mentioned earlier that our coaching practice is strongly connected with assessment, which in turn led to a defect- correction, action planning process to bridge the gaps in the assessment results, rather than driving behavioral change as the participant feels he/she looks bad, and they have to protect their image in the organization.

Thus, the previous examples highlight the role of organizational culture, and the culture from which leaders come from, as a hidden force in driving leadership thinking and behavior. This point made it very challenging to engage in coaching, especially with an organizational history of being successful with these believes and values. Also, it illustrates the impact of delivering coaching in connection with assessment to drive behavioral change, as it could serve a cultural value of face protection, and does not create a productive space for coaching to flourish.

**Panelist 3 (Tony): Lessons Learned and Way Forward**

**3.1 Lessons learned**

As we progressed in our coaching journey, we had to learn to navigate the cultural nuances and deal with the presented cultural challenges, including:

1. Providing a comprehensive contracting process that takes into account the coachee’s circumstances and expectations, and provide context on coaching as a concept to promote organizational and leadership development, process and clarify expectations on the role of the coach, coachee emphasizing on the fact that the coach is not only there to support, but also to challenge and the way that would happen. Further, highlighting pros and cons of staying in the supportive dimension throughout the coaching engagement.

2. Expanding the coachee's view outside of the assessment experience to engage in effective, transformational coaching.
3. When it comes to coaching in practice, we realized that for the challenging dimension to bring positive impact, without affecting the established relationship, the sub-dimension must be empowered, as it has great potential for establishing an emotional connection with the coachee.
4. A need to provide coaching separate from the assessment, and act as a standalone element in the talent management process,  to drive more behavioral change and avoid the implication of moving towards defect-correction action planning process

### 3.2 Feedback Loop

There are number of practices utilized throughout our journey that acted as a feedback loop to shape our process and direction. These included establishing a coaching community of practice, in which coaches will meet to discuss cases, share experiences, and make a decision on how the faced challenges could be handled. Further, surveying the coachees at the end of the coaching engagement to gather their perspectives, and quantify coaching outcome. The data suggests that we have created sufficient success to have leaders become familiar with the coaching concept, and trust and value the process, evident by the increased uptake for coaching. Also, the reported data noted that the coachees' preference for having the coaches challenging them, with demonstrating appreciation of the impact that it has on both the personal and professional level. The challenging dimension was seen as culturally inappropriate at the beginning. Thus we have reached a level in which the coaching concept became familiar in the organization, and has a record of success and generated impact.

### 3.3 Future Direction

Our aim is to create a culture of feedback and dialogue in which everyday conversation will be an indication for immediate and visible culture transformation. As we progress in this journey, upcoming modifications to our process include complementing the efforts of the internal team with an external executive coaching team, to provide current, external perspective on issues, and bring specific areas of expertise to support executives during specific timeframes or initiatives.

As part of the coaching process, we aim at increasing the number of development conversations between the coachee's and their respective development sponsors (immediate and skip level bosses), to create more feedback and dialogue opportunities in the organization.

Since the introduction of coaching, it has been offered following an assessment event, we aspire to expand coaching in the organization, and have it also capture a broader range of development needs that relate to other parts of the talent management system. Further, provide additional data streams from the coaching experience, to enrich talent management decision-making, which could further strength coaching position in the organization.

20 min: Moderator invites the wider audience for questions and observations

10 min: Closing thoughts by the panelists and moderator

**Conclusion and Implications for Application**

Internal studies of organizational culture within Saudi Aramco, leadership culture and external pressure illustrated through kingdom's 2030 vision places a need on leaders to shift in behaviors. Thus, coaching has been introduced as an enabler to drive behavioral change to achieve corporate and Kingdom aspirations. There are key organizational cultural traits identified, which generated the sources of an organization's strengths and challenges. These traits, accompanied with specific culture traits which leaders bring with them, acted as hidden forces that drive thinking and behavior in the organization, in a way that made it challenging to engage in coaching. This situation indicated a need to apply coaching from a systemic perspective, to create an organization-wide behavioral change, and to have a customized approach that accommodates cultural nuances. Our case study shed light on the importance of considering the unique elements of organizational culture, and the challenges of adopting a western approach outside that environment.

Our organization has a unique cultural orientation with a western management orientation, which could mean that coaching in different Saudi organization may produce inconsistent results. This is an opportunity to explore cross-cultural coaching, with a focus on how organizational culture drives thinking and behaviors, to develop coaching models that accommodate these challenges.

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***Panel Discussion: How to Build Systemic Coaching Capability – Mindsets and Approaches – to Amplify Strategic Organizational Initiatives***

**Abstract**

Our panel of experts share their learnings from deploying systemic coaching initiatives in large business environments. They will share the business drivers behind these efforts and discuss the critical elements that make systemic coaching deployments both effective and long-lasting. What's possible when coaches approach business leaders and position coaching as an amplifier of something bigger than just individual transformations? How might you shift as a coaching professional to successfully prepare for those broader organizational coaching needs?

***Key Words***: Organizational Drivers, Systemic Coaching Initiatives, Business Results, Corporate Strategy, Scalability of Coaching, Mindset Shift, Leader Coach

Outline of Panel Discussion

**Session Objectives:**

- Explore why companies are **moving towards** systemic coaching strategies
- Consider the mindset needed by a coach and by coaching program owners that allow an organization to successfully **adopt** coaching as a strategic approach to business execution
- Bring awareness to some of the potential roadblocks and best practices

**Panel Roles:** We propose a structure of a moderator and *up to* five panelists, who have played an integral role in developing a coaching culture and capability and leveraging it for broad-organizational performance:

1. Moderator: Jayne Jenkins (CEO, Churchill Leadership Group & Executive Coach PCC)
2. Panelist 1: Renee Erridge (Head of Leadership Development, eBay; CCCP Graduate)
3. Panelist 2: Mindy Morrow (Executive Coach, Churchill Leadership Group; Key Change Strategist for eBay's Leader as Coach Program)
4. Panelist 4: Melissa Frank (John Hopkins - Applied Physics Lab - Section Supervisor, Strategic Partners Group - HR)
5. Panelist 5: Randi Walters (John Hopkins - Applied Physics Lab Group Supervisor, Strategic Partners Group - HR)

**Target Audience:** We address three target audiences:

1. Coaching program owners looking to impact business priorities
2. Internal executive coaches looking to bring greater value to their internal audience
3. External executive coaches who want to expand their client coaching offerings

**Moderation Approach:** We will maximize the interactive value and pace of the panel by combining moderator-led questioning with audience participation. With her deep experience in coaching and the application of coaching for business performance, our moderator, Jayne Jenkins will promote a conversation that provides tangible and actionable detail so that listeners can walk away with real content they can try right away. We will ask each panelist deep questions up front, strategically focusing those questions to the panelist that can provide the best insight. We will support the conversation with examples and stories that illustrate our points of view. We will shape the questions to build on each other to allow the larger, more holistic story to unfold over the course of the session. Throughout the panel, we will elicit audience point of view via small group exploration (and possible smart phone polling - TBD). The panel would conclude with a robust question and answer session.

**Session Flow:**

**5 Minutes: Moderator Set-Up**

- Moderator provides a brief intro giving context to the "why" of this panel and examples of business drivers behind the strategic decision of organizations to invest in a coaching culture and capability.
- Moderator shows a slide on session objectives and relevance to bringing a systems perspective to the work of executive and organizational coaching.

**5 Minutes: Panelist Introduction:** Each panelist provides their name, role, and their "why I am here", offering the mindset and intrinsic motivation behind their attendance on this panel *(keep to 1min each)*. Each panelist will have their supporting slide that provides a phrase and a picture. The phrase will be the key takeaway they would offer anyone in a similar role trying to do a similar transformation. The picture will offer a graphical representation of how they view themselves within their coaching ecosystem.

**30 Minutes: Moderator Engages Panelists**: To empower the audience we will create an overarching story that builds. We will tell the following powerful stories (5mins each), each using the STAR approach (situation, task, action, result) for clarity. Each panelist will also explain their mindset **SHIFT** & emotions/learnings at the time.

Example approach to build out in partnership with the Conference team:

- As an internal exec coach I realized the greater organization-wide impact I could have –Mindy
- I'm leveraging coaching to innovate so we can protect our country – Randy *(show video)*
- I saw what's possible and I'm building a broad coaching capability (strategic change) –Melissa
- I'm doing this and it's working – Renee *(show video and scorecard)*

We will support stories with real visual assets such as scorecards, videos, and testimonials. We will weave these assets into the storytelling to amplify both "left brain / right brain" thinking throughout the course of the discussion.

**10-15 Minutes: Partner Share –** At the end of the panel discussion, the moderator will ask participants to turn to someone next to them and explore the following question: "How have these stories triggered your mindset to shift and based on that shift what might you do differently?" We believe this partner session will trigger deeper insights for the upcoming interactive Q&A.

**20 Minutes: Audience Interactive Q&A -** Moderator will open up the floor to questions and reflections from the audience, with a microphone passed around and direct questions either to the whole panel or to selected panelists. Initially, the moderator would ask for questions, and then later, would guide audience members and panelists to share observations.

**10 Minutes: Synthesis / Wrap-Up -** Moderator shares an overview and then asks each panelist to share a 1-minute aspiration / question for the future for the audience to explore. Close is subject to change based on conference participant preparation

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# PAPER PRESENTATIONS

# Contextual Coaching: Leveraging context for alignment in the system

***Dr. Michael Valentine, Partners in Human Resources International***

## Abstract

Although context surrounds all coaching work (Johns, 2006), there is an absence of empirical research on its influence on coaching effectiveness and sustained behavior change. This paper examines the presence of contextual factors in an organization, considers how coaches incorporate them in practice, and suggests a framework to enhance coaching outcomes. The mixed methods paper identifies which factors are most incorporated by coaches' and which promote behavior change sustainability.

***Key Words:*** Executive Coaching, System Coaching, Contextual Coaching

## Introduction

This is a theory-based research paper that examines the extent to which organizational context influences coaching outcomes and the *sustained* behavior change by a coaching client (the learner). This study uses the perspective of the coach, to assess the influence of context on their ability to achieve desired coaching outcomes and the learner's ability to sustain agreed upon change objectives, resulting from the coaching relationship.

The organizational interest in leveraging contextual knowledge is obvious. Firms that invest in coaching as a developmental intervention, generally have two compelling needs they wish to meet: first, organizations wish to ensure the investment made in the coaching focused development, yields a return through resulting desired behavior change in the individual or group that participates in the coaching and second, the organization wishes to learn from each engagement to improve the overall developmental environment for future investments and activities (Gorrell & Hoover, 2009). It is clear then, that a knowledge of the system level factors that inhibit or support coaching work and the ability of an individual or group to sustain behavior change over time, would be useful to creating the conditions that are most conducive to accelerated organizational learning and development. Further this knowledge would allow the organization to better guide the alignment of the investment with overall business objectives.

One approach that allows understanding of these factors and examines the potential importance of the various contextual elements on developmental outcomes, is by examining the experience of internal and external coaches working in the organization. Coaches hold unique positionality, by virtue of their exposure to the many "touch points" in the organization they interact with during their work. It is not unusual for a typical for a coach, to speak with numerous stakeholders during the course of their work with a learner. These stakeholders, who may have an interest in the development work of the learner, also provide their own perspective on the organization, in the course of providing feedback they deem useful to the learner. Each of these interactions therefore, provides the opportunity to collect data about the personality of the organization. This data, due to its inherent diversity of perspectives, offers a coach an opportunity to uncover themes and patterns at the system level. To the extent the coach knows what contextual elements will have the most impact on their work, given the developmental need, and can collect this data over the course of a number of interactions, it could provide valuable insight on how individuals and groups develop in the organizational context.

## Methodology

The multi-phased study employed a mixed method (Qualitative - Quantitative) approach; it utilized archival data, interviews, and use of surveys to identify the factors in an organization's context that act as enablers or barriers to behavior change. The study examines the relationship between the incorporation of contextual factors in the coaching approach and the attainment of desired coaching outcomes.

The study was conducted in three phases. Each phase was intended to inform the following phase of work. During the first phase of work a random review of 50 coaching reports from Partners International coaches, from their work with organizational leaders or groups was evaluated. These reports provided details of each engagement, identifying individual objectives by the learner and perceived barriers or enablers for change. The reports also incorporated coaching insight on potential organizational challenges faced by the learner during the engagement. The review of the coaching reports was intended to answer two key questions: to what extent did the coach consider context important to their work and to what extent did contextual factors emerge during the various coaching conversations. The themes identified during the archival review informed interview question that were used during the second phase and the data collected during phase two interviews informed a pilot survey design to be used in phase three. Four lines of inquiry were pursued during the interview phase:

- How the coach viewed the importance of context in their coaching work.
- What elements of context the coach viewed as the most influential to achieving coaching outcomes?
- What elements of context the coach viewed as most influential to achieving sustained behavior change?
- How did the coach incorporate context into their coaching work?

Twelve (12) in-person interviews and twenty-seven (27) four question questionnaires were completed during the second phase of work. A manual thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) was applied to all questionnaires and interview transcripts. A theme was identified once *saturation* was reached on an element (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 136) and it appeared in at least 20% of the transcripts. The themes identified through the thematic analysis were incorporated into a 10-question test survey that was distributed to a wider distribution of coaches. A random sample of 17 completed surveys were evaluated for face validity. Basic descriptive statistical techniques were utilized to further understand variation in the survey data.

## Literature Review/Conceptual Framework

Contextual coaching or system-oriented coaching proposes that certain factors in an organization's context may have disproportionate impact on coaching outcomes. Further it is theorized that if learner developmental objectives derived during coaching are properly aligned with business objectives it enables a more effective coaching engagement and sustainable behavior change beyond the engagement. This systems orientation "produces simultaneous growth and development opportunities for the organization and executive" (Gorrell & Hoover, 2009, p 5). Despite its inherent logic, the ability to achieve the aims of systems-based coaching however, is dependent on meeting several requirements. First, one must identify those elements in the organizations culture with the most impact on coaching and developmental objectives. To do this the coach must understand not only how the element supports or inhibits the aims of the learner, but the coach must evaluate the relationship between the element and the specific need being addressed by the work to determine how to incorporate the knowledge. The second requirement relates to scale. For the organization to benefit from this valuable "on the ground" data, there must mechanism to consolidate numerous data points, from numerous coaches, across the organization to surface patterns of behavior that influence the overall developmental environment. Organizations that extensively use coaching must be able to understand how certain contextual attributes influence the development of desired leadership behaviors or competencies in order to strengthen their developmental and learning "climate".

**Literature Review**

Context influences many aspects of organizational life. Relevant studies using the narrow term "organizational context" in the title, have examined its influence on organizational behavior (Johns, 2006), on Leadership (Porter & McLaughlin, 2006), organizational creativity (Shalley & Gilson, 2004), on work team effectiveness (Doolen, Hacker, & Van Aken, 2003), on quality (Glasgow, Yano, & Kaboli, 2013) and Total Quality Management (TQM) (Sila, 2007) and its influence on turnover and job satisfaction (Parzinger, Lemons, & McDaniel, 2012). Studies using the broader term of organizational culture yield additional support for the link between context/ culture factors and organizational outcomes (Gregory, Harris, Armenakis, & Shook, 2009) for example. At the individual or group level the relationship between behavior change and context is complex, however there is established research on how it influences the formation of attitudes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993) and can even help predict behavior change (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Despite these studies, there still is a dearth of extensive work on the relationship between context and coaching or leadership behavior change (Porter & McLaughlin, 2006). This point is made clearly by Funder (2001), in discussing contemporary personality research,

> "For all the arguments that the situation (context) is all important…, little is empirically known or even theorized about how situations influence behavior, or what the basic kinds of situations are (or alternatively, what variables are useful in comparing one situation with another)" (Funder, 2001, p. 211)

An example of how additional examination of the topic would benefit the field can be found in the contextual coaching framework described in one prominent model. The model identifies ten broad components that represent organizational alignment factors that a coach should account for and incorporate into their work with a coaching client. Though the framework does provide guidance on how a coach should considered these factors, it is not specific on how to align the factors. The framework does not offer a precise measurement methodology to instruct a coach on how factors should be weighted or how factor importance may shift with different contextual profiles or differences in developmental objectives. The framework's ten factors are grouped into five dyads: Strategy/Structure, Culture/Communications, Talent Systems/Talent Solutions, Development/Dynamics (Gorrell & Hoover, 2009). They are intended to act as a filter for the coach while they work with their client on adjusting habits, behaviors, and skills. The dyads account for:

- Strategy – Structure: Strategy impact on leader and relationships within organizational structure
- Culture – Communication: How culture presents barriers and opportunities, and how communication style impacts success
- Talent Systems – Talent Solutions: How organizational processes impact development opportunities
- Development – Dynamics: Individual development for the coaching process and leaders' impact on others
- Career – Competence: Career plan and gaps versus organizational definitions of leadership

**Definitions**

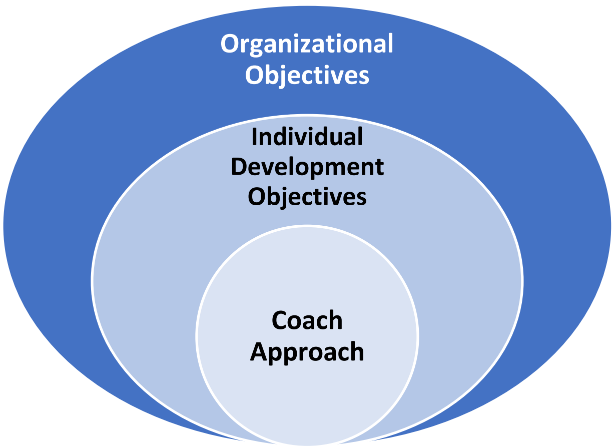
| Author/Source | Description |
|---|---|
| (Cappelli & Sherer, 1991) | Definition of Context<br>"context is defined as the surroundings associated with phenomena which helps to illuminate that phenomena, typically units of analysis above those expressly under investigation" (p. 56) |
| (Johns, 2006) | Definition of Context<br>"Situational opportunities and constraints that affect the occurrence and meaning of organizational behavior as well as functional relationships between variables. Context can serve as a main effect or interact with personal variables such as disposition to affect organizational behavior" (p. 386) |
| (Natale & Diamante, 2005) | "Executive coaching is defined as, that which relates to managerial - executive level development for performance and professional growth. The working definition of executive coaching for the study was: "a collaborative, solutions-focused, results-oriented and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of performance, self-directed learning and the personal growth of individuals" (p. 65-67) |
| (Maltabia, Marsick, & Ghosh, 2014) | Organizational coaching is defined as, a developmental process that builds a leader's capabilities to achieve professional and organizational goals" (p. 165). |
| (Gorrell & Hoover, 2009) | Contextual coaching is defined as, "a system oriented or holistic approach to coaching, that proposes the incorporation and alignment of certain contextual elements in the coaching approach increases the effectiveness of the behavior change in the organizational setting" (p. 5). |

**Origins/history**
Although the exact origins of executive coaching are unclear (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001), coaching managers can be traced back to the late 1980s (Tobias, 1996). The origins for organizational or systems-oriented coaching is even more elusive. Paul Gorrell and John Hoover developed their framework of contextual coaching during the 1990s (Gorrell & Hoover, 2009), however the concept has only recently received renewed attention. What makes the task of tracing history more complicated is use of terms. Three terms are most associated with organizational coaching: performance coaching, executive coaching and alignment coaching. These terms are often used interchangeably; however, all aim to work with leaders in their organization with the goal of increased performance. Contextual coaching takes this a step further by suggesting that a disciplined approach to aligning the coaching work with organizational objectives is a primary focus and will result in enhanced outcomes. To date there has been limited empirical work validating the key elements in context that influence coaching work.

**Conceptual Framing**

Regardless of the framework, the consistent theoretical underpinning of context-based coaching is the alignment between the organizational objectives, individual developmental objectives and coach agenda. In theory the closer the alignment between these elements the stronger the impact on the overall effectiveness of the investment in the developmental work. This contextual coaching alignment is represented by the figure 1. below:

Figure 1. Contextual Alignment Elements: The overlap




**Findings**

The study provides several key findings associated with understanding the role of context in coaching. First, it validates the importance coaches attach to the influence context has on coaching outcomes. Secondly, it identifies a number of discrete factors that coaches identified as inhibitors or enablers to learner development during a coaching engagement and factors that may

inhibit or enable achieving coaching outcomes. Finally, the study provides insight into approaches coaches use to incorporate contextual considerations into their coaching work.
The findings identify which factors are most influential to a coach's ability to achieve desired outcomes informed by organizational dynamics.
The key insights gained from the study are as follows:

1. **Importance of Context:** There is a wide variation in how coaches understand, account for and incorporate context into executive coaching work in organizations. However, coaches recognize the importance of context on coaching work and behavior change by a learner.
2. **Contextual Factors:** Although definitional challenges exist coaches identified several discrete contextual elements that they believe have the *most* influence on coaching outcomes and sustained behavior change.
3. **Incorporation of Context:** There is some consensus, with limitations, in how coaches incorporate context into their work.

***Importance of Context:***
There is a significant variation in how coaches define, recognize and assess contextual factors however, there was strong agreement on its importance to achieving coaching outcomes and sustained behavior change by the learner. It remains unclear to what there is a relationship between how the coach perceives context importance and how it is incorporated into coaching work. The following two themes were identified in phase two of the study:

- Level of importance is dependent on engagement objectives or developmental need
- High level of importance to coaching outcomes

***Contextual Factors most influential to achieving coaching outcomes:***
Coaches identified several factors that were deemed as most influential on the ability of the coach to achieve desired coaching outcomes. For simplicity the factors were subdivided into two categories: (*Inward focused factors)* or factors associated with the learner's awareness of context and (*Externally focused factors)* or factors perceived by the coach to exert influence on the learner but not necessarily known to the learner.

Inward focused factors

- Goal orientation of the organization (related to the perceived accountability for achieving agreed upon developmental objectives and the perceived degree to which goals are a natural aspect of the existing culture)
- Control orientation perceived ability by the learner to achieve set objectives in the organization.
- Perception of organizational fairness with regards to advancement
- Perceived safety (or encouragement) to take risk. This is expressed as the perceived consequences of public failure.

Externally focused factors

- Level of leadership engagement or prevalence of engagement orientation across the enterprise and visibility to the learner.

- Organizational developmental mindset. Two dimensions were noted with this theme: codes related to the demonstration of a developmental mindset by senior leaders or recognized as the prevailing leadership style and the visible organizational attitude with regards to the efficacy of coaching.

***Contextual factors most influential to achieving sustained behavior change by the learner***
Coaches identified several factors that were perceived to have the most influence on the ability of a learner to sustain behavior change resulting from coaching work:

- Level of engagement of direct supervisor in the process and accountability to agreed upon objectives
- Peer pressure to advance in the organization
- Level of organizational accountability on leader competencies and the connection of coaching work with those competencies
- The level of a positive feedback culture in the organization

***Incorporation of context***
This element did not meet saturation requirements and only one theme emerged from the examination of the transcripts of completed interviews and questionnaires:

- Work to raise learner awareness of contextual factors that may impede achievement of developmental objectives

The finding suggest that coaches can identify discrete elements in context that have disproportional impact on coaching outcomes and they actively consider how to incorporate them into their coaching work. The limited quantitative data suggest that a strong correlation may exist between, the ***visible*** **level of leadership engagement** (outside of HR) in the coaching process and the attainment of coaching outcomes by those who participate in the process. This may be complemented by the extent to which the prevailing view of coaching in the organization is positive and that the culture is a feedback-oriented culture.

The findings also suggest that the broad descriptions of contextual elements initially positioned in early models, may not be as useful for coaches or the organization, as envisioned by the thought leaders of those models. This study advocates for more narrow and measurable elements that are closely relevant at the level of interaction, than generic elements. While it may be appropriate to provide a structure that allows for comparison across multiple engagements and coaches, the data suggest that proximity to the learner is a key consideration to how context is accounted for.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The study represents the initial stage of validating the influence of context on coaching work, and sustained behavior change by a learner. The study assumes some level of ability on the part of the coach to recognize the factors in the organization's environment that are ***most*** relevant to the focus of the client's work and the ability to incorporate those factors into the coaching approach in an effort to align the client's developmental objectives with the organizational aims.

To the extent that these conditions are met, it follows that coaching in an organization is more effective when the coach uses a contextual oriented approach. The study also suggests that ther are discrete contextual factors that are recognizable and potentially measurable which if armed with an awareness, a sponsor of coaching may be able to bolster the contextual factors that support coaching work and intervene to mitigate those that inhibit coaching work in their system. If this is achieved, then organizations can be better positioned to support sustainability of their coaching investment. Theoretically, this awareness could be gained through the existing coaching work in the organization. The initial findings in this limited study suggest that, although the relationships between contextual elements, developmental objectives, and the coaching approach are complex, and likely moderated by other background factors, it is clear, that individual and group coaching in the organizational setting can be enhanced by a further understanding of context.

This contextual coaching study has several limitations and opportunities for additional opportunities for inquiry. The sample size used for this study was limited. In phase two of the study only 39 coaches provided their perspective. Of those over 40% represent Partners coaches already familiar with the contextual coaching framework. In addition, the data was collected primarily from coaches practicing in the United States and as such has limitations in its global reach. It is suggested that a much larger sample of coaches be invited to provide a narrative perspective on the subject. A second significant limitation is the reliance on coach centric data to form the findings. While useful to understand incorporation approach the reliance on coach only data subjects the study to notable bias with regards to the perceived importance of context to achieving coaching outcomes and realizing sustained change. Finally, the study small quantitative survey sample does not allow for inferences about relationship between contextual factors or the correlation of those factors with sustained behavior change.

These limitations provide potential avenues to expand the work by examining data from the perspective of the learner (client) population and expanding the sample. A correlational analysis on the factors, identified by coaches, and the relationship on the ability to achieve coaching outcomes and sustain those outcomes also represent a possible avenue of further study. A Considering these limitations, the study also presents a need for further examination of measures associated with each factor’s influence on developmental objectives and behavior change sustainability. Specifically, research needs to be conducted to explore the point at which incorporation of context into the coaching approach influences outcomes. Additional work in understanding how factor relevance changes with developmental focus or client profile would be useful for coaches preparing for executive engagements and providing system level insights.

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# Engagement fault: Whole person in anomic society

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## Abstract

This work presents a preliminary literature review (i.e. anomy, and coaching) as a way of connecting concepts and proposing research agendas to the field of coaching, as well as fostering the practice of personal, executive and organizational coaching to understand specific social contexts that can influence engagement. The ultimate aim is to contribute to the practice of coaching the whole person by exploring anomie as an additional potential perspective.

**Key Words:** Anomy, Change, Systemic Coaching and Whole Person

## Introduction

These last few years have witnessed huge changes in the labor market with impacts at the organizational level. The means by which professionals relate to companies and to work have been rapidly changing and it's probable that these changes will intensify in the next years. This is a global reality, even if national and/or regional nuances can be noticed. (Balfour,2000) The person (or group) to be coached is always influenced by the social environment. Cultural aspects, social tendencies, contemporary habits and practices deriving from this environment are natural elements of the coaching process. These elements also influence the client's behaviour, responses and feelings directly and therefore client's context is important to coaches. Anomie is a social phenomenon that can influence the capacity and willingness of individuals to engage in HR development processes, such as coaching. The changes mentioned above are claimed to have even more disruptive effects in Brazil due to a deep social crisis (economic, political, and moral). The whole social picture should be configuring an anomic society.

## Methodology

This proposed paper is inspired in an interrupted academic study, a PhD research in the field of Organizacional Psychology, not yet completed. While researching the impacts of political external interference on Organisational Culture in public companies, the anomy concept has contributed to understanding workers' behaviour. Disengagement, communication and low productivity issues were claimed to be associated with sudden and unjustified changes in rules, norms and practices.

This study aims to better understand how to coach the whole person, particularly while considering this person as affected by a specific social context: the anomic one. The focus is on the client, and (i) how to describe and identify his anomic behaviours, (ii) how he can be affected by an anomic context, and finally (iii) potential impacts on the coaching process. If in the future this study becomes part of a research project or program, there should be wider theoretical contributions from the areas of psychology, sociology, and coaching to be explored. This is an initial approach that intents to provide foundational grounding to: (i) identify and connect concepts, (ii) apply them to the Columbia coaching methodology and (iii) propose further research.

Literature review has been selected as the method to base the study on the topic. This approach initially reviews, connects and interprets part of representative literature. Anomie can contribute with 2the field of coaching research by introducing an addition perspective on how individuals react to context influences, particularly in what concerns their propensity to change and to engage in coaching processes.

## Literature Review

The Literature Review presented bellow concentrates on three areas: anomie, goals and success. The research was made on google scholar, searching for key words and authors. Anomia, anomy, anomie associated with work, well-being, organisation, culture, among others. No studies were found that associated anomie and coaching concepts. However, it was observed that a variety of topics that are mentioned in the studies and researches in the field of anomie are also important topics in the field of coaching. This work has selected these goals and success, because of their immediate association with coaching client´s usual focus and interest. Bellow, first area presented is the anomie concept, its different visions and versions, origins and history. A few paragraphs are dedicated to the concept of alienation, which is commonly used as a synonym of anomie. The following areas are "goals" and "success".

### Anomy, Anomie, Anomia

Anomie is a difficult concept for readers to grasp. To better understand it, imagine an individual that has survived the Katrina hurricane in New Orleans or the great 2011 tsunami in Japan. Picture someone, or a group of people, who return to a place where they used to live after such an event, only to find nothing but ruins. Not only did they lose most of their possessions, but also loved ones, neighbours, friends, relatives, authorities, jobs, physical places like churches, schools, shops, streets… Almost everything has disappeared. These people have lost all their references.

Now suppose another group, community or society is going through a big crisis-not necessarily caused by a natural event like the ones described above, but still going through imposed massive changes that cause them to lack collective legitimate references. Rules and routines are altered in such a manner that individuals do not know what they can expect from life in society. This could be an external invasion or sudden political upheaval.

The circumstances described above help our minds approach what would be a typical anomy triggering context. The concept was deeply studied during the last century and has been applied in different ways.

Table 1.
*Definitions of Anomie*

**DEFINITIONS OF ANOMIE**

**Author/Source**
**Description**
Greek religious texts (Orru,1983)

"Absence of law"
Plato and Old Testament (Caruana et al., 2000)
"Anarchy and intemperance in Plato" and "Sin and wickedness in the Old Testament"
Durkheim (1897)
"Characteristic of a society which suffers an amorality that results from deregulation."

MacIver (1950) and Srole (1956)
"State of mind, a subjective condition that exists in persons that live in anomic conditions and is due to the breakdown of individual's sense of attachment to society"
Passas (1999), Saini (2008), Tsahuridu (2006), (Martin et al., 2009)
"Anomie in most organisations is a consequence of the systematic pressure placed on people to achieve expected but unachievable economic goals that lead people to resort to illegal or immoral methods in order to achieve them."

Anomia is a state of mind, a subjective condition that exists in persons that live in anomic conditions and relates to the breakdown of individuals' sense of belonging to society. Some use the term anomia to refer to the individual characteristic and distinguish it from anomie which refers to this societal or social group level. The first term focuses on individual perception of the anomic conditions that exist in the world of work and non-work contexts.
For some authors, Anomia or Anomy is exclusively an individual phenomenon that can only be seen as a state of mind and not a state of society. This is not the approach adopted in this paper. A second approach is instead chosen, which is based on the premise that the existence of anomic persons denotes the existence of anomie in society.

**Origins and history** Anomie, is originally defined as the absence of law, and was used in classical philosophy and Greek religious texts to represent 'anarchy and intemperance in Plato' and 'sin and wickedness in the Old Testament'. The term was reintroduced much later, in 1885, by the French philosopher Jean Marie Guyau, as the absence of a fixed law. These writings were probably the initial inspiration and references to Durkheim's developing concept of anomie adopted in this paper. Durkheim (1947) describes anomie as a derangement that involves immorality and madness, and not necessarily as normlessness. According to his point of view, anomie is a characteristic of societies which are related to amorality and that can result from a lack of regulation, among other things such as shares moral values and assumptions, rules and references. Such an important aspect as amorality will cause the response of individuals belonging to these societies to have common (low) values and ethical standards as well as poor commitment to collective development and changes perceived as necessary.
When big crises or ruptures occur, people tend to renounce life more easily. (Durkheim, 1947) This could be a superficial explanation, and very adequate to the everyday concept of suicide. Facts contradict it. If voluntary deaths should increase with a harder life, they would decrease as wellbeing rises. This was not proven by Durkheim's research. Both financial crises and waves of prosperity have been shown to be correlated to the increase of suicides and this led Durkheim to the conclusion that the real cause to this particular group of suicides were the disturbances in the collective order. Every time a substantial rearrangement in the social body is felt, either as a consequence of growth or a cataclysm, men are more likely to kill themselves. This means that individuals behavior and attachment to life is highly connected to stable rules and references, not necessarily the wellbeing they provide. How can that be?
If a living person is offered less means than necessary for his survival the consequence is unhappiness, pain and friction. Any movement that cannot happen without pain or friction tends not to reproduce itself. This tendency can evolve to atrophy, and the tendency to live is weakened.
A second aspect identified by Durkheim is related to our sensibility, which is inherently limitless and therefore, will never be fulfilled. This limitless source of desires, according to Durkheim, can only represent torment. This insatiability is commonly seen as a sign of morbidity, and eventually the renouncing to life. (This is more a mental state of mind than physical life itself.)

The solution would come from the regulating forces that attend to moral necessities much like the role that the organism plays in answering to physical needs. Since appetites are not automatically strained by physiological mechanisms, they can only respect limits that are recognised as fair and just. Still, we cannot dictate ourselves these laws and rules. We must receive them from respected authorities in front of whom we spontaneously decline. Only society can play this role.

What happens when life conditions are abruptly and/or substantially changed? The scales according to which individual needs were regulated cannot go on being the same. They should vary according to social resources and circumstances. It takes time for men and things to be reclassified according to the new public conscience. For a while, social forces are free, and having not found a new equilibrium, its values are not determined and, as a consequence, there is no regulation. One does not know what is and isn't possible. What is and isn't fair. What can be claimed, what hopes are legitimate. Even if this is not profound, it will reach important principles because the ideas that express these principles are not the same anymore.

Anomie in modern societies has been found to be one suicide factor and one of the sources of global suicides. It has been considered by Durkheim a new and different kind of suicide which differs from the others because it depends on the way society regulates individuals and not on how individuals connect to society.

It is necessary that individuals feel support from a collective being that preceded them in time and will outlast their existence. Under this condition they will cease to search inside themselves the reasons for their own conduct and, by understanding that each one is an instrument of something bigger that surpasses him, will realize he is worth something. Life will regain meaning in their eyes because they will meet natural goals and orientation once again. Life will make sense.

In present day society is too far removed from individuals in order to act over them in an effective and continuous way. Even though there are some ties connecting daily life and public life, they are too indirect to be felt in a vivid way. We only feel our dependency towards state when there are serious interests involved. The idea of nation can be in the shadow, in deaf (muffled) representation, sometimes absolutely absent. Only when exceptional circumstances happen, such as in a big national or political crisis, this nation idea comes to the foreground, and becomes the driving force behind conduct. This is the case of Brazilian society today. And it is anomic because of the absence of state's authority and regulation which is perceived as uncommitted with providing the basic public services (such as health, security, transportation, education). Not all individuals living in such a context should be characterised as anomic. They would definitely be under collective influence and behaving acordingly.

It would not be an intermittent nation force that would discourage suicide. An individual must always be aware that his acts have meaning. In order for his existence not to seem empty he must realize, permanently, that he serves a meaningful objective. That is only possible when a closer social environment involves him and offers his existence meaning and belonging.

This is where a first important connection between the coaching practice and anomia is found. Clients in general are faced with topics related with life meaning and belonging. The closer they are to society circles and groups, the more profoundly damaged they can be by anomic tendencies. This can be an important external factor influencing the work of coaches.

This paper claims that in current Brazilian society (and potentially in others around the globe) individuals are not subject to positive collective action, other than a weak state which is the main collective organised force. It is only through it that they might eventually feel society and how dependent on it they are. But, as state is apart from individuals, it could only have a distant and discontinuous action over them; therefore, this feeling is not present either on a permanent or energetic way. Individuals in general are disconnected from society. They tend to be disengaged from the groups.

The political and economic crisis that has been going on in Brazil affects individuals and their propensity to engage in coaching (and any self-development effort). The anomie literature describes that when living in anomic contexts there is nothing that attracts individuals outside of themselves or that imposes limits to them. Under such conditions it is inevitable to drawn on selfishness and disorder (misconduct). One cannot aspire to lofty goals and submit to rules when he does not recognise any solidarity. To discharge him of all social pressure is to abandon him to himself and to a demoralised being. (Sanson, 2014)

**Alienation** One common concept that is present in the literature and usually associated with anomie is alienation. Both anomie and alienation were concepts created to criticise 19th century industrial society. In current times these concepts are used interchangeably (or as a subcategory of each other) although they were originally derived from different analyses, with different meanings.  Since this is not our focus we will not delve into the extremely rich and valuable discussion of the two concepts. Marx originally defined alienation as an aspect of labor division, which ultimately forces people to participate in relations in which they are dispensable and of which they do not wish to be part of. According to Marx, social relations determine more than what they do, including the structure of their thoughts, self-image, their products and activities. "Alienated man is dehumanised by being conditioned and constrained to see himself, his products, his activities, and other men in economic, political, religious and other categories – in terms which denies his human possibilities." In Durkheim's vision, labor division (once regulated) is a source of solidarity and anomie is the gap between relevant rules and institutions. "The individual becomes aware of his dependence upon society; and from this comes the forces which keep him in check and restrain him." (Struening, EL. 1965*)*
Being alienated is quite different that being anomic, though the common usage of the words may sometimes be equal. The fact that an individual is detached from social groups can be interpreted and explained from different perspectives and causes.  As the original concepts briefly presented above show, one can lack conscience of his role and position in society (by not having access to complete information) and therefore become less engaged than he could or should be to social contexts. This is different than the (subtle) erasure or substitution of a substantial amount of referential/information (affective, social, legal, behavioural references, rules, etc.) that drives collective behaviour.  Also, political associations usually made with the two author's approach are quite different.

**Goals**

A second interesting concept that connects anomie and coaching is goals.  There are some interesting findings in the literature that connect the observance of anomie and goals. One aspect to be outlined here is that there is consensus in the literature researched around the bond between goals and anomie.  Merton, like Durkheim, sees anomie as the roots of a disconnect between means and goals. When the individual does not have the means to achieve goals, anomie is the result. Considering how frequent coaches are hired in the search for accomplishing specific goals, this is an import aspect to be looked at. In the growing field of internal coaching, anomie can be a potential subliminal cause of a goal disconnect and of a lack of attachment among workers and executives. (Merton, 1938)
Goal differences play a central role in Durkheim's theory of anomie. According to Durkheim, a healthy society sets limits on the goals of its members. Under certain conditions however, the society may lose its power to regulate individual goals. When this happens, individual goals become limitless. (Durkheim, 1897) Individuals being unable to reach their goals experience what they call subjective anomie. This is a second aspect related to goals that is quite important in a coaching context.  Many emotional reactions and feelings can be observed on individuals

living or working in anomic contexts: lack of normalcy, powerlessness and despair. Whichever is the primary cause or source of these reactions, the fact that the social environment might be (at least) reinforcing them must be taken into account with the client in the search of understanding the situation, and searching for solutions and alternatives. Given a psychological situation of high anomia, combined with a social situation that makes it difficult to do anything about the matter, it would be especially stressful to make plans, to build hopes, be forward looking. Research has found that those who are forward looking and of a lower class are much more susceptible to a high anomia state.

**Success**

A third concept related to coaching that has been focus of anomie studies is success. Again, the studies found in this preliminary review stress different aspects of the relation between success and anomie and their results are aligned. Major findings in recent studies show that success orientation has a significant positive (reinforcing) effect on anomie. These finding are easily explained. As success orientation goes up, goals become more difficult to satisfy. Other findings show that if a goal is unachievable, high-status people would be as unable to achieve it as low-status people. So there is some evidence that unlimited or unachievable goals may play a role in the causation of anomie, independent on social class. (Agnew, 1980) (Passas 1990 and 1999)

## Coaching and Anomie in Brazil

Disbelief in change. The fact that authorities loose trust, justice system is outdated, institutions are profoundly weakened in Brazilian society (and there can be parallels to be made with other countries around the world), is the starting point to understand the social incapacity to react to adverse social and economic conditions. Coaches will have to understand the effects of this anomic context over their work. The propensity of individuals to engage in any effort to development or change at the organisation or at the personal level in such a context is definitely affected. To coach a whole person in Brazil today means understanding that the client will engage "in spite of the general belief that nothing changes". The coach's approach (both while contracting and during the process) will have to contemplate this important aspect of the social context.

The most desirable outcome of coaches work and the main reason clients look for coaching services is: action. Clients and the companies they work for (stakeholders) want change; they expect to benefit from the results of coaching process. This paper considers specific situations in which direct clients may not have accessible triggers to move forward with their lives and projects (initially). They work and live in contexts that make them perceive and believe in change differently, or not see how it can effectively happen. At first glance they may not seem or feel capable of reacting. They might not want to hire a coach or they might be resistant - in internal coaching relations. It is true that "action will always look very different for different clients", but one important major finding is that a social condition such as anomie can affect large groups of people and their individual propensity to engage, motivate and commit to change. (Agnew, 1980) A general atitude of misbelief in the feasibility, or in the necessity to act towards positive changes is a significative influence over any substantial moment or decision. Therefore an insightful coach will need to be able to identify and deal with this influences over the clients.

Building commitments. Since in coaching relationships coach and client work together on the client's behalf, it is up to the clients to bring an agenda for change. They should bring desire and qualities such as motivation, commitment to their own choices and decisions, and dedication to their own purpose. Courage is necessary to take risks for the sake of change. Anomic individuals are not coachable: they should be referred to a specialist. However, a client living in an anomic context may present some common behaviours as a result of the influence of the context. They may tend to feel shut-down from communication, to withdraw from it, distrusting and avoiding it. Part of the coach's job is to establish, monitor and maintain connection. It is up to the coach to remain aware and maintain connection through listening, exploring and adjusting. He should be aware and prepared to deal with specific reactions if he works in anomic societies and/or contexts.

The coaching process in anomic contexts will call for the client's inner strength and capacity. The process can help him reconnect with inner core values and build individual solutions independent of harmful environments (not only anomic ones). Coaching is an opportunity to find a way out of this particularly drastic and extremely painful kind of disengagement.

Moral Issues.In professional relations and productive contexts, this concept might be useful to explain why peers, fellows and subordinates do not engage in projects and initiatives, as well as in clearing motivational issues. It is known that leaders claim that by adopting coaching practices in the team, this aids in creating more trustful and engaging conversations with its employees. It helps to support important factors in engaged workplace relationships: making a difference, sharing a purpose and connecting personally. On the opposite extreme this paper presents a concept that explains not only difficulties or coaching resistance, but also moral issues. Anomie has also been seen as a consequence of pressure placed on people in organisations to achieve the unachievable which can lead them to resort to illegal or immoral means.

Two major groups of implications for coaching practice related to this research can be pointed. They come: (i) before and (ii) after contracting the coaching services.

Opportunity to develop adequate business approach. The unwillingness to communicate, the detachment of society, the lack of trust, the absence of hope for a better future are some of the aspects found in anomic individuals, which are unlikely to engage in a coaching process. The concept, as social or individual manifestation, can help us understand coaching commercial opportunities (potential clients and agendas) that are missed or unsuccessful. An anomic individual is not a potential client. As mentioned previously, this person should be referred to a specialist. Still, individuals living and working under anomic conditions and in anomic contexts will suffer influences of this social context and behave accordingly. Further research and deeper investigation might lead us to develop approaches that are more adequate in such contexts, leading us to more successful commercial and working experiences.

After contracting, once the work with clients begins, there are also some implications and applications.

Important connections with the coaching process. Among CCCP guiding principles, "earning the right to advance" would be the principle that would impede the practice of coaching an anomic individual. This could be a situation in which you are hired to coach someone (internal coaching) who is not interested or really does not believe in change at all. This emphasises the importance of strengthening ethical conduct.

Co-creating the relationship and strengthening meaning are two core coaching competencies enacted while clients are affected by anomic contexts.

Context phase demands special attention. "Entry and contracting" can take longer since the client can be extremely distant and disengaged, and/or may be dealing with individuals who are feeling that way. There may be no initial expression of hopes or expectations at all. Even so, it is in the "Developmental frame" component that there shows a big potential for identifying emotional and social capabilities to be used in the future as re-framing sources to eventual anomic contexts. Situation analysis will also allow the coach and client space to collect information that can widen the client's perception of his own individual alternatives to act and

react to social and productive contexts. In an anomic context, to react in a more participative way may be an important differentiating feature.
Content and conduct phase, as practice has proven so far, are more productive the deeper the context phase has been explored. In that sense, there is an emphasis on the need to collect extensive and solid material in the initial phase, strengthening the relation with the anomic client in order to be able to go through the "What matters?" and "What's next?" phases. Lots of feed-forward, reframing, self-appraisal, self-renewal, teachable moments might be necessary in the last phases.
Inner strength, values, goals, life purpose: helping the clients reaction. It is necessary to have inner strength to take risks. The lack of institutional support may have turned clients "excessively" cautious of failing. They may limit their choices and plans to those actions that have a high probability of assurance, safety and success. It is our job to ask them if their alternatives have become limited, and to present them with wider fields of play. If the context is anomic they do not have to respond the same way. The coach may be able to help them find trust, courage and boldness inside themselves. He can partner with them in the exploration of their inner world in the search for references and regulation that is missing in the outside, the anomic context.
It is also the coach's role to help clients to position themselves. While responding in "an anomic collective way", an individual would tend to remain without a specific goal, and therefore be drifting or randomly shifting among options, alternatives and ideas. Establishing a goal raises his chances of making concrete progress. Part of the work will be for the coach to help clients create goals from their plans and intentions. Also, coaching processes can help them relate and accomplish goals created by third parties, or establish limits to goals that are excessive and have been imposed by others. As literature shows, both the absence and the existence of (excessive) goals can be a source of anomia. The best goals are specific, measurable, and there is some way to track or monitor their results. These aspects can be coaching topics and will help the client out of immobility and into concrete action.
Values are either present in or absent from the choices made in everyday life. An anomic context influences individuals to renounce their choices (some of them to the extreme of renouncing life itself) and therefore their daily life (and choices) end up not being linked to their values. A value is honoured or betrayed through life and this is an important material to be worked during coaching. If a client is connected with his core values he will not surrender to anomic context and influences. Helping them find and maintain this connection can be part of the coach's job as well.
Life purpose is exactly what is missing in an anomic individual as defined by Durkheim. Life purpose is one important and central topic in coaching practice. A coach accomplishes his work when he succeeds in helping clients using their talents and respect their unique way of learning, living their lives, increasing their experience, and getting in touch with their wisdom. Living a fulfilled life is the opposite of being anomic. A coaching practice in an anomic society cannot renounce special attention to clients' life purpose.
Building a tool for coaches. One final contribution of this work to coaching practice is the one that follows. The two Srole Scales, presented below, might be developed into some assessment test used to support coaches in identifying if a client is anomic or working in an anomic context. (Srole,1956) They are widely used for research purposes as questionnaires. The building of individual parameters would help coaches applying the questions and identifying their client's "anomia degree". This still requires further research, test and practice in order to be accepted as a professional tool for coaches.

Table 2.
*Srole Scales* (Srole,1956)

**General**

**Work**

1. I feel no one really cares much about what happens to me
1. These days I get the feeling that in business, individuals are just not a part of things
2. The life of the average person is getting worse, not better
2. The life of the average person in business is getting worse, not better
3. These days I don't know whom I can depend on
3. These days in business, I don't really know whom one can depend on
4. These days I get the feeling that I'm just not a part of things
4. I feel no one in business really cares much about what happens to individuals
5. I get the feeling that life is not very useful
5. I get the feeling that life at work is not very useful
6. No one cares what happens, when you get right down to it
6. I find it hard to be hopeful for the future of the world the way things look now
7. People don't really care what happens to the next person
7. In this organisation no one cares what happens, when you get right down to it

8. It is hardly fair to bring a child into the world the way things look now
8. People in business don't really care what happens to the next person

## Conclusions and Recommendations

organisationsResearch reveals an increase in organisations beginning to link coaching activities to business results and a rise in the use of coaching in leadership development strategies. While in the global scenario the industry appears better defined than in past years, it is believed that it has not yet reached maturity and will continue to change with the fast-moving demands of the 21st century. How about Brazil? How do Brazilian coaches respond at the same time to this global demand while dealing with an anomic context?

The Brazilian market for coaching has been growing at high rates. The practice grows in presence and in importance. The qualification and awareness of Brazilian coaches to face this challenges is yet to be proven.

Coaching happens at the personal level. Anomic contexts affect subjective conditions, mainly the individual's sense of attachment to society, and therefore should be used to explore and understand behaviour of people. Independent of the degree that is observed, whether superficial or pathological, human interaction is deeply affected by anomie.

Preliminary findings of this paper suggest that when we commit ourselves to coaching the "whole" person, we should include this particular source of social influence as a possible factor to be influencing our client's response. Anomie is a phenomenon that can influence the subject, nature and quality of the response to change stimulus, to questioning, to motivation, and many other aspects related to clients´ values and ethical inputs. Therefore, anomic contexts must be identified as soon as possible and taken into consideration in coaching processes. Building individual strategies and capacities to act towards desired goals is what coaching is about. In anomic contexts, by partenering with a coach, the individual will notably differentiate his capacity to interpret the surrounding reality and to build adequate strategies.

The main conclusion taken from this preliminary work to the practice of coaching is not exactly related to anomie but to the essence of coaching practice. Although this brief and initial study has reinforced the relevance of (i) the general lack of trust in laws, justice, institutions; (ii) the general feeling of being deprived of shelter and protection from state and institutions; and (iii) the decrease of hope and faith in the future as a common society; to clients propensity to engage, the coaching process itself remains the same in anomic contexts. In such a context, coaches' work can gain special importance on helping the client connect with his own core values and life purposes, independent of what is going on around him. It can be challenging, but absolutely necessary both at the individual and at the collective levels. Coaching can definitely be an effective and resourceful tool in these contexts.

Many questions remain to be answered and they represent a meaningful research agenda. The literature research was far from extensive and raised a huge amount of other aspects to be explored. It is my intention to improve not only this draft version, but to go on researching the subject and its applications to the field of coaching.

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# Executive Coaching and Artificial Intelligence: the Impact of Emerging Technology on Evolving Practice

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**Abstract:** As Executive Coaching works to accommodate greater complexity, artificial intelligence moves into a "third wave" of building and adapting meta-models. The application of these models will allow coaches to visualize and gain insight about coaching ecosystems. This literature review takes stock of current research and practice problems and suggests applications of emerging technology.

**Keywords:** Executive Coaching, Artificial Intelligence, General Systems Theory

## Introduction

In reviewing the literature within the fields of executive coaching and artificial intelligence, there is meaningful contrast between the goals and aspirations of each field. Executive Coaching has a great wealth of wisdom and practical knowledge while the practice proves difficult to conceptualize and study effectively. Artificial Intelligence, on the other hand, is a field built around the uses of data while striving to approach a semblance of wisdom and practicality. This integrative literature review will examine both fields with the goal of imagining a set of conditions, both theoretical and practical, that would allow emerging technologies to enhance and support the practice of Executive Coaching.

## Methodology

This study follows the methods of an integrative literature review (Torraco, 2005) in highlighting critical areas of focus in two fields of literature—Executive Coaching and Artificial Intelligence—and attempting to integrate them with the conceptual structure of General Systems Theory. In framing the integrative process, essential questions can be divided into three categories: research, analysis, and synthesis questions.

*Research Questions*
What are the most pressing challenges faced by researchers and practitioners in the field of Executive Coaching?
How is Artificial Intelligence being used? How might it continue to evolve?

*Analysis Questions*
Imagining larger systems and networks that contain these Executive Coaching challenges, where are they located and how do the interact with other system components?
What are the specific mechanisms used in emerging technology to solve problems?

*Synthesis Questions*
What are potential connections between components of an Executive Coaching system?

What connections exist now that could be enhanced?
What are specific applications of these emerging technologies that could remediate issues in the field of Executive Coaching?

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Google Scholar and EBSCOhost were used to identify literature that gave either a comprehensive overview of the field or described emerging trends. Keywords included combinations of: executive coaching, effectiveness, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and deep learning. Google searches were used to identify technology platforms that incorporate a coaching aspect.

## Review of the Literature

**Research and Practice in Executive Coaching**

The first system we can imagine is the system we are currently engaged in, which is a system of feedback and research about the field of Executive Coaching. In examining the literature on executive coaching, there is an often noted tension between research and practice. For researchers, the nature of the work creates a variety of obstacles to conducting research that meets the standards held by the social sciences. Some of the issues include:

- Small sample sizes and weak statistical methods (Joo, 2005)
- Lack of conceptual clarity about essential components of coaching research, such as differentiating between competency and process (Maltbia, Marsick & Gosh, 2013)
- The general inadequacy of self reports (McKenna, 2009)
- The possibility that replicating research in a complex and context driven field may never be possible (MacKie, 2014)

While researchers note the difficulty of engaging in research, practitioners face issues that, though not formal research, are similarly concerned with the use and management of information and insight. Some of these questions include:

- The need to demonstrate efficacy
- Questions of specialization and industry expertise
- Addressing coach and coaching methodology fit
- The need for greater individualization and personalization (Forbes.com, 2018)

**Describing Coaching**

A review of the literature showed a variety of ways to organize the practice of coaching. The coaching process can be described in terms of the larger philosophy or paradigm that drives it, such as psychodynamic, behaviorist, person-centered, cognitive therapeutic, or systems oriented (Peltier, 2011). These philosophies are each a way of organizing a theory of change as it relates to behavior, learning, and development. Another strategy is grouping coaching models into similar categories, such as cognitive, goal setting, strengths coaching, solutions based, developmental and competency based, diagnostic and assessment based, self-awareness, and restorative (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). Similarly, we can examine coaching approaches and look for common elements between them, such as goal-setting, self-reflection, behavioral change, situational analysis, time frame and relational processes (Schutte & Steyn, 2015).

Executive Coaching can also be understood as the development and enactment of coaching competencies (Maltbia et al., 2013). Other researchers have focused on different ways of measuring coaching outcomes or different ways of understanding stages of the coaching cycle or phases of the coaching relationship (Feldman et al., 2015). The context of the coaching has also been explored, in terms of connecting with the organizational goals, understanding and agreeing upon the purpose of the coaching (Maltbia et al., 2013), and identifying supports and resources within the organization (McKenna, 2009). Considerable attention has been paid to ways of understanding the client, in terms of their readiness for the coaching process, the needs that will addressed be in coaching, and as a reflective tool within the process.

The history of executive research has also been described, as moving from focusing on knowledge and tools, to learning and development processes, to finally dealing with complexity and finding balance (Schutte & Steyn, 2015). Others have proposed meta-categories for the research, including antecedents, processes, and outcomes (Joo, 2005) and measures, moderators, and results (Grover & Furnham, 2016).

At this conceptual level, there is a lack of clarity about the interactions and relationship between the components. For example, there are unclear distinctions between competencies and components of a process (Maltbia et al., 2013). Additionally, while meta-categories like measure, moderator, and result seem to be comprehensive, it remains unclear whether they have any utility beyond simply containing a large amount of research.

Working towards an artificially intelligent system, questions about conceptual clarity and consistency may become less important—we can imagine a machine working to manufacture rules and discover relationships which are analogous to concepts. The more important question may become, in this imagined system, what do we know and how can we collect more data about more variables? A systematic inventory of variables used in Executive Coaching research has already been attempted (Grover & Furnham, 2016), but a wholistic or systemic understanding of these variables remains elusive.

How can these variables be organized in a way that allows them to be used systemically? As a social science, the study of Executive Coaching employs quantitative and qualitative measures. Many of the quantitative instruments seek to precisely understand some quality of the client—e.g. their readiness for coaching, self-efficacy, thinking style, personality type, etc. Other instruments examine the relationship between coach and client, such as the Working Alliance Inventory (Horvath & Greenberg, 1989). Still others look at the relationship between the client and the organization, such as the Leadership Practice Inventory (Kouznes & Pozner, 2003). Many instruments use surveys or questionnaires while others employ interviews, like the Subject-Object Interview (Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan,, Goodman, & Felix, 2011), or narratives, like the Adult Attachment Projective (West, 2001). Coaches and researchers can also use linguistic analysis to measure, for example, developmental levels. Qualitative measures include self-reports of satisfaction with the coaching process, case studies, measuring the completion of a process, and peer feedback. Coaches use reflective tools like journaling and creative activities like theater, painting, or autobiography, all of which can result in artifacts used for research.

There are several possibilities to explore in considering the evolution of coaching research. One possibility is that methodologies are evolving and more complex insights require more complex data, as in the use of Lectical analysis to determine developmental levels using algorithmic analysis of writing samples (Dawson, Fischer & Stein, 2006). Another is the evolution of instruments that more fully utilize the potential within emerging technology. As the tools to create and analyze narratives using a variety of media continue to evolve, so does the possibility that these narratives can be used as a way of collecting data that would normally be contained in a questionnaire.

The data collected in coaching research is used to measure the effectiveness of the coaching, a way of justifying the coaching or demonstrating a return on investment, as a diagnostic to frame the goals of the coaching process, a reflective tool for the client's self awareness, or some combination of all of these. While these data points describe the elements of a system, they represent individual moments within the functioning of the system. Whether the system is conceived of as an organization or the psychological systems within an individual, the methodologies used limit our ability to perceive the dynamic, chaotic, flowing nature of the system to snapshots.

One exploration of the systemic impact of Executive Coaching is a study of the effect of developmental coaching on an organization using social network analysis (O'Connor & Cavanagh, 2013). Researchers used network analysis to analyze the positivity or negativity of interactions of people within the organization, including those who were not being coached, showing that improvements in individual measures could have a broader impact on the organization. This helps frame the question, which will be addressed later in this article, of how we conceive of a systemic practice of coaching that is meaningful and valuable.

**Case Studies of Coaching and Technology**

There are a wide variety of examples of applications of coaching principles to new technologies and technology platforms. These include health and fitness applications, voice coaching, financial and entrepreneurial coaching, and more general coaching applications. In the case of health coaching, there many platforms that focus on a specific health measure or cluster of measures. These include blood sugar in relation to diabetes management, pedometers as they relate to general fitness, and platforms built around managing blood pressure or weight. There are other coaching platforms that rely on self-reporting of substance abuse, stress, or depression. These platforms use a variety of strategies like goal setting, regular encouragement or reminders, and sharing information with a social network. In more specialized applications, athletes receive feedback based on video of a specific movement or suggestions about the behavior of an athletic team using different strategies. A key component of these facilitated coaching tools is the availability of data.

Orai is a coaching app that helps users speak more effectively by analyzing recordings of their voice and suggesting exercises based on the results. Once the vocal problem has been identified, the app guides the user through prescribed exercises and monitors their progress. PocketConfidant uses a Chatbot interface to take users through self-awareness and goal setting exercises. It also provides organizations with anonymous data about how users within the organization are using the app. Similarly, Unstuck is a website and app that helps users identify issues, set goals, and connect with resources to solve those problems.

BetterUp is a coaching platform that provides support to organizations looking for coaching programs. The platform uses psychological instruments to match coaches and clients and facilitates the videoconference conversations and text-based conversations, while aslo providing "micro-learning" video modules. BetterUp, like PocketConfidant provides a dashboard for managers to view participation and feedback data, promising customization to meet specific business challenges.

Examining these applications and platforms, there is a common set of tools:
- Monitoring and accountability using "Internet of Everything" connected devices or self reports
- Facilitation of a process (e.g. setting goals, reflective prompts, etc.)
- Collecting diagnostic data and feedback
- Conversations with a coach or chatbot
- Organization-level data and analysis

To understand the significance of these tools, and the potential for developing new tools, it is important to explore the field of Artificial Intelligence more generally.

**Defining Artificial Intelligence**

Definitions of artificial intelligence evolve and change often (Russell & Norvig, 2016). From one perspective, artificial intelligence is the pursuit of technology that attempts to simulate the cognitive processes of humans. Considering Artificial Intelligence as a field, it is the discipline focused on creating technology that can make optimal decisions without complete information or without explicitly being taught how to do so.

Artificial Intelligence is rapidly evolving, with new ways of framing the problems that can be solved and new ways of solving them. Artificial Intelligence can be envisioned in three waves, as a way of understanding the next step in its evolution (Hulburt, 2017). The first wave, handcrafted knowledge, works with systems that have clear rules and a defined scope. The second wave, statistical learning, is good at making predictions and classifying data. The third wave is contextual adaptation where the technology will build and improve the models it uses to make decisions.

The examples in the cases studies are mostly first wave technologies—the system is given a set of rules to follow that shape the experience of the user. Second wave technology, might be helpful in predicting, for example, the best coach for an individual client. A machine learning algorithm could take a large amount of data about clients, coaches, and coaching outcomes and learn to make predictions about fit, but it is not clear how large the dataset would need to be to do this. The application of third wave artificial intelligence is explored in the findings of this review.

**Emerging Technology**

Outside these examples, there are a number of emerging technologies, some of which utilize artificial intelligence, which may be incorporated into a systemic coaching process. Machine learning, as a second wave technology, is a constellation of technologies that are able to learn to make predictions after looking for patterns in large amounts of data. Applications include self-driving cars or facial recognition. Predictive modeling, as an iteration of machine learning, seeks to build models that can make accurate predictions. Structural equation modeling looks at data with many variables and try to infer causal connections between variables. Natural language processing is a branch of machine learning that tries to make sense of natural language in meaningful and useful ways.

Some potentially relevant applications of machine learning are using facial recognition algorithms to measure emotions from visual data or sentiment analysis to measure emotions within text. Preference clustering can group users into groups and predict the behavior of those groups. Hierarchical complexity is a tool that looks for hierarchies of meaning and has been used to infer developmental levels.

There are other technologies that do not use artificial intelligence directly but are significant to the question of understanding emerging technologies. One such category is the technology that allows people to make, edit and share stories using a variety of media. There are also emerging technologies that explore new ways to visualize and map data. The internet of everything means that devices will collect data about nearly every human activity and enable constant communication. Neuroimaging and other ways of monitoring biorhythms is becoming easier and cheaper.

How might these technologies be integrated with systems that support learning and development? Imagining a system that was able to collect and analyze large amounts of data about the coaching process, how would it change the practice? What would it mean for some of the fundamental assumptions we make about Executive Coaching?

## Conceptual Framework

With these questions in mind, the task of reconciling the fields of Executive Coaching and Artificial Intelligence has not just the potential of imagining the practical application of new technology, but also resolving some of the epistemic questions surrounding research and practice. As new technology changes both what we know and how we know it, the epistemological ground on which both research and practice are based must shift as well. This necessity is illuminated by questions in the research literature, the development of new technology, and also increasing doubt about the field of psychological research as a whole (John, Loewenstein & Prelec, 2012). As a profession which helps clients facing rapidly shifting landscapes, which also faces analogous shifts of its own, it is important to ask what knowledge and ways of knowing should be privileged and to take an active role in answering this question.

It is also important to recognize the impulse within the field of adult learning, and science as a whole, towards reification and reductionism (Fenwick, 2000). In an effort to provide meaning and clarity, we risk eliminating the complexities that are most essential and meaningful. In dealing with complex systems, and by extension discussing complexity, we must necessarily patch together formal, informal, and symbolic language and, in doing so, acknowledge our inability to escape ambiguity (Alhadeff-Jones, 2013).

### General Systems Theory

In general systems theory, a system is "an organized whole in which parts are related together, which generates emergent properties and has some purpose" (Skyttner, 2005). Much attention has been paid to describing the properties of systems that would help identify them. These properties include interdependence of the components of a system, the irreducibility of a system (it is greater than the sum of its parts), entropy, hierarchies, inputs and outputs, goal seeking, and regulation or transformation to meet those goals (Skyttner, 2005). These properties help begin to frame questions about how coaches and researchers might interact with and study systems. For example, where do we see these properties in our work? What hierarchies of systems exist and how could we describe the ways they interact? When might the system transform an input into an output? What interdependencies might exist that we may not be aware of?

There are also principles of systems (Alhadeff-Jones, 2008), which offer further assistance in framing coaching systems. Using the Systemic-Organizational Principal, what preferences does the system have for scale, whether they are spatial scales (interpersonal/institutional, group, institutional, cultural, societal, etc.) or temporal scales (moment, lifetime, historical period, etc.). The Hologrammic Principle helps us question the relationship between parts and wholes. When is something considered specific, individual, or complete? How do the parts relate to the whole? How do we decide what is generalizable and what is an isolated incident? The Principle of Self-regulation allows us to ask questions about the balance the system is moving towards. How might we describe homeostasis and who might it be maintained by the system?

Answering these questions is necessarily ambiguous and this ambiguity allows the possibility of reframing the way coaching systems are understood. The ambiguity within the systems perspective also invites a provocative question: Could we imagine a scenario in which emerging technologies made our understanding of these systemic issues ambiguous in a different way? Le Moigne, as an original architect of General Systems Theory, conceived of a systemic model of research that had three main subsystems: philosophers, researchers, and practitioners (van Gigch & Le Moigne, 1989). Philosophers work out how to make models while researchers construct models. Practitioners then use the models to solve problems. There are a variety of points of feedback, such as philosophers interrogating the practitioner's methodology.

Imagining a future where third wave Artificial Intelligence becomes an integral tool for the research and practice of Executive Coaching, allows for a provocative answer to our provocative question. If machines develop the ability to build and use structures that are analogous to the models now developed by philosophers and researchers, could we conceive of a separate, perhaps parallel system that included only practitioners and third wave machines?

## Findings

From this conceptual framework, imagining a future in which the mechanisms of research have shifted radically, we can engage in a thought experiment about the future applications of new technologies. These ideas are presented in part as a piece of a what could become a design process for developing new technology, but mostly as a form of analogical thinking. If some of these technologies did exist, how would it change the way we coach and think about coaching? What would it mean for the models or training programs that support Executive Coaching? What would it mean for coaching research?

### Potential Applications and Implications for Coaching

*Narrative Making*
The ways in which we will be able to tell stories will change and grow, allowing for the use of new media. This media will be rich with data and coaches will use narrative and storytelling intentionally as a diagnostic and coaching heuristic.

*Preference Clustering*
Large and small decisions within the coaching process will be collected as data. Analysis of this

data will help create recommendations about coaching moves that will be personalized to individual clients and situations.

*Diagnostic Instruments*
Diagnostic instruments will be embedded in passive data systems, allowing for continuous streams of information about aspects and qualities of the client, coaching process and organization. Constructs like self-efficacy or thinking style will be used by coaches as dynamic variables instead of snapshots or benchmarks.

*In Process Functions*
Similar to the existing capability of translation software to translate an ongoing conversation, analytics will be available to coaches within the coaching conversation. This will allow coaches to make decisions using “live” data, which might augment or support their intuition.

*Visualization and Mapping*
Visualizing data and the systems that contain them will evolve, allowing visualization tools to adapt to specific context and audiences. Coaches will leverage this tool, as a way of understanding and engaging with systems, as a key component of their coaching process.

*Structural Equation Modeling*
The evolving use of Structural Equation Modeling will decrease the cognitive load for coaches and clients in hypothesizing correlations. Unexpected correlations will present themselves, and encourage a focus on discovering new inputs. Coaches will need to manage large amounts of data as well as analysis as part of their work.

*Process Facilitation*
As coaching technology incorporates more tools, access points, and data points, the coaching process well change. Parts of the process will be facilitated by machines and coaches will make strategic decisions about how this happens.

*Neuroimaging and Biorhythms*
Neuroimaging will become cheap and ubiquitous, allowing coaches to see changes in the brain and body in real time. Decisions that coaches make about, for example, what questions to ask at a specific moment in a coaching session, will be influenced by this data.

*Natural Language Processing and Linguistic Analysis*
Advancements in Natural Language processing will mean there will be little difference in spoken, written, or typed language. Our ability to analyze and make use of this data will improve, and coaches will be experts in language and linguistic analysis as a way of understanding intra- and interpersonal systems.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Imagining a technological system that could incorporate a wide range of variables and data helps frame new questions about the theory and practice of executive coaching. Rejecting a reactionary stance, which might portend the end of theory or the end of coaching, imagining potential applications allows for the development of new conceptual and theoretical approaches to coaching and coaching research. Without the immediate availability of these technologies, their potential allows us to imagine new ways of understanding the systemic nature of Executive Coaching and the implication of systems thinking. Researchers and practitioners have a responsibility to lay the foundation needed for the use of third wave Artificial Intelligence.

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# Gamification as an Enabler for Motivation in Executive Coaching

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**Abstract**

There is a myriad of possibilities in using technology as enablers for executive coaching to optimize performance and enhance engagement. Gamification is explored as a tool to sustain motivation and closely monitor clients' progress towards set goals. Using an integrative literature review methodology, selected literature is reviewed (i.e., gamification, motivation theory and self-directed learning theory) to inform the use of gamification as a tool to help participants remain motivated throughout the coaching process.

***Key Words***: Gamification, Motivation Theory, Self-directed Learning Theory, Adult Learning

## Introduction

This paper provides a theoretical framework for leveraging gamification in the field of executive coaching. As one of leadership development best practices, coaching has gained momentum as more and more organizations face a shortage of talent and are concerned about leadership and key employee turnover. Within less than three decades of existence, the executive coaching (EC) field has rapidly grown to become a multibillion-dollar global market (Armstrong, 2011, p. 183). As the field continues to evolve, the potential application of gamification in the practice of coaching for positive behavioral outcomes warrants further exploration. Scholars and practitioners in this field of executive coaching will benefit from the use of the technology tool to engage people more systemically.

This proposed research paper will present an integrated literature review to demonstrate gamification as an enabling tool in a more holistic, effective coaching process by looking at gamification through the lens of motivation and self-directed learning. Specifically, motivation theories—self-efficacy model, goal-setting theory, attribution theory, and ARCS model—are reviewed to propose a theoretical framework for using gamification to keep clients engaged. Lastly, through the self-directed learning lens, gamification is explored.

### Research Questions

- How does gamification enhance user motivation and engagement? (Provide theoretical framework)
- How does motivation theory support the use of gamification?
- In what ways, do executive coaches draw on self-directed learning theory to help clients learn and change behaviors?

## Methodology

This proposed theoretical paper uses an integrative literature review as the method of choice to ground future research. This approach is a “distinctive form of research that generates new knowledge about the topic reviewed” and provides “review and critique to resolve inconsistencies in the literature and provide fresh, new perspectives on the topic” (Torraco, 2005, pp. 404-405).

The main purpose is to identify empirical studies on gamification in the context of executive coaching. Multiple computerized databases are searched for articles, including ERIC, PsycINFO, PsycNET, ProQuest. In addition, Gottesman Library at Teachers College, Columbia University was leveraged to investigate further on available literature on gamification, motivation and self-directed learning theory to explore the application of gamification to the field of executive coaching.

## Literature Review and Emerging Conceptual Framework

Over the last decade, coaching has gained importance as organizations face the challenges of talent retention, performance optimization, and leadership development. (Peterson, 2009) Building a coaching culture with millennial leaders warrants a more comprehensive use of emerging technology to make the coaching process more interactive and dynamic. The literature reviewed for this paper explores how executive coaches can utilize gamification as a tool to leverage technology to sustain client involvement and motivation.

First, gamification literature reviewed for this paper offers insight into how coaches – educators and facilitators – expect that the game design elements can foster the initiation or continuation of goal-directed behavior, i.e., motivation (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2010). Gamification as “the use of game design elements in non-game contexts” (Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, & Nacke, 2011) has become a popular technique to increase the level of user engagement and motivation in a variety of contexts, within work and education.

Second, considering gamification as a tool, it is then examined through the lens of various motivation theories. The underlying intrinsic motivation are the innate psychological needs for competence and self-determination, and the effects on intrinsic motivation of external events such as the offering of rewards, the delivery of evaluations in the form of feedback, the setting of goals, and other motivational inputs are a function of how these events influence a person’s perceptions of competence and self-determination. As such, various motivation theories are examined to gain a deeper understanding of the interplay between the motivation and the gamification and the use of gamification in the context of executive coaching.

Lastly, Garrison’s multidimensional and interactive model for self-directed learning offers explanation in why game design elements can be effective tools for executive coaches as various game design elements can be used to strengthen different dimensions of learning. Coaching process can be enhanced with the effects of external factors, such as badges, points, performance graphs.

## Literature Review

Areas of literature review include Gamification, Motivation theories, and Self-Directed Learning. While gamification may not be seen as a concept with inherent qualitative aspects, it is the area that calls for more robust qualitative research to better understand the role of contextual, social, and situational components. It is not possible to determine whether a given system is "a gamified application" without taking into consideration the designers' intentions or the user experiences and enactments. Motivation theories ----- A deeper understanding of motivation theories -- what motivates users -- can help situate the gamification in different contextual, social, and situational aspects of game design elements. SDL will help probe deeper into how gamification can be used an effective tool to engage users, i.e., adult learners, and subsequently improve performance.

**Gamification.** Gamification is defined as "the use of design (rather than game-based technology or other game-related practices) elements (rather than fully developed games) characteristic for games (rather than play or playfulness) in non-game contexts (regardless of specific usage intentions, contexts, or implementation media)" (Deterding et al., 2011, p. 5). While this definition of the gamification has been most commonly and widely used, there have been attempts to build deeper from the building blocks of gamification to the process of the gamification. Therefore, gamification can also be "the process of making activities in non-game contexts more game-like by using game design elements" (Sailer, Hense, et al., 2017).

Key research in gamification have markedly been quantitative studies in which researchers conducted experimental designs, designed to provide summaries of data that support generalizations about the phenomenon under such types of studies. In Rieber et al's study (2008), the study was done using mixed methods. It is worthwhile to note the differences in the results of the quantitative and qualitative study. From the quantitative phase of the game, the findings indicated the following: the game interfered with explicit learning in which posttest scores for those who received the game context scored lower and demonstrated less confidence. However, participants in game context had a higher level of enjoyment and if given both game and metaphor, participants scored better on tacit learning. From the qualitative study, in contrast to the quantitative results, four participants found visual metaphors useful. Yet, participants had difficulty in focusing their attention on how to manipulate the task to learn more about the content. This study illustrates the significant role played by an outside agent in helping the learner to make use of the simulation/game to learn about the science content. The findings can help guide designers to consider how to effectively balance the demands of motivation and experiential and reflective cognition. The use of a game may increase learners' engagement, but it may distract their learning away from the intended instructional goals (Riber et al., 2008).

In Sailer et al.'s study (2017), the results indicate that certain game design elements address specific psychological needs. The game design element group with badges, leaderboards, and performance graphs were found to strengthen competence need satisfaction and autonomy need satisfaction while avatars, meaningful stories, and teammates enhanced social relatedness need satisfaction. The findings were consistent with theoretical considerations about the potential of badges, leaderboards, and performance graphs to act as feedback elements, thereby addressing the experiences of competence.

Most of the currently available gamification literature focuses on studying the effectiveness of game design elements in promoting certain behavioral outcomes (Hamari et al., 2014), without taking into full account the psychological mechanisms that may account for these effects. There is also a lack of insight into whether game elements such as badges, leaderboards, performance graphs, or avatars are suitable for a given context, or how they should be implemented (Deterding, 2015). Table 1 illustrates the commonly used definition of basic game design elements. To gain a better understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying gamification, researchers have attempted to investigate the effects of individual game elements on user motivation and performance. While gamification has potentials to increase user engagement and improve motivation and performance, without a deeper understanding of how gamification affects individual motivational needs, the concept of gamification may not be used most effectively in learning contexts.

| **Author/Source** | **Term(s)** | **Description** |
|---|---|---|
| Bunchball, 2010; Educause, 2011 | Points | Tokens that can be collected by users, which can be used as status indicators, or to spend on virtual goods or gifting. |
| | Badges | Trophies that appear as icons or logos on a webpage that signify a user's accomplishments of a particular activity such as completion of a project. |
| | Leaderboards | High-score tables that indicate an individual's performance compared with other users |

Table 1.
*Definitions of Basic Game Design Elements*

In Mekler et al.'s study (2017), the findings suggested that game elements did not significantly affect competence or intrinsic motivation, irrespective of participants' causality orientation (e.g., tendency or preference to be more autonomous vs more controlled). None of the game elements significantly affected intrinsic motivation or need satisfaction, nor was this further moderated by participants' causality orientation (e.g., autonomy vs controlling.) While points, levels and leaderboards increased tag quantity, the lack of effects on intrinsic motivation, need satisfaction suggest that they may have functioned as extrinsic incentives. Points, levels, and leaderboard still seem to be an effective means for promoting performance quantity.

**Motivation Theories.** There are several motivation theories to review in order to understand the interplay between the motivation and the gamification and the use of gamification in the context of executive coaching.

### ***Self-Efficacy Theory***

According to Moorhead (2007), a person's self-efficacy is "that person's beliefs about his or her capabilities to perform a task" (p.66). A person with high self-efficacy believes that he or she can perform a task well whereas a person with low self-efficacy tends to doubt his or her abilities to carry out a task well. People's degree or pride or disappointment is affected by their self-efficacy, the extent to which they feel that they can still meet their goals even if they failed to do so in the past (Moorehead, 2007, p.143). The concept of self-efficacy is often incorporated in many other models that will help understand what motivates people and how to keep them motivated.

### ***Goal Setting Theory***

Edwin Locke's (1968) goal setting theory of motivation assumes that behavior is a result of conscious goals and intentions (p.157). Goals of learning play a key role in influencing the level of a student's intrinsic motivation. By setting goals for clients, coaches should be able to influence their behavior. Given the premise, it is imperative for clients to understand the processes through which goals are set and achieved. The implications of goal setting are especially important for online learners as distance learning requires much of self-direction and self-regulation. Without goals, it is easy for clients to fall out of the radar and lose interests.

### ***Keller's ARCS Model***

Keller (1983) has defined the motivation as "the magnitude and direction of behavior. In other words, it refers to the choices people make to what experiences they will approach and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect." In his "ARCS Model of Motivation", he defines four necessary components as the motivational elements of instruction: engaging and maintaining student interests, relating course content to student interests, enhancing student confidence in understanding course content and satisfying coachees' inquisitiveness related to information thus encouraging coachees' active involvement in learning. These elements were summarized as (A) attention, (R) relevance, (C) confidence, and (S) satisfaction.

A modified version of the ARCS Model considers the nature of motivation in the online classroom. Keller indicated that attention problems occur when coachees work independently. In the computer-based environment coachees may not attend to important information because they do not find independent work interesting. Content in the online setting must be presented in ways that help or motivate coachees to attend to the information. Attention also involves engaging the learner by the use of interesting graphics, animation or any kind of event that introduces conflict. Other components of attention include mystery as unresolved problems that stimulate a sense of inquiry and variability as the user adapts and loses interest over time (Keller & Suzuki, 2004).

The level of relevance any one student attaches to instruction will differ because of their individual background and personal interests. Application is needed to promote learning by utilizing coachees' prior knowledge and making sure that personal connections to the course content are made (Hodges, 2004). Relevance involves providing consistent goals, ideally intrinsic in nature, that are connected to the learners' past experiences and future goals and are compatible with their individual learning styles. This factor has links to the Goal Theory which assumes that establishing goals to be obtained motivates behavior. These may be learning goals or performance goals and they can be proximal, those that can be achieved in a reasonable time frame, or distal, those that will be achieved in a long period of time. In addition to setting clear goals, it also says that coachees need to be kept informed of their progress towards meeting these goals (Hodges, 2004).

***Wlodkowski's Time Continuum Model of Motivation***

"The primary value of the Time Continuum Model of Motivation is that it is an organizational aid." (Wlodkowski, 1985, p. 67) The model draws on approaches from linguistics, cognitive psychology, and motivation research. Wlodkowski's Time Continuum Model of Motivation identifies three critical periods in the learning process where motivation is most important. Those periods are the beginning of the learning process, during the learning process, and at the end of the learning process.

The factors to be considered at the beginning of the learning process are attitudes and needs. When planning the beginning of a learning experience, the designer should consider how the instruction will best meet the needs of the learners, and how a positive learner attitude can be developed. Wlodkowski (1985) provides many strategies to address learner attitude. The strategies are centered on easing into the course with icebreaker activities, stating clear objectives for the course, and various strategies to help the learners develop a clear understanding of what will be required to be successful in the course. It is suggested that when possible, the instruction should focus on the physiological needs of the learners and experiences familiar or relevant to the learners. The instruction should allow for choice and self-direction in assignments. A needs assessment should be performed prior to developing the instruction to aid in appropriate planning. Stimulation and affect are to be considered during the learning experience (Hodges, 2004, p.3-4).

Wlodkowski suggests several ways to maintain stimulation of the learners during the instructional experience. To maintain a stimulating learning environment, learner participation via questions, humor, varying presentation style using body language and voice inflection, and the use of different modes of instruction from lecture to group work to class discussion are strategies suggested. The primary strategy used here is to make the learning experience personalized and relevant to the learner (Hodges, 2004, p.3-4). The end of the learning experience should focus on competence and reinforcement. Frequent feedback and communicating learner progress are the author's main methods for developing confidence in the learners (Hodges, 2004, p.3-4). Wlodkowski (1985) addresses reinforcement by relating the natural consequences of learning to the learner and providing rewards in some instances.

**Conceptual Framework**

In order to bring together various theories to understand why and how gamification can potentially be an enabler in the executive coaching field, Garrison's multidimensional and interactive model of self-directed learning (1997) is used as a conceptual framework. The model integrates three dimensions: *self-management* that acknowledges the social milieu in which the learner's interactions takes place and shapes the learner's understanding of contextual conditions, which translate into increased responsibilities for the learner; *self-monitoring* as the learner's responsibility to monitor his/her cognitive and metacognitive processes; *motivation* involves what influences people to participate in a self-directed learning activity. Figure 2 illustrates the interplay among three dimensions. As such, motivation and responsibility are reciprocally related. The interactions among three different dimensions influence the learner in developing a sense of self-direction for setting and achieving meaningful outcomes. Albeit briefly, Garrison touches upon the concept of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Garrison argues that to foster intrinsically motivated learning that brings about meaningful outcomes, learners must see "opportunities to share control and to collaborate in the planning and implementation of the learning process." Clients should be given an opportunity to see why such learning is meaningful, "if not to select relevant objectives from among several options, shape approaches, and select appropriate learning tasks." (1997) From the interactive model, Garrison views autonomy as a critical aspect of motivation that sustains and encourages self-direction in learning beyond the imposed learning on learners, through which "authentic self-directed learning becomes self-reinforcing and intrinsically motivating."

Garrison's Three Dimensions of Self-Directed Learning

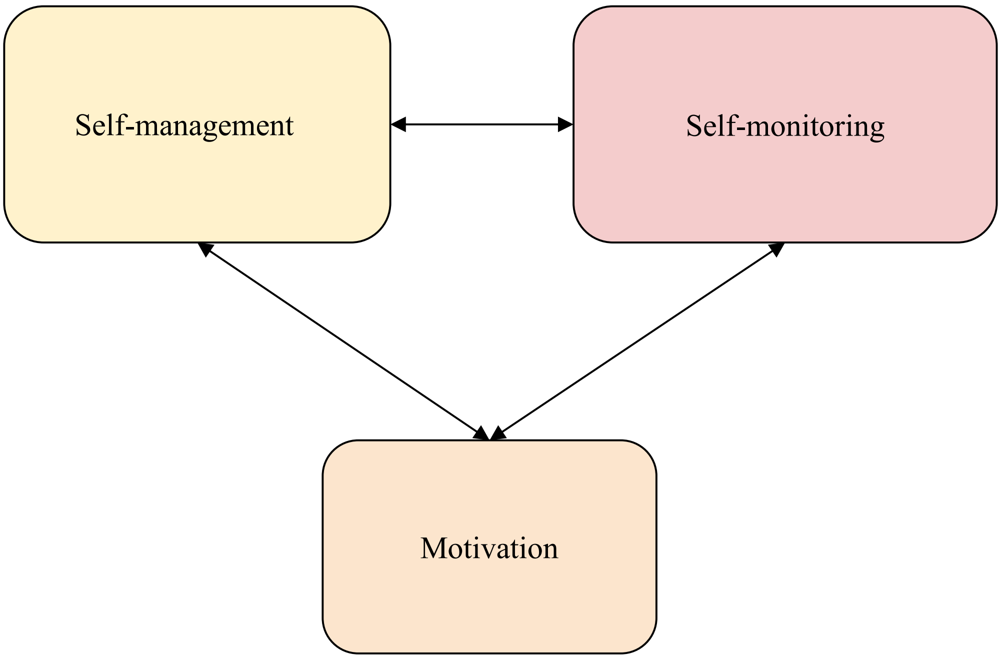


Figure 2
*Garrison's Three Dimensions of Self-Directed Learning model*

## Findings

Preliminary findings suggest that the selected areas of literature have potential connections for creating a comprehensive framework for facilitating whole-person coaching engagement via gamification. First, in investigating the theoretical framework for gamification, prior studies reveal that enriching the environment with gamification modifies the environment, which affects motivational and psychological user experiences. As such, studies indicate that certain game design elements address specific psychological needs. In Sailer et al.'s study (2017), the results indicate that certain game design elements address specific psychological needs. Gamification explored through the lens of self-determination theory indicate that game design elements can act as mechanisms to fulfill psychological needs.

While there is a lack of empirical studies on the impact of gamification on addressing intrinsic motivation, there is a growing body of research, investigating the effectiveness of gamified elements in various settings. Game elements such as points, badges, leaderboards can be tools to engage and motivate clients in a more systematic way. By creating a platform in which executive coaches and clients can monitor and track one's performance together – whether it be a journaling, meditation, recording of emotions, jotting down thoughts, data points are created for executive coaches to better understand clients and also help create a narrative around how clients process coaching in their own distinct ways. It is not the gamification itself that will reinforce one's changed behavioral outcomes, but the process that involves game design elements that can reinforce the behavioral changes.

Second, various motivation theories support the use of gamified elements as an enabler to keep clients engaged. Based on Self-Efficacy Theory, it is critical to explore one's perception about his or her capabilities. Coaches can work toward helping clients identify their perceived strengths and weaknesses, which can be reinforced or strengthened by using gamification, a platform through which one's performance is displayed and monitored. The goals of learning play a key role in influencing the level of one's intrinsic motivation. By utilizing game design elements such as badges and points, executive coaches can positively reinforce executives' behaviors while they may work together on setting and visualizing the goals. Keller's ARCS model also supports the use of gamification in that the four components of the model can be mapped out to certain components of gamification. Gamifying the coaching process with certain elements can enhance clients' motivation and involvement through various mechanisms such as granular feedback, choices, shared goal, and a sense of relevance. The game design element group with badges, leaderboards, and performance graphs were found to strengthen competence need satisfaction and autonomy need satisfaction while avatars, meaningful stories, and teammates enhanced social relatedness need satisfaction. The research findings were consistent with theoretical considerations about the potential of badges, leaderboards, and performance graphs to act as feedback elements, thereby addressing the experiences of competence.

Based on the Continuum Model, executive coaches can leverage gamification in three critical periods: before, during, and after the coaching sessions on a specific task or a goal. From the beginning and moving onto the mid-course completion, coaches may focus on providing extrinsic motivation to clients through points and badges by identifying goals and strengths. Coaches may need to step in to help clients clearly address their intended outcomes and adjust expectations, if needed. During this time, based on the needs assessment using various available tools, coaches may investigate clients' experiences and motivation for their need and desire to be coached. This process enables coaches to provide more individualized, specific feedback through which clients feel heard, and that their needs are being honored. This is also when the Goal Theory may come into play in that coaches need to help clients establish clear goals that can be achieved in a reasonable time frame or in a long period of time. By receiving instant feedback via badges and points, clients can monitor the progress of the potential changes in their behaviors. Points and badges can serve especially effective for clients who may not as receptive or new to being coached. From during the coaching session until the end, coaches may shift their focus on providing intrinsic motivation. By now, coaches have data points from the platform – which is composed of various game design elements – to leverage in understanding clients' behaviors. Through the leaderboard, clients may see how others in similar challenges are performing or responding.

Third, Garrison's Multi-dimensional and Interactive Model indicates that, in order for self-directed learning to occur, there are three dimensions constantly interacting with and influencing each other, that drive a person to develop a sense of self-direction for setting and achieving meaningful outcomes. As indicated in figure 2, it is the interaction among three dimensions – self-management, self-monitoring, and motivation – that lead to continued learning. By gamifying the coaching process, coaching can also be a fun activity, in which clients can enjoy and learn simultaneously. With help of executive coaches, game elements such as badges, points, and leaderboards can create a more interactive, visual process to help clients identify opportunities to learn and continue to grow. This perceived autonomy can also play a significant role in helping clients view learning as self-reinforcing and intrinsically motivating.

Findings from surveying various literature in the areas of motivation and self-directed learning support leveraging the process of gamification as game design elements can reinforce one's learning that can lead to changes in behaviors. The results suggest that gamification can be used to generate diverse game dynamics via rewards, competition, and collaboration. Therefore, it is worth exploring how game design elements can be used as tools to engage clients and keep them interested in the process as well as the outcomes of the coaching. As such, motivation is the recurrent theme across various literature surveyed, and there are various attempts to address how gamification may be used to motivate learner extrinsically as well as intrinsically.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Theoretical foundations for motivation and self-directed learning into existence well before the advent of gamified learning. However, the implications that these models encompass are far-reaching in understanding users in gamified applications as active learners rather than passive learners.

As various models and theories of motivation are examined in this literature review, this overview is important to understand in designing and facilitating the gamified application to meet the needs of users to create a conducive learning environment where users are assessed individually and receive personalized, highly relevant, instant feedback through badges, leaderboards, performance graphs. Designing a coaching process while understanding that the process is fluid and organic, the intentional deployment of game design elements can drive one's intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. There is significant potential to increase user engagement and as a result, improve performance, gamification is the area that calls for more robust empirical studies in the executive coaching field.

This paper is a preliminary literature review with implications for collaboration among game designers, coaches as well as researchers. Tapping into the potential use of gamification and being open to leveraging various game design elements that can provide both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to clients are the first step toward making the coaching process more holistic. For coaches, gamification can serve as an enabler to engage and motivate clients. For researchers, the implication is such that that it will be worthwhile to explore further perceived impact of gamification in the context of executive coaching as there is neither existing body of literature nor empirical studies, linking the two vastly different fields. For organizations, gamifying the coaching process indicates the scalability, if designed properly, that can be used not only for executives but also mid-level managers who may need coaching.

In conclusion, gamification can be a great enabler to enhance engagement by invigorating a process. Game design elements will help keep clients engaged toward achievement as well as competition by achieving clearly defined short-term goals as well as changed behaviors in the long-term.

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# How Manager-as-Coach Practice Can Apply to Law Enforcement Professional Development: An Action Inquiry

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***Key Words:*** Manager-as-coach, coaching, professional development, leadership development and action research
**Type**: Action Research

## Approach/Method

This paper employed an action research method to investigate how managerial coaching can contribute to enhancing leadership capacity in manager's direct reports in a law enforcement agency. This project was part of a larger organization-wide leadership development initiative to foster a more adaptive capacity in people and the organization in order to better respond to vexing challenges facing law enforcement in the 21st century.

Action research (AR) is an overarching family of research methods that focuses on issues important to people inside of where they live and work. The researchers who make up the AR team are stakeholders in the system they seek to understand and change. Thus, they not only have a stake in the outcome of the research, they also participate in the process of planning, observing, action and reflection, taking on a mindset of "learn as we go" through engaging in multiple cycles of action and reflection, in service of the practice knowledge needed (Kuhne & Quigley, 1997; Reason & Bradbury, 2001)

According to Reason and Bradbury (2001), action research strives "to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individuals persons and their communities" (p. 3). As a more democratic and participatory approach to research it reflects a more systemic orientation to learning and change (Burns, 2007). This systemic view is achieved by involving those who participate in the setting and the issues under study in the design and process of the research. In this way it fosters a more diverse set of lenses through which to look at the system in play. By employing multiple cycles of action, the research can be more responsive to the emergent, unpredictable and complex nature of organizational life.

This particular AR project involves five participants from a medium sized municipal police department in California, who volunteered for it--a captain (one of the co-authors, three lieutenants and a sergeant). Using Action Inquiry Method (AIM), a specific method in AR family, it incorporates participatory principles of AR, which strives to embed the process of learning in relevant organizational change efforts through linking this action with deep reflection (Burns, 2007).

Jessica as a co-author of this paper initiated this AIM project as part of MA in Leadership thesis project as one part of the larger organizational initiative to foster a more adaptive capacity in her police agency. As a result of witnessing the positive effect of applying coaching conversation with her direct reports, peers and even her superior, she saw the potential of developing coaching capacity in managers as one pathway in the organizational-wide leadership initiative, which in could contribute to having a positive impact on the way in which the officers and sergeants police the community.

The questions that animated her AIM research project was “How can a manager-as-coach practice be applied . . . to enhance a leadership and management development program for lieutenants and sergeants?” And “When supervising personnel, when is a manager-as-coach approach most effective?”

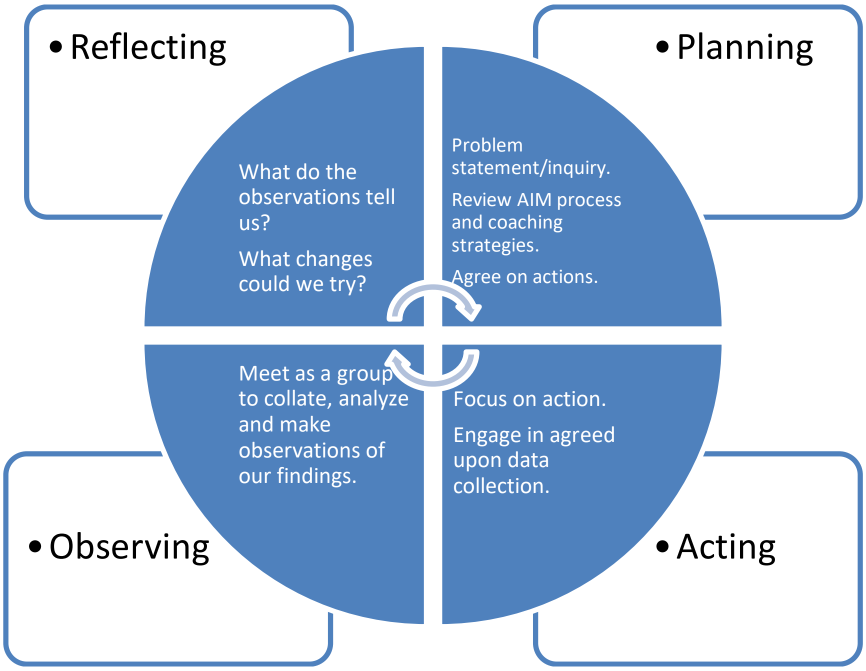
Because Jessica was one of the participants, who had more role authority in the agency, she took extra effort to ensure authentic participation of all researchers. For example, during the reflection meetings she invited the other participants to share their experiences first and encouraged the conversation and discussions to be led by others and not her as the project’s convener. Additionally, Jessica did not express any specific expectations for the outcome of the research. She confirmed with participants that any dissenting opinions would be welcomed, and even encouraged. Other validity procedures the AIM team employed to ensure the quality of the research process included: Using multiple means of collecting data such as reflective journal writing, observations, short interviews, and surveys; focusing on patterns and emerging themes in group discussions during the reflection phases; and asking critical questions about the choices they made and potential consequences when they decide on new actions.

The following is a brief narrative of the research process of the AIM project following the four-phase design described above (see figure 1). In the planning phases participants identified what opportunities existed with specific direct reports and selected specific coaching competencies to practice while having discussions with their direct reports. During and after these meetings, participants made notes regarding the interactions to include the nature and tone of the conversation and the outcome. Participants met together and described the conversations they had with their direct reports and hypothesized the meaning of the outcome. At first, participants found themselves focusing a manager-as-coach approach to officers and non-sworn employees that were struggling with performance. It was observed early on in the research that this approach to managing performance was not consistently beneficial, if at all.

The participants changed their focus to those employees that appeared to have a neutral or positive disposition and were interested in leadership development. Participants compared how they would have approached the conversations in the past as opposed to having a manager-as-coach mindset. The task for the group was to focus more on patterns that emerged through the research and not just on individual experiences. As a result participants were able to identify common themes among all of the participants.

Although the authors acknowledge the limitation of the collection and analysis of empirical data in this research, it should be noted that there were several other factors observed that indicated an improvement in morale and officer-sergeant relationships. One such factor is, as of the writing of this paper, the number of officer rebuttals to evaluations that complained about unfair evaluation procedures decreased by 100% over two years. Although this research project was not specifically aimed at improving morale, the authors argue the quality of the supervisor/subordinate relationship is directly related to creating a culture that supports professional development and positive community relations.

Figure 1:
The model of Action Research used in this project. Created by the co-author.




**Conceptual Framing/Literature Review**

Commensurate with society at large policing in the 21st Century has become more complex than ever before. Nationwide, police officers are being required to respond to a multitude of challenges, and increased complexities both within policing and within society. The rising temperature of race relations between law enforcement and communities of color prompted President Obama to convene a task force of experts to recommend new practices for law enforcement agencies nationwide. One of the areas the final report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) identified as particularly important to address within law enforcement was procedural justice. Procedural justice refers to fairness in the process of how the justice system treats people.

Yet, procedural justice cannot be achieved by providing technical training alone to law enforcement, which is their tendency to do. To implement procedural justice requires more than new skills but rather enhanced cognitive complexity (Kegan, Lahey, Miller, & Fleming 2016), a more adaptive approach to leadership (Heifetz & Linksy, 2002), and a more systemic view of the world (Capra, 2004), is required. In other words, for law enforcement to pursue procedural justice as part of their practice, it would require them to change the way they develop their people, the way they interact and relate to each other, as well as the way they interact with the larger community they protect and serve. By developing more adaptive capacity and leadership in people, and in the culture of the organization is one pathway to sow the seeds of change in law enforcement that procedural justice requires.

As mentioned above, this research project was part of an organization-wide leadership development initiative to develop more effective collaboration, communication, self-awareness and reflection in managers, which would in turn cultivate more capacity for adaptive responses in a profession oriented more toward technical ones. According to Heifetz & Linksy (2002) adaptive response is one when people immersed in adaptive challenges—ambiguous and complex problems with no known solutions, collaborate on finding new solutions requiring new learning.

Because training is ill suited for developing adaptive capacity and leadership in people, managerial coaching was viewed as a viable way to customize the learning and development for officers (Fatien & Otter, 2015). Managerial coaching was chosen over specialized coaching due to budget, the perception of external coaching as a sign of performance deficits, and the desire to foster a culture of learning and development in the organization. While managers would be facilitating learning and development with their staff as part of their managerial responsibilities, learning how to coach would develop their self-awareness, skills of reflection, communication and collaboration.

## Findings

The AIM project presented here provided an experiment about how to bring coaching skills to management, we learned that it was not about "teaching" leadership per se, rather it is about facilitating learning around leadership activities. In this project, over the course of several meetings, managers would meet together with one of the co-authors and learn specific coaching skills and would practice these skills with their direct reports. In subsequent meetings, the participants would reflect on their learning toward improved practice while learning about the effects of this practice on their staff's developmental goals.

In addition to enhanced learning in participants in coaching, they reported a positive shift on the part of their direct reports toward being more learning oriented. The mindset in law enforcement is that failure is not an option. While this may be important in crisis situations in the field, the mindset tends to infiltrate daily organizational life, creating an environment that undermines learning. Engaging in coaching, and identifying activities toward cultivating an environment more conducive to learning, supported them to be a learning organization. Participants also found that by embedding learning in day-to-day activities of managing there was a palpable shift in the organization toward becoming more of a learning organization, in which reflection, experimentation, and positivity were more common behaviors. This led participants to realize that they needed to look at their problems through a larger systemic lens and look for ways to integrate a coaching culture as a vehicle for leadership development. Although this research project specifically examined how manager-as-coach practices can apply to law enforcement professional development, it became apparent that managerial coaching and the organizational culture have a mutually enhancing relationship.

Shortly after the AIM project was completed other initiatives that soon followed that reinforced the effects of the managerial coaching AIM project, and contributed to the emergence of the agency as a learning organization with more adaptive capacity. At the end of this research project, it was identified by the participants that a worthy question for further exploration was, "How do we encourage practices in the police department that support us as a learning organization?" To that end, two particular practices were introduced. For example, a non-critical incident debrief form and process was created to aid patrol teams to review their team's response to incidents that are not necessarily considered "critical." There is a well-established practice in law enforcement for such practices, but mostly for more critical incidences, such as an officer involved shooting. This new process is for the sole purpose of team learning within the more mundane encounters with the community. It encourages officers to facilitate a discussion regarding the events of a response, their role in it, the positive and negative outcomes of the incident and what can be learned from it all. Patrol teams have taken to this new process with enthusiasm and are by in large, self-motivated rather than being imposed by command staff.

Another example of the police department's efforts to support a whole-person approach to leadership development is the initiation of a police chaplain program. A chaplaincy program offers a non-law enforcement resource for well-being and support. One officer told the police chief that having the chaplain available as a resource has changed his life for the better. We noticed a marked improvement in his attitude towards his work and his co-workers as well as an improvement in the quality of his work.

**Conclusions/Recommendations**

Coaching engagements are more effective when they are multi-faceted – specialized (external and internal), managerial (embedded and distributed), and peer (democratized), and when they take place in a conducive organizational culture, which is learning centered and "deliberately developmental" (Kegan et al., 2016). Police legitimacy depends on 21st Century law enforcement leaders that are dedicated to changing the culture of the traditional command and control style of leadership and embrace a systemic change that includes a holistic approach to whole-person development. In this fast-paced world, we need to be mindful not to create an approach that adds a lot more to the plate of those doing the work. Alternatively, we need to create a way to impart coaching competencies as a method of leadership development as a way of doing day-to-day business up and down the chain of command.

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# Looking Outside-In: A context-driven approach to team coaching

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**Abstract**
In keeping with the conference theme of Systemic Coaching, this paper considers the importance, impact, assessment and incorporation of external context to team coaching and proposes a practical framework for coaches to leverage. The role of coach as sense maker of external context is examined. The paper seeks to serve as guidance to team coaches working within an unfamiliar contextual terrain and support them in avoiding the pitfalls of a context oblivious approach.

**Key Words :** VUCA**,** Systemic Team Coaching, Sensemaking, External Context, Activity Theory

## Introduction

While the body of work around team coaching, and coaching in general, has evolved over the last few decades, the role of context in coaching engagements is rarely elaborated upon. In fact, in several prominent coaching frameworks, "context" is either wholly bypassed as a key ingredient in the coaching mix, or is implicitly, almost invisibly embedded in the competencies and skills that a coach needs to have to effectively deliver a coaching engagement. Many coaching frameworks (ICF for example) do not make any reference to context in laying out the core competencies and skills that are required in coaching.

The basic premise of this paper is that, in this hyperconnected VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) world, a context oblivious coaching mindset and approach is both inadequate and dangerously ineffective. Contextual factors are often the hidden gears driving issues and dilemmas that bring individuals and teams to coaching. As coaching evolves as a systemic and holistic discipline, sensemaking of the contextual factors, and keeping them in focus is likely to be a core requirement for effective coaching. Understanding and leveraging context might well be an additional core coaching competency that the field of coaching needs to introduce to help coaches and coachees navigate through the turbulence of this VUCA world.

## Methodology

This paper outlines a practitioner focused approach to incorporate the analysis of external context into team coaching engagements. Based on best practices gleaned from conducting, facilitating and coaching more than 100 teams, this paper distils the experience from these engagements and presents them as an advancement to the body of knowledge of team coaching. The author also conducted an extensive review of the literature around the topic of context in human systems and sense making to frame the core concepts in this paper. Further, a survey was conducted by the author, to assess the relative impact of various factors on the performance of teams, as part of the research approach; key findings from this study are presented in this paper.

## Literature Review / Conceptual Framework

In keeping with the conference theme of **"Systemic Coaching: Whole Person/Whole Organization Engagement"**, this paper explores team coaching context as set of interrelated factors that interact with human systems. This paper, at its core, proposes a framework to analyse external context, as a synthesis of disparate strategic models and approaches, extant in the management literature, but brought together as a connected and unified framework that coaches will find of practical utility in their team coaching engagements.

The term "Outside-In" appears in Peter Hawkins' "Leadership Team Coaching" (2017) as he develops his concepts of the "Five Domains of Focus" that hold the dynamic relationships of internal and external focus and focus on task/performance and process. While writing this paper, my starting point was Peter Hawkins' work, and then building on this from a practitioner's perspective.

I am a big fan of Dr. Amy Edmondson's writings and have drawn from her concept of "Teaming" (2012). In our VUCA world, the fact that team members need to dynamically engage in iterative cycles of communication, decision, action and reflection is something that I have had the opportunity to observe and work with in almost all my team coaching assignments.

Barry Oshry, whose life work has involved developing a holistic understanding of human systems, has been a strong influence on my thinking and approach. His question "Can we humans see the human systems of which we are a part?" in "Leading Systems" (1999) provides the point of departure for the exploration of the nature of "worlds", and therefore the need to understand context external to ourselves.

And, through Karl E. Weick's insights in "Making sense of the organization" (2009), where he explores human organization as "loosely connected" systems that need to be explicitly made sense of, I was able to arrive at my own insights on the of the role of coach as sense maker in this VUCA-world of ours.

Again, as a practitioner team coach, I have applied several strategic analysis models, over the years in deconstructing and making sense of context. I do need to make special mention of the following, that I have almost imperceptibly internalized in my practice over the years.

1. PESTLE, which originally comes from F.J Aguilar's *"Scanning the business environment"*(1967)
2. Kurt Lewin's Force Field Analysis, which he laid out in his 1943 article on "*Defining the Field at a Given Time"*.
3. The works of Michael E. Porter, especially his five forces model, from *"Competitive Strategy"* (2004) that formed the bedrock of strategic analysis over the last few decades.
4. W. Chan Kim & Renee Mauborgne's *"Blue Ocean Strategy"* (2016) which outlines the Eliminate-Reduce-Raise-Create grid
5. Alex Osterwalder's Business Model Canvas, from his book "Business Model Generation"(2010)

A comprehensive resource for strategic models that coaches can tap into is Trompenaars and P.H. Coebergh's "100+ Management Models", something I often find myself referring to.

Finally, though, the glue that holds this all together, and that which has framed the thinking for this paper are the 100+ team coaching engagements and the individual coachees who, I hope, have benefited by my context driven approach to team coaching.

## Findings

### Teams today

Let's step back and take a look at what's happening with teams today, especially in the light of the changing face of change, which we now know by the 4-letter acronym VUCA. The term VUCA, coined by the US Army War College in the 1990s, to describe the dynamic nature of our world today, has caught on in a variety of organizational settings to describe a business and working environment, characterized by

- Volatility : The nature, speed, volume, magnitude and dynamics of change
- Uncertainty : The lack of predictability of issues and events
- Complexity : The confounding of issues and the chaos that surround any organization
- Ambiguity : The haziness of reality and the mixed meanings of conditions

As the global consulting firm Deloitte explained in a 2015 whitepaper:
*"In the VUCA world, companies face increasing demands from customers they've never served with needs they've never had to meet, relentless productivity pressure thanks to competitors with lower costs, and business model threats from upstarts in new sectors. Then throw in other macro trends like the shifting geo-political landscape; the rapid adoption of social, mobile, and cloud-based technologies; and the changing demographics of customers and employees. Welcome to VUCA, the New Level Playing Field …. The challenge facing organizations today is how to anticipate, adapt, manoeuvre, make decisions, and change course as needed in a VUCA world"*

The VUCA-ness of our hyperconnected world has impacted the way teams come together and perform, - a move away from Tuckman's time-tested paradigm of Forming-Storming-Norming-Performing to a more contemporary paradigm of "Teaming". As Dr. Amy Edmondson, the pioneer of the concept, puts it in her path breaking book by the same name, teams today are more likely to function via dynamically organizing around the task while simultaneously evolving to stability through the Tuckman stages. Teams of today are better described as complex adaptive systems rather than stable role-focused entities. The term "complex adaptive systems" describes systems that are dynamic and adaptable, much like those found in nature. They may self-regulate, but also require thoughtful leadership to optimize their potential. Complex adaptive systems such as ecosystems in nature, or the human body or brain are systems with a network of many agents acting in parallel, is constant action and reaction to what other agents are doing. Thus, nothing in the environment is essentially fixed. Like their counterparts in nature, businesses and other organizations, in today's VUCA world, evolve as complex adaptive systems.

Organizations that are likely to live and prosper through the VUCA storm are those that are able to evolve with teaming as an emergent responsive behaviour helping them navigate through the VUCA-ness of our times.

**Implications and questions for coaches**

Given this evolution in teams and times, how does coaching as a discipline need to evolve to match these changing demands? More practically, what are the additional skills that team coaches in particular need to best equip herself/himself with to build awareness, sensitivity and resilience to the VUCA-ness amongst the team and/or individuals being coached ? How does the coach step up to challenge and support the team to make sense of their circumstances? How might she provide the catalytic impetus for the teams to consider the impact of the various factors, visible and invisible that might be impacting their performance and experience ? What might be some of these factors, and how do they show up? How do you start making sense of this VUCA world and frame or reframe your approach to coaching?

**The question of context**

At the core of the question of context lies a very basic human limitation – our inability to see beyond our immediate circumstances, experience and the recency of events; our inability to reframe issues to include wider and perhaps deeply impactful causal factors, that lie external to us. And perhaps, our need to internalize and have ourselves at the center of our world. This is essentially the core problem of context that confronts us as we look to take coaching across different "worlds". Barry Oshry, in his prologue to his powerful work "Leading Systems" notes *" ….I noticed a peculiar paradox. Human systems – organizations, families, nations – in addition to their amazing accomplishments, persist in living out self-limiting and often destructive stories; but members within these systems do not experience themselves as living out any familiar story.*"

Human systems do not exist in a vacuum. They exist in a swirling ocean of factors, and like the proverbial iceberg floating in a vast ocean, we humans see only our own experience, but are more oblivious to the contextual factors that make up for the ocean that the iceberg finds itself melting in. We tend to spend more time working on the tip of our iceberg, and wondering why it is changing so rapidly, and solving for fixing the melting tip. But given our cognitive biases, we fail to pay as much attention to what's causing the metaphoric oceans below to get hotter, which is the actual reason for the iceberg melting in the first place. We miss the underlying reasons, the contextual factors, with our hyper focus on the immediate elements of impact that we can see. And this is where coaching today needs to change in today's VUCA world.

The emergence of systemic coaching over the last decade is a key response from organizations and teams to cope with agility and resilience to the all-pervasive VUCA-ness. Approaches to coaching in our ever-changing VUCA world therefore require the coach to be aware of the dynamic interaction of the task, process, stakeholder, organization, and the environment that these interactions occur within. The team coach, today, more than ever, needs to be significantly more attuned to contextual factors.

**Defining Context**

So, what is "context" after all? The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word "context" as *"The circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood,"* I therefore propose the following working definition of "Context" as applied to coaching: *"The context as applicable to an individual coachee or team refers to the dynamic and continuous interaction of systemic factors arising from the broader external environment, which directly or indirectly impact the experience and performance of the human system – whether at an organization, the team's or individual's level of engagement"*

**Coaches as sense makers of context**

In our age of VUCA, more than ever before, coaches, both in individual and team coaching, need to help the constituents of the human systems that they support make sense of contextual factors and their impact on themselves, their teams and their organization. Sensemaking, as Karl E. Weick and Kathleen M.Sutcliffe, note *"involves turning circumstances into a situation that is comprehended explicitly in words and serves as a springboard into action. Sensemaking is seen as a diagnostic process directed at constructing plausible interpretations and implications of ambiguous cues that are sufficient to sustain action."*

In Weick's seminal work "Making Sense of the Organization" he discusses sensemaking through the angle of mindfulness, using the analogy of a movie theatre *" When we are watching the screen, we are absorbed in the momentum of the story, our thoughts and emotions manipulated by the images we are seeing. But if just for a moment we were to turn around and look toward the back of the theatre at the projector, we would see how these images are being produced."* - and that change in perspective from looking exclusively "inside", to looking "outside – in" makes all the difference.

Team and individual issues and dilemmas tend to be essentially projections of individual and collective experiences. The coach therefore needs to move the focus away from the drama that the coachee / team is embroiled in and direct their attention to the causal factors of context that perhaps are the source of the drama in the first place. And that's what we refer to as moving from the inside-out to the outside-in. As Weick elaborates *"To focus on sensemaking is to portray organizing as the experience of being thrown into an ongoing, unknowable, unpredictable streaming of experience in search of answers to the question, "what's the story?"*

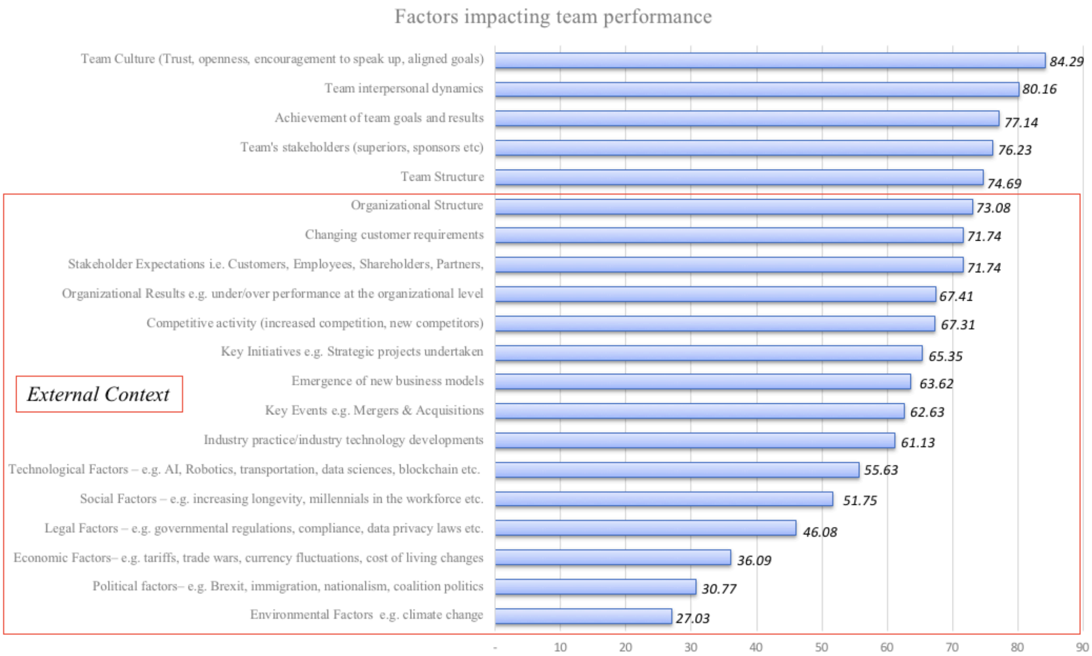
Team coaches, especially, in our age of systemic coaching today, need to be "master sense makers" of the context that the teams and individuals find themselves in. And here the term master sense maker operates at two levels – one, to understand and see the interconnections and implications of the contextual elements for oneself as a coach before stepping into the coaching engagement, and two, to be the facilitator helping the coachees arrive at their insights regarding the implications and impact of the contextual factors in their world.

**Deconstructing Context : A Nested Multi-Level Framework**

In a recent survey of more than 100 respondents, (n = 106) conducted by the author, participants were asked to provide inputs on the impact of the various preselected factors on the performance of teams today, on a scale of "0" to "100" - with "0" representing "No Impact" and "100" representing "Very High Impact". The graph below captures, in descending order of impact, the rated factors.

Figure 1.0 :

*Factors impacting team performance*




(Sample size, n = 106)
(Source : Surveymonkey.com, Teams in a VUCA Context, Author: Krish Iyer)

From the survey results we can see that top-rated factors that impact a team’s performance are those internal to the team; however, there are a significantly large number of factors that impact team performance that are external to the team (highlighted by the red text box in Figure 1.0 above). The question that arises is, do teams suffer from an inattentional blindness to these factors ? Do teams only see the tip of the iceberg, but miss the other factors that lie hidden ? And if so, how do coaches prevent / avoid the pitfalls of ignoring these factors as they set up their coaching engagements ?

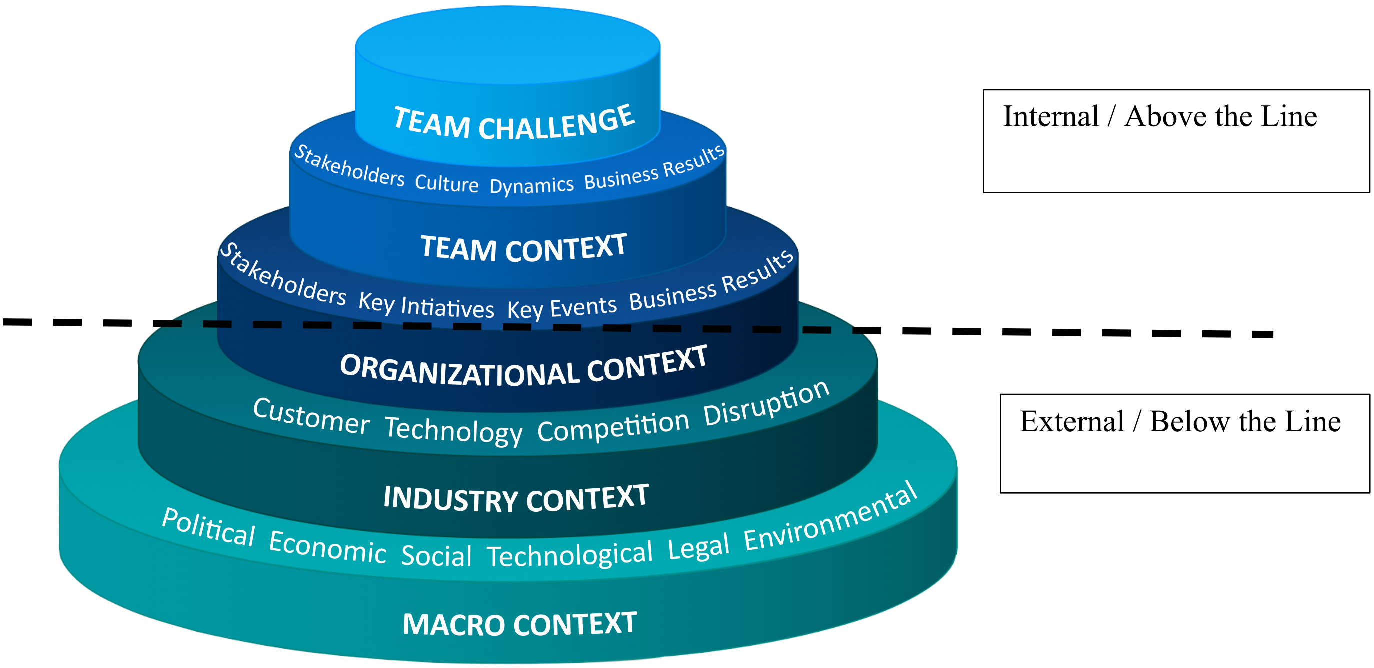
 

Based on the experience of over 100 team coaching and facilitation engagements, over the last 10+ years, and the corroboration of the factors impacting team performance, we have, through a process of considered practice, developed a structured unified framework approach analyzing context in team coaching.

The figure 2.0 below depicts a nested, multi-level and outside-in framework enabling coaches to work with the relevant contextual factors that the team/coachee experiences. The framework operates as an interconnected set of contexts, starting from the widest/outside level and then telescoping in to the level of the team /coachees challenge/s that stand at the core of the coaching engagement.

Figure 2.0:

*Nested Multi-Level Context Analysis Framework – The Iceberg View*




The outside-in (external/below the line ) contextual levels, as depicted in Fig. 2.0 are the

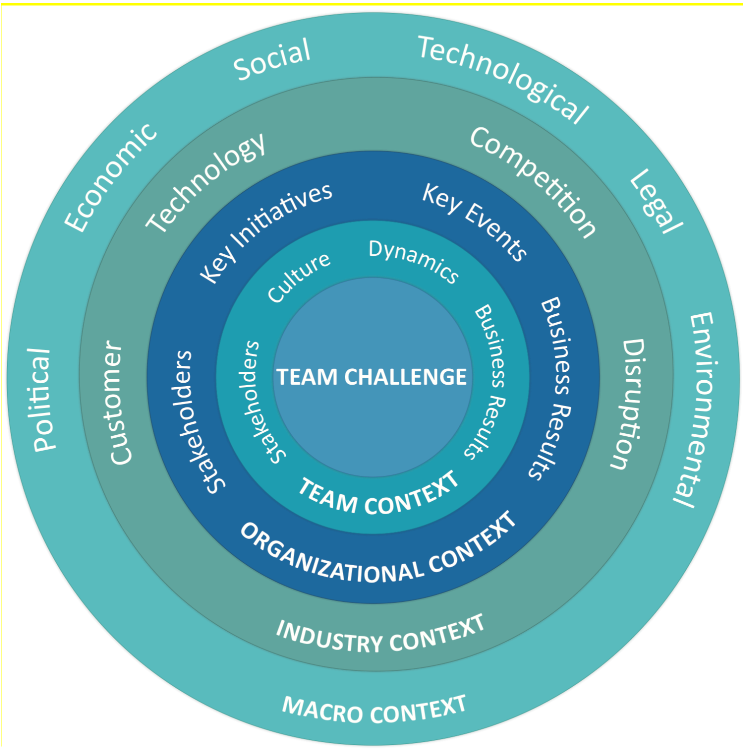
1. The Macro Context,
2. The Industry Context,
3. The Organizational Context,

leading to the internal factors of Team Context, and finally to the Team Challenge that would be at the core of the coaching engagement.

Each contextual level may be viewed as layers of an onion (Figure 3.0) and an effective coach should be able to start with the outermost layer of the macro context and work with the team/coachee in unpeeling each layer while navigating the conversation through the layers of industry context, organizational context, team context and finally down to the question of how these individually and jointly impact what the team/coachees seeks to address as the team challenge. The levels of context are thus related to and lead in to the issues that confront the team, cascading movement from external team context to the team challenge.

Figure 3.0:

*Nested Multi-Level Context Analysis Framework – The Onion Ring View*




Let's now examine each external context level, Macro, Industry and Organizational, in more detail. Key strategic analysis models that might be used in the discussions at each level of context are also identified. A detailed discussion of the use of these strategic analysis models is outside the scope of this paper.

***Level 1: Macro Context***

This refers to the broad conditions in which the organization and industry operates. These are typically external and generally uncontrollable factors that influence an organization's decision making and affect its performance and strategies. An analysis of the macro context will need to consider economic factors; demographics; legal, political, and social conditions; technological changes; and natural and environmental forces. Specific examples of macro context influences include, changes in interest rates, changes in cultural tastes, disastrous weather, government regulations, and changes in demographics.

**Key Strategic Analysis Models for Macro Context:**

- PEST or PESTLE Analysis,
- Force Field Analysis (K. Lewin)

***Level 2: Industry Context***

Industry context refers to the immediate external ecosystem of organizations that serve similar or related customer needs and which interact as peers, competitors, partners and vendors. The *VUCA-ness* of the environment has a direct impact on the industry context, and factors such as new technology, disruptive changes, customer factors and competitive activity need to be considered.

Unlike in previous decades, the lines defining, and demarcating industries stand increasingly blurred. The way industries are reconstituting and realigning in this era of disruptive change has a direct and real-time impact on team performance. In this scenario, the coach needs to be aware of the changing trends, the disruption in business models, the forces of consolidation and dilution, competitive forces and changes in customer preferences that may be impacting the team/coachee.

An effective approach to discussions around industry context is to frame these conversations around key themes that apply no matter what the industry or business context. The key themes and some approach questions that might be used to unravel industry context could include:

1. Disruption:
    a. What are the forces of disruption at play in our industry?
    b. What are some recent examples of disruption we have seen in our industry such as mergers, consolidations, bankruptcies, adjacencies (defined as a player formerly in one industry now branching out into an adjacent industry like a telecom company now providing payment services), new business models, and new technologies?
    c. What is the impact on us as an organization and team because of these disruptions?
2. Competition
    a. Who are our competitors? Who do we consider direct competition and who are providing alternative / substitute products or solutions?
    b. What do we see our competition doing to cope with the changes in the macro context?
    c. How might the changes in the competitive landscape be impacting us as an organization and a team?

3. Technology
    a. What are the major forces and dimensions of technology that are impacting our industry?
    b. What new emerging technologies and technology trends should we keep on our radars?
    c. How are these new technologies impacting our customers and our competition?
    d. What is the impact on us as an organization and team because of these the changes in the technology landscape?
4. Customer
    a. What trends or changes in customer preference are we seeing from an industry standpoint? (For example, the airlines industry might see "efficient-no frills service" as an emerging customer preference.)
    b. What new customer segments have emerged in the last 3-5 years? Is the industry adequately servicing these new customers?
    c. What is the impact on us an organization and team because of these the changes in the customer landscape?

An additional compounding factor that added to the understand of context at the industry level, is that each industry tends to develop its own specialized lexicon of terms, acronyms and measures, that might sound like arcane language to outsiders, but would be of critical importance to the teams and individuals in that industry. For example, the hotel industry works with some of these terms, that perhaps coaches to this sector should familiarize themselves with. – *AGOP, Amadeus, ARR, C&I etc.*

**Key Strategic Analysis Models for Industry Context:**

- Five Forces Analysis (M. Porter 1979),
- Core Competencies, Gary Hamel and C.K. Prahalad(1990),
- Value Discipline, Michael Tracy & Fred Wiersma (1993),
- Eliminate-Reduce-Raise- Create Grid from Blue Ocean Strategy, W. Chan Kim & Renee Mauborgne (2005)

***Level 3: Organizational Context***

Organizational Context refers to the internal ecosystem comprising the corporate entity and the various internal divisions, departments, functions and geographic entities that constitute the "organism" the team in question "lives" within. The organizational context level is where the outside world (macro and industry contexts) connect with the team's world and where the touchpoints and impacts become evident. Elements such as the key stakeholders, key organizational events, key initiatives, and business results that the organization is focused on, are the dimensions that need to be examined at this context level. From a team coaching perspective, understanding the organizational context allows the team coach to understand the organization outside-in prior to sponsor, stakeholder and team engagement. Further during the team coaching sessions, keeping the organizational context in perspective allows the team coach to clarify and surface issues. And finally post the team coaching sessions, keeping the organizational context in focus allows for practically transferring the decisions and learnings from team coaching sessions into their real world ( e.g. What are we going to do differently based on what we discussed?).

The structure and questions in Table 1.0 below can help team coaches secure a better understanding of the organizational context:

Table 1.0:
*Organizational Context Analysis Questions*

| **Organization Overview** | **Business Strategy** | **Performance & Peer Analysis** |
|---|---|---|
| 1. **Company Snapshot:** What business is the organization in? What were key events in their evolution/history? How do they articulate their "raison d'etre", their vision and mission? What are some compelling statements they make about themselves? Do they feel the vision and goals are shared and are commonly understood across the organization?<br>2. **Business Segments:** In what terms/language does the organization describe its business?<br>3. **Geographical Presence:** Are they dominant in a certain geography and absent elsewhere?<br>4. **Organization Structure:** What is the prevailing organization structure? How centralised /decentralized is decision making? How matrixed is the organization? How are silos bridged?<br>5. **Management Profiles:** Who are key players? What is their background? | 1. **Customer Value Chain Analysis:** How does the organization deliver value to its customers? What are they good at?<br>2. **Strategy Overview:** How do they plan to win? What are the key elements of the company's strategy? What's working? What's not?<br>3. **Significant Developments/ Announcements:** What are some recent events / achievements /announcements that should be taken note of? What impact might they have on the team?<br>4. **Key Investments:** What are some of the key areas the organization is looking to invest in? What resources, projects, initiatives are of prime importance in the next 3-5 years for the organization? How might this impact the team?<br>5. **Social Media Highlights:** What does a search of the organization's name in the search field of prominent web and social media sites such as "Google", "LinkedIn" "YouTube" yield? What forums are senior executives are speaking at in the recent past? What are some of their key messages? | 1. **Performance Analysis:** What are some of the key metrics, financial and non-financial, that the organization and team measure themselves on? How are these trending? How do they measure customer perception especially in response, satisfaction and loyalty? How are they faring?<br>2. **Peer Analysis:** Who are their peers? How are they faring in comparison? Which peers can we learn from? What are they doing that we should learn from? |

**Key Strategic Analysis Models for Organizational Context:**

- Business Model Canvas (A. Osterwalder, 2008)
- Stakeholder Management (R. Edward Freeman 1984),
- The Sustainable Value Framework (Stuart Hart, Mark Milstein, 2003)

A more detailed version of this paper is under consideration for publication as a chapter in *Team Coaching: The Practitioner's Handbook.* (Editors: Krister Lowe and Sandra Hayes (US), Doug MacKie (Australia), Ioanna Iordanou (UK), Judie Gannon and David Clutterbuck (UK).) An exploration of the subsequent levels of context, moving into the team context and challenge is also considered in the chapter, but is out of scope for the purposes of this paper.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Being aware of the elements of external context, keeping these contextual elements in deliberate cognizance in a structured way, and sensemaking through the vicissitudes of context is crucial to effectively helping the team and coachees steer through their challenges.

Assessing external context and the changes therein could be conducted at various stages of the team coaching engagement including:

1. <u>During the discovery or preparation stage:</u> Typically, these conversations might take place as part of the needs assessment or validation and could take the form of interviews with significant stakeholders such as the sponsor, the team lead, and key members within or immediately connected to the team, including external audiences such as end consumers of the product or service offered by the organization in question. Coaches should ideally use this opportunity to explore the coaching challenge in the light of the macro, industry and organization contextual factors that might be in play.
2. <u>During the engagement:</u> Conducting a kick-off workshop to uncover external context is an effective way to "warm-up" the team. For example, a one hour brainstorming session facilitated by the team coach around the question *"What are the key political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental factors impacting our organization and our industry today?"* would yield insights not only to the macro contextual issues that the team sees as relevant, but also will provide insights to the team coach of the interpersonal dynamics in the team, and the informal alignments that might exist. These insights provide rich and relevant data points for the team coach to leverage with the team at subsequent levels, especially, Level of the Team Context.
3. <u>Post / continued engagement:</u> Conducting a quick "What's changed since we last met?" check in with the contextual factors under consideration, is recommended as an ongoing practice whenever the team coaching sessions are held. This helps keep the perspective not only on what's happening within the organization and team but yields useful insights to any changes in the external environment that might emerge as driving forces impacting the performance of the team.

Working with the elements of outside-in context,  from the macro to the organizational, in a structured way is crucial to effectively steer the team through their challenges. Context has thus moved from being an incidental factor to a core consideration for team coaching in today's world of continuous change. Using the nested levels framework of context and the associated analytical mode elucidated in this paper team coaches will help drive team coaching engagements,  as Peter Hawkins (2017) so eloquently puts it, of moving to truly "ecosystemic team coaching" and …*"make[ing] an enormous contribution to the transformation that is needed in organizations of every size and kind as well as in the wider world*".

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**Peer Coaching: Uncovering the individual and organizational value**

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**Abstract.** Organizations move at a fast past. Competition is fierce with rapid innovation entering the marketplace regularly. Performance is critical for new employees and challenging when individuals are bombarded with new information daily. Employees entering the workforce lack the experience and maturity to overcome obstacles and challenges in competitive jobs. Using surveys and organizational data, this study presents the individual and organizational value, including financial ROI, of a peer-coaching intervention for new sales individuals.

**Key Words:** ROI, return-on-investment, financial value, peer coaching, systemic change.

## Introduction

This is a qualitative and quantitative case-study paper and uses surveys to capture qualitative data from individuals which is focused on the "whole-person', as well as trend-line analysis and forecasting to capture quantitative financial data which is focused on capturing the "whole-organization" impact. Surveys with rating scales on topics such as perceived value, organizational commitment and behavioral changes provide a way to collect insights on individual change and value. This allowed us to gain a rich understanding of the impact of peer coaching. This data was supported by financial information, including ROI metrics collected through the organizational system, to support the understanding of the fiscal impact of peer coaching.

## Methodology

Thirty-one individuals participated in the intervention and were asked to provide data to support the study. Specifically, these individuals were invited to participate in a peer-coaching program, called Mentor Coaching, where one-half of the participants learned new mentor skills to coach the other half. Data was collected throughout the eight-month study to answer the following research questions and were designed to address both the "whole-person" as well as the "whole organization":

1. Do peers who Mentor value the peer-coaching experience as much as the Mentee?
2. Do peers who Mentor find that peer coaching is taking them away from something that's a better use of time?
3. Do peers who Mentor, and are more senior in their career, gain new insights about mentoring and coaching?
4. Do peers who Mentor provide enough value to their peers that the Mentees gain new insights?
5. Do insights gained by both Mentors and Mentees turn into action?
6. How does organizational commitment of Mentors and Mentees change as a result of participating as a peer coach?
7. How does peer coaching impact employee retention?
8. Does peer coaching produce a monetary return-on-investment for the organization?

Data was captured throughout the program and shared with the organization at the conclusion. Financial data was validated by the organizational sponsor. Survey items are provided in the Tables 1-9.

## Literature Review / Conceptual Framework

### Literature Review

The organization faced a significant challenge in retaining new sales staff. Stakeholders of the organization observed that the requirements for a new sales person were challenging. New sales employees were required to call on 50 prospective clients per day. On average, a new sales employee would take three months before closing their first sale of an average of $200. Given these challenging metrics, it was difficult to understand what would motivate an individual to sign on with this company and persist. The reason was simple: If the new sales representative could meet the KPIs of the first year, they would likely earn a six-figure income. Motivation started high for these new employees but quickly dropped before the first year anniversary due to the challenge, resulting in nearly 72% turnover of first-year sales employees. The company wanted to find a solution.

In spite of this challenge, which seems at first glance to be beyond the individual's control, the research indicates there are three primary keys to success in creating behavioral change, based on Baldwin and Ford's Transfer of Training model (Baldwin and Ford, 1988):

1. Motivation and sense of self-efficacy of the individual
2. Alignment and structure of the intervention
3. Support and reinforcement of the system

Specifically, when individuals are motivated and have a sense of self-efficacy, they are more likely to transfer their learning to doing (Frazis, H., Gittleman, M., & Joyce. M., 2000). Some studies have shown that motivation is the only variable that leads to transfer of learning (Grossman and Salas, 2011).

In addition, it is also critical to success that the overall design of the intervention aligns to support the developmental needs of the participants. For example, when participants have a variety of elements, such as audio-visual vs. reading, to take in new information, they are more likely to use new skills (Baldwin, 1992). More importantly, one study showed that peer coaching had the most impact on application of new skills (Pogust, 1994).

Finally, the support of an individual's manager and peers has been shown to be a predictor of transfer of learning to doing (Rouiller and Goldstein, 1993).

### Conceptual Framework

The purpose of the intervention was to support the success of the sales employees and equip those who would become coaches with mentor skills to help more junior sales employees become resilient. The overall goal was to retain these new sales people through their first year.

The more senior sales employees were assigned to the Mentor Coach role and coached their peers, junior sales employees. They participated in three sessions designed to teach mentor-coaching skills. The remaining sales employees were assigned to Mentee roles. Both groups participated in five sessions to learn skills related to the unique challenges of sales roles: time management, resilience, communication style and engaging client conversations through storytelling.

Each Mentor had to spend at least six hours coaching their Mentee. Both had to create a development plan. Mentor Coaches also participated in Coaching Supervision. Finally, participants had access to additional resources including books, videos and podcasts (Figure 1.). The entire intervention was conducted by telephone. Support materials were provided and sent via email immediately in advance of each session.

Figure 1.
Mentor Coaching for Peers


## Findings

Overall, we discovered a positive response and impact for individuals as well as for the organization. Specifically, both Mentees and their Mentor Coaches provided a positive reaction to the overall Peer Coaching experience. Not only did Mentees find the experience valuable, but Mentors did, too. Both Mentors and Mentees believed they gained new insights and applied their learning to their role as a Mentor, or, for Mentees, in their role as a sales representative on-the-job.

## Individual Impact

**Do peers who Mentor value the peer-coaching experience as much as the Mentee?**
All sales representatives were required to participate in this intervention. Because of this, there was some doubt whether more senior sales representatives, who participated as a Mentor Coach, would find value in the program. In fact, two (2) senior sales representatives expressed concern that their efforts in coaching junior peers would be developing their competition. Our findings were insightful. Not surprisingly, peers who were on the receiving end of the Mentor Coaching experience – the Mentees -- reported a positive experience (Table 1.).

Table 1.
Mentees' response to Mentor Coaching.

| Mentor Coaching Experience | % Positive Agree |
|---|---|
| I felt my Mentor wanted to spend their time helping me. | 89% |
| My Mentor asked me more questions than they gave suggestions. | 78% |
| I created a coaching plan with a specific goal in partnership with my Mentor. | 67% |
| I would recommend this program, including Mentor Coaching, to others. | 89% |
| I believe this program, including Mentor Coaching, is value-added. | 89% |
| I believe this program, including Mentor Coaching, is important to my success at the present time. | 67% |
| I believe this program, including Mentor Coaching, has been relevant. | 100% |

Not only did Mentee's respond positively to the experience of Mentor Coaching, but surprisingly, Mentors did, as well (Table 2.).

Table 2.
Mentors' response to Mentor Coaching.

| Mentor Coaching Experience | % Positive Agree |
|---|---|
| I would recommend this program to others. | 67% |
| I believe this program is value-added. | 75% |
| I believe this program is important to my success at the present time. | 58% |
| I believe this program has been relevant. | 83% |

**Do peers who Mentor find that peer coaching is taking them away from something that's a better use of time?**
In addition to understanding the overall perceived value, we wanted to understand if the experience was worthwhile enough that there was no other better use of time. Again, not surprisingly, Mentees were unanimous in their response that there was no better use of time (Table 3); yet, even 75% of Mentors reported that there was no better use of time (Table 4). This was surprising to us because in some instances Mentors were potentially supporting and developing their competition.

Table 3.
Mentees' response to use of time.

| Use of Time | | Was there a better use of your time? |
|---|---|---|
| No | % Responses coded as 'no' | 100% |
| Yes | % Responses coded as 'yes' | 0% |

Table 4.
Mentors' response to use of time.

| Use of Time | | Was there a better use of your time? |
|---|---|---|
| No | % Responses coded as 'no' | 75% |
| Yes | % Responses coded as 'yes' | 25% |

**Do peers who Mentor, and are more senior in their career, gain new insights about mentoring and coaching?**
The intervention was designed to equip senior sales representatives who would be supporting their peers with a framework of mentoring and coaching skills. Specifically, information and practice sessions were provided to give new insight on how and when to mentor and how and when to coach. Both mentoring and coaching skills were described as a unique set of skills with mentoring skills specific to teaching, telling, sharing stories and showing how; and coaching skills specific to a process to facilitate another person's problem-solving ability through open-ended questions.

As often happens, individuals who are more senior in their career believe they are already well-aware of these skills. We wanted to ensure that senior sales representatives who mentored spent time learning something new. Overall, we discovered that senior sales representatives did report they gained new insights. This, despite that senior sales representatives were more advanced in their careers, and more specifically, already successful in their sales role which requires similar types of conversational abilities (Table 5.).

Table 5.
Mentors' response to new insights gained.

| Learning Topics | % Positive Agree |
|---|---|
| I know what to say or do when someone is 'resistant' to moving forward as evidenced by repeating the same conversations over again. | 100% |
| I know at least two questions I can use to go below the surface of what someone is saying. | 92% |
| I can name at least one specific time when it's the appropriate time to mentor (share a story, provide advice) rather than coach. | 100% |
| I know what to ask when someone responds with "I don't know" when they are faced with a challenge or problem. | 100% |
| I gained at least two new insights about my strengths and development areas in Mentor Coaching as a result of the feedback from the role plays. | 83% |
| I have at least two standard questions I can ask for each step in the coaching process. | 75% |
| I can name the four steps of the Mentor Coaching process. | 83% |
| I have learned at least one technique to manage the highs and lows of sales. | 100% |
| I learned at least one new idea I can use in telling stories to create engagement with clients or mentees. | 83% |
| I learned at least one new technique to adjust my communication style for someone with a different style. | 100% |

**Do peers who Mentor provide enough value to their peers that the Mentees gain new insights?**
Key to individual impact that could lead to organizational impact was the Mentors' ability to impart new insights, whether through mentoring or coaching, to their Mentee. Without this transfer, not only would individual impact fail to occur, but organizational impact would not occur. Therefore, we were interested to learn whether the Mentor could effectively impact Mentee's thought processes. Overall, we saw a positive impact in the Mentor's ability to impact the Mentee through Mentor Coaching conversations (Table 6).

Table 6.
Mentee's response to new insights gained.

| Learning Topics | % Positive Agree |
|---|---|
| I gained more clarity about what steps I needed to take to be success in my role as a result of Mentor Coaching. | 100% |
| I gained insights about my strengths and areas I can improve upon as a result of Mentor Coaching. | 100% |
| I learned how to make progress toward the Mentor Coaching goals I set at the start of the program. | 100% |
| I learned how I could overcome a challenge I was facing in my job as a result of Mentor Coaching. | 100% |
| I have learned at least one technique to manage the highs and lows of sales. | 89% |
| I learned at least one new idea I can use in telling stories to create engagement with clients. | 100% |
| I learned at least one new technique to adjust my communication style for someone with a different style. | 100% |

**Do insights gained by both Mentors and Mentees turn into action?**
Finally, at the individual level, we wanted to understand how both Mentors and Mentees perceived their ability to turn insights gained into action. Again, a positive response to change and application of insights gained was reported across both Mentors (Table 7) and Mentees (Table 8), using self-report rating scales.

Table 7.
Mentors' self-report of application of new insights.

| Areas of Change | % Positive Agree |
|---|---|
| Applied the right approach when someone was 'resistant' to moving forward by repeating the same conversations over again. | 92% |
| Asked at least two questions that went below the surface of what someone was saying. | 92% |
| Applied the mentoring vs. coaching at the appropriate time in at least 50% of my Mentor Coaching conversations. | 92% |
| Asked the right questions when someone responded with "I don't know" when they were faced with a challenge or problem. | 100% |

| | |
|---|---|
| Applied at least two new insights about my strengths and development areas in Mentor Coaching as a result of the feedback from the role plays. | 83% |
| Asked at least two standard questions for each step in the coaching process. | 83% |
| Applied the four steps of the Mentor Coaching process in at least 50% of my coaching conversations. | 92% |
| Applied at least one technique to manage the highs and lows of sales. | 92% |
| Applied at least one new idea I can use in telling stories to create engagement with clients or mentees. | 92% |
| Applied at least one new technique to adjust my communication style for someone with a different style. | 92% |

Table 7.
Mentees' self-report of application of new insights.

| Areas of Change | % Positive Agree |
|---|---|
| I took steps to achieve success in my role | 100% |
| I applied the insights about my strengths and areas I can improve upon into specific actions. | 89% |
| I took action to make progress towards the Mentor Coaching goals I set at the start of the program. | 100% |
| I took specific steps to overcome a challenge I was facing in my job. | 100% |
| Applied at least one technique to manage the highs and lows of sales. | 100% |
| Applied at least one new idea I can use in telling stories to create engagement with clients. | 100% |
| Applied at least one new technique to adjust my communication style for someone with a different style. | 100% |

## Organizational Impact

**How does organizational commitment of Mentors and Mentees change as a result of participating as a peer coach?**

To begin understanding the impact of individuals participating in peer coaching on an organization, we captured self-report from both Mentors' and Mentees' on how their commitment to the organization changed or grew. Capturing qualitative data through comments, both Mentors (Table 8) and Mentees (Table 9) grew in their commitment.

Table 8.
Mentors' reported growth in organizational commitment.

| Gain in Organizational Commitment | | How did your level of commitment to the organization change or grow over the course of the Mentor Coaching experience? |
|---|---|---|
| Same/No Growth | % Responses coded as "same/no growth" | 64% |
| Growth | % Responses coded as | 36% |

Table 9.
Mentees' reported growth in organizational commitment.

| Gain in Organizational Commitment | | How did your level of commitment to the organization change or grow over the course of the Mentor Coaching experience? |
|---|---|---|
| Same/No Growth | % Responses coded as "same/no growth" | 45% |
| Growth | % Responses coded as | 55% |

**How does peer coaching impact employee retention?**
The primary catalyst for this intervention was turnover of sales representatives. Specifically, both voluntary and involuntary turnover was higher than desired (Figure 2). In fact, this study, conducted in 2014, revealed that the sales organization was on track to experience 72% annualized turnover when rates for both involuntary and voluntary turnover were combined (Figure 3).

More importantly, the organization had calculated the cost of one turnover of a sales representative by totaling an estimate of the total costs associated with recruiting, hiring, on-boarding and time-to-productivity. The organization had established the cost of one turnover as $36,808. By the end of 2014, at which time the peer coaching had ended, turnover had been reduced to an annualized rate of 19%.

Figure 2.
Voluntary and involuntary rates.

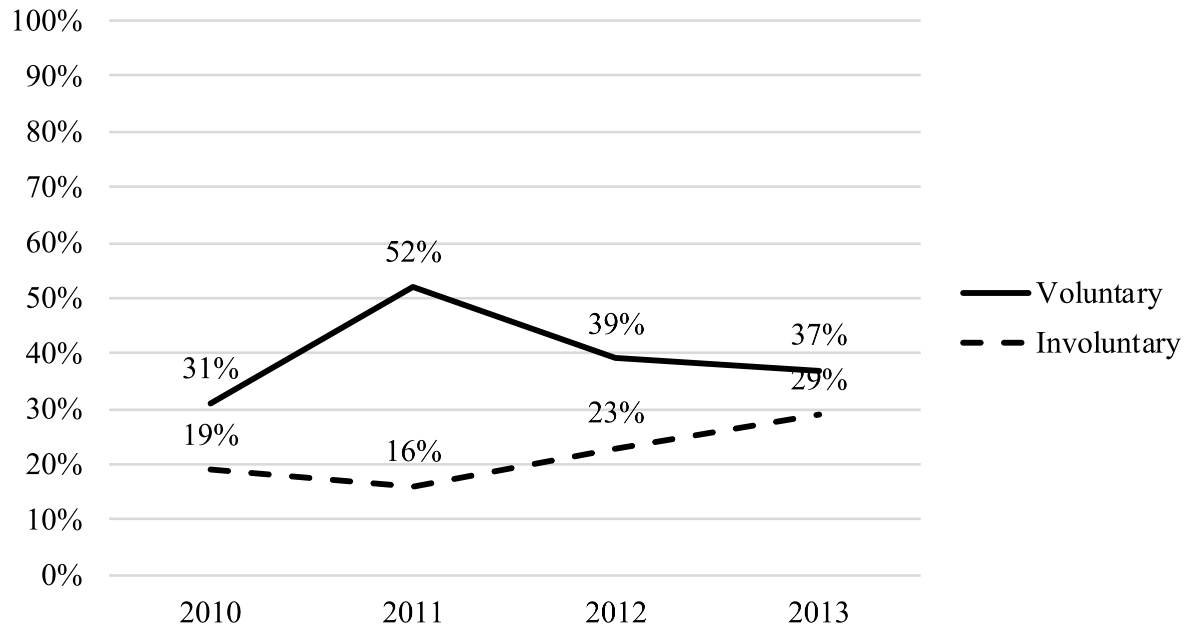
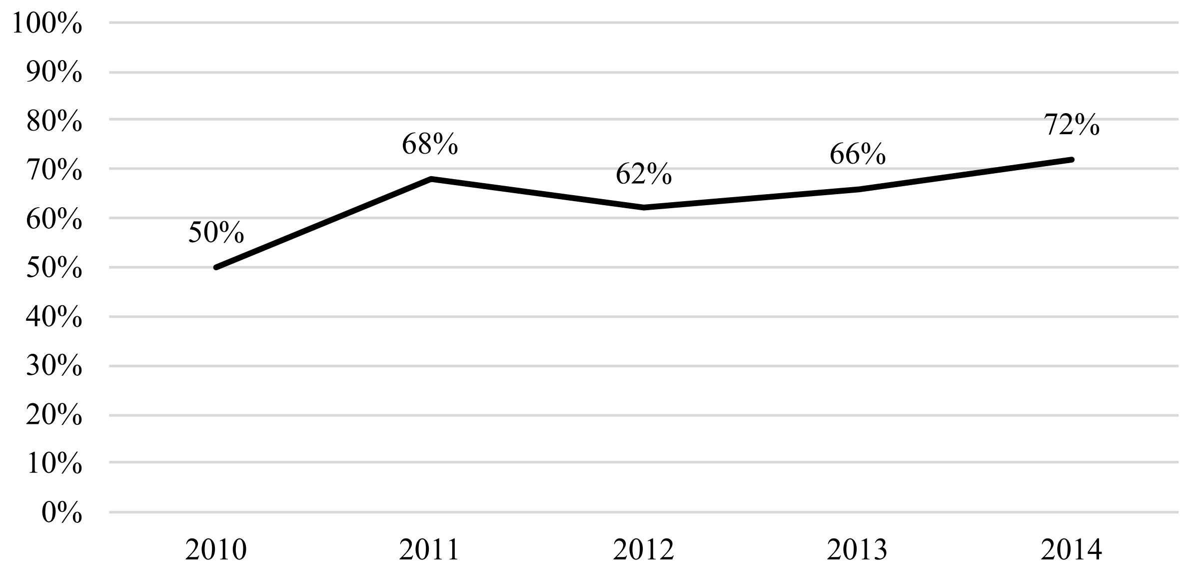



Figure 3.
Voluntary plus involuntary turnover rate 2014 forecast based on trend.




**Does peer coaching produce a monetary return-on-investment for the organization?**
To calculate the return-on-investment of the intervention, insights were captured from the organization. At the same time of this intervention, the organization was also adjusting its recruiting, selection and on-boarding processes, all of which were believed to have been making an impact on the organization. Using forecasted data of 72% turnover, the

organization should have lost and replaced 22 of its 31 sales representatives over the course of the year when the peer coaching intervention was implemented; or 50% of that amount over the course of the program which was six (6) months. Using 50% of 22 anticipated headcount departures, it was expected 11 sales representatives would depart by the end of the program, which coincidentally, ended at the end of 2014.

Instead, only 6 sales representatives departed by the end of the program, and also by the end of year, saving 5 headcount who did not depart as expected. This savings in headcount was calculated at $184,040.

Through conversation, and based upon the other interventions (recruitment, selection and on-boarding improvements) implemented at the same time as the peer coaching, the organization reduced, the overall cost savings in retention by 50%, resulting in an agreed upon savings of $92,020 (Table 10). This $92,020 was the amount the organization agreed was attributable to the Mentor Coaching program for peers.

Finally, to calculate the return-on-investment of the intervention, the costs were needed. The costs of the intervention were $39,496. Using the standard return-on-investment formula, the ROI was calculated as ($92,020 - $39,496) / $39,496, or 133% ROI. In other words, for each dollar that the organization invested in Mentor Coaching for peers, they gained $1.33 in return, taking into consideration their investment costs.

Table 10.
Monetary values of sales-representative retention.

| **Retention Data** | |
|---|---|
| Forecasted annual turnover based 4 years of data | 72% |
| Total employees | 31 |
| Estimated turnover | 11 |
| Actual Turnover | 6 |
| Improvement for year | 5 |
| Average turnover cost per person | 36,808 |
| TOTAL SAVINGS IN RETENTION | $184,040 |
| Attribution of improvement due to program | 50% |
| Net Amount | $92,020 |

## Conclusions and Recommendations

This study demonstrates that an intervention, which allows for individual development and is supported by peers who encourage that development, results in positive individual and organizational value, including financial impact. Specifically, this study illuminated the following:

1. Peers who participated as either Mentors or Mentees in a Mentor Coaching program responded positively to the experience of mentoring or being mentored.
2. Both Mentors and Mentees perceived the program to be a good use of their valuable time.
3. Mentors valued of each coaching-skill-building modules.
4. Both Mentors and Mentees reported improvement in their skills related to mentor coaching and/or specific goals set out at the start, on an individual level.
5. Both Mentors and Mentees reported improvement in their commitment to the organization as a result of peer Mentor Coaching.
6. Mentor Coaches by peers led to improved employee retention that had a positive monetary impact.
7. The organization reported a positive financial ROI as a result of the Mentor Coaching.

Further study into the specific behaviors and elements should be explored. For example, if the Mentees had only a supportive, empathetic listener vs. coaching skills provided by a Mentor Coach, would we see the same results and impact? Additionally, more objective feedback from observers of Mentees or Mentors about behavioral change or application of new coaching skills would be important data.

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# Reciprocal peer coaching supported by an experienced coach: the future of sustained leader development?

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**Abstract.** Leader development requires learning new ways of behaving, which takes sustained practice over time, yet organisations continue to focus their efforts in traditional classroom style workshops, spending billions of dollars in the process. Using an autoethnography methodology, this paper describes and interrogates a contemporary approach to leader development, that includes a reciprocal peer coaching component to embed skill development, increase goal attainment, and enable learning transfer into the wider organisational system for positive impact.

**Key Words:** reciprocal peer coaching, leadership development programs

## Introduction

When it comes to developing leaders, much of it is about learning new ways of behaving, literally rewiring the brain (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2013, Rock & Schwartz, 2007) and we know from the neuroscience that it takes on average 66 days of sustained practice to create self-sustaining new neural pathways (Lally Van Jaarsveld, Potts & Wardle, 2010, p. 1007). We also know that adults typically retain just 10 percent of what they hear in classroom lectures, versus nearly two-thirds when they learn by doing (Gurdjian, Halbeisen, & Lane, 2014), and the little empirical research on the effectiveness of leadership development programs (LDPs) would tend to support this (Kirchner & Akdere, 2014).

Why organisations continue to focus their leader development activities in classroom-style workshops and leadership offsites, (Goldman, Wesner, & Karnchananomai, 2013) is therefore worth considering.

This paper is one of a series that seek to better understand the impact of embedding a peer coaching component into LDPs and on the overall learning and practice of individuals. The approach outlined offers an effective approach to sustainable leader development: It is focused firstly on the individual, but extends to consider the influences on the system in which the leader operates (the organisation).

Using an autoethnographic methodology and method, this paper describes the experiences of one coach (the author) in re-designing and supporting the delivery of the coaching component of a LDP in a large Australian corporation, and connects them to a relatively under-theorised context in which peer coaching is anecdotally having a positive impact.

## Methodology

*Autoethnography attempts to utilise autobiographical artefacts of the researcher as the primary data source to reflect upon, analyse, and interpret participants' experiences within a sociocultural context.*
*(Chang, 2008, p. 49 and p. 46).*

 

Chang (2008) suggests autoethnography is "ethnographic in its methodological orientation, cultural in its interpretive orientation, and autobiographical in its content orientation" (p. 48). McIlveen (2008) adds, "it is not the same as autobiography in the literary sense. It is not simply the telling of a life ... It is a specific form of critical enquiry that is embedded in theory and practice" (p. 3).

Recently, an emerging demarcation between "evocative autoethnography" and "analytic autoethnography" has been observed. For this paper, I have adopted the latter, the conditions for which are summarised by Anderson (2006) as being "(1) a full member in the research group or setting, (2) visible as such a member in the researcher's published texts, and (3) committed to an analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena" (p. 375).

Autoethnography has been employed within this paper because my focus is understanding the experiences of participants' through my practice, and within their, and my, socio-cultural context.

About 450 of the company's mid-senior leaders participate annually in the LDP that is the subject of this paper. Following a three-day workshop, leaders engage in a 'back-end coaching component' that I helped redesign. To Anderson's analytic autoethnographic criteria: my analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of how reciprocal peer coaching can sustainably enhance coaching skills and increase goal achievement, and how it enables learning transfer into the broader organisation for positive impact; I was embedded in the research setting as the coach and thus observed first-hand the experience of the participants; and I collected and analysed extensive notes or "field texts" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) of each meeting, including the voices of the participants and my own.

## Literature Review/Conceptual Framework

### Literature Review

This paper investigates a way to embed skill development on a sustainable basis and increase goal achievement following a LDP, and enable learning transfer from the leader into the wider organisational system. Within this review, the following themes are considered:

- The role of reciprocal peer coaching
- The role of the professional coach in that process
- The impact on the wider organisational system

One is immediately confronted with a challenge; there is little in the literature about what constitutes a good LDP design, and whether it builds long term skill development and enables learning transfer. Abrell comments that "complex and long-term leadership development programs are only randomly described and almost never evaluated empirically" (Abrell, Rowold, Weibler & Moenninghoff, 2011, p. 206), while Kirchner & Akdere (2014) in their search of the literature in the last century found only 201 studies related to leadership interventions and considerably fewer on whether they were worthwhile, adding that only "between 10 and 20 percent of organisations investing in LDPs actually follow through to evaluate the program's effectiveness" (p. 144). Ladyshewsky (2017) suggests that transfer into the workplace following training and development initiatives is as low as 15 percent (p. 4).

Compounding the problem, Kirchner & Akdere (2014) argue that while there is no universal definition, "LDPs emphasise the concerted, formalised effort of individuals and organisations towards leader improvement" (p. 138). Ladyshewsky (2017) and Goldman et al, (2013) suggest that LDPs should encompass all four of Conger's (1992) primary approaches:

- Conceptual understanding
- Skill building
- Feedback
- Personal growth

While coaching has a role in providing feedback, coaching interventions to support skill development in the context of LDPs are rarely examined (Abrell et al, 2011, p. 207) and of particular relevance to this paper, "there is scant literature concerning the use of reciprocal peer coaching in leadership development" (Goldman et al, 2013 p. 63). In addition, where peer coaching is mentioned, it does not include a professional coach as an integral part of the process, thus making the conceptual framework outlined below unique.

The concept of peer coaching originated in the field of education over 25 years ago as an on-site dimension of staff development. More recently it has been adopted in nursing, and clinical/therapeutic practice (Goldman et al, 2013, p 68-70).

For the purposes of this paper I have adopted Parker et al's (2013) definition: "a developmental relationship with the clear purpose of supporting individuals within it to achieve their job objectives ... the interaction is between two or more people with the goal of personal or professional development. The emphasis is on the voluntary, non-evaluative, and mutually beneficial partnership between two [or more] practitioners of similar experience" (p. 490).

Bennett et al (2013) tell us that while peer coaches do not need to be experts, they need to have effective listening skills, ask exploratory questions, build trust, and maintain tact, confidentiality, and diplomacy. Goldman et al (2013) notes that training peer coaches in listening and questioning is one of the essential elements for success (p. 68) and Bennett et al (2013) add the need for some form of education about coaching and a framework to keep the client clear on the goals.

Ladyshewsky (2017) goes further, describing the following conditions for success related to peer coaching:

- Status (peers are of equal status)
- Certainty (trust and confidence between peers)
- Autonomy (the coachee determines the agenda)
- Relatedness (the relationship builds positive emotions)
- Fairness (the feedback is non-evaluative, honest and fair)

Equal status helps remove the evaluative aspect of coaching that can arise when the line manager is the coach. Ladyshewsky (2017) suggests that these contexts may not be the safest places to grow professionally and can limit learning "because of the heightened defences that are put into place... activated by parts of the brain's limbic system [of the coachee]" (p. 5). By contrast, "removing the evaluative component [through peer coaching] encourages clients to assess their own strengths and development needs through discussion and self-reflection, which builds confidence and commitment" and it also contributes to greater safety in the relationship (Bennett et al 2013, p 258).

Ladyshewsky (2017) and Goldman et al (2018) add that trust and confidence are created through peer coaches getting to know each at the outset. Asking non-evaluative questions also helps and yet it is the most challenging part of the peer coaching process. "The natural tendency is to want to help or provide advice. But this changes status and makes the coach an evaluator and consultant" (Ladyshewsky, 2017, p. 8).

To the question of the broader organisational impact, while Bennett et al (2013) state that "peer coaching has been shown to accelerate group or organisational change and create a self-sustaining coaching organisation" (p. 263), there are very few examples in the literature that speak to the impact of peer coaching in embedding skills and enabling learning transfer into the wider organisational system, and even fewer that share the socio-cultural context of interest to me; following a LDP in medium to large corporations. Bennett et al (2013) comment on case studies at Citizen's Financial Group and CocaCola Enterprises, each of which showed the use of peer coaching as a component of larger LDPs ultimately supported a culture of learning and development (p. 260).

Abrell et al (2011) reported on a study designed by Rowold (2008) that provided initial evidence that peer to peer team coaching led to increased transfer of learned content after training in the German branch of an international drug company. Ladyshewsky (2017) talks of his own research where "it is clear that peer coaching can enhance the professional development and performance of individuals across a broad range of sectors" (p. 6) and he cites specific examples in physical therapy students, universities and a 'large [Australian] government agency'.

Although not set in a large corporation, Goldman et al's (2013) study conducted amongst Master's students undertaking a faculty medical education fellowship program of the George Washington University is noteworthy because it uses a control group, comparing the impact of a LDP with and without peer coaching. "Analysis of the data indicated that the coaching cohort completed or was on schedule for completion of 73% of their planned initiatives, compared to 50% for the standard cohort. Having the structured process of support—reciprocal peer coaching, journaling, and interview-discussions—was credited by the participants as making the difference" (p. 80).

**Conceptual Framework**

Amongst the authors reviewed for this paper, Parker, Hall, Kram & Wassweman (2018) stand out for offering a three-step model for peer coaching: building a strong and trusting relationship between the involved parties; creating success through honing relational practices; and making peer coaching a habit. Their advice echoes their research and reinforces much of what is discussed in the preceding section. It is anchored in the social context of peers connecting with peers as a natural consequence of their engagement at work or outside work.

I would like to offer a model that builds on the work of the researchers cited elsewhere and tie it to a specific social context; embedding learning and skill transfer following a leader development event, with the aim of positively impacting the leaders in question and the organisation in which they operate.

Figure 1.
*Peer Coaching for sustained leader development*

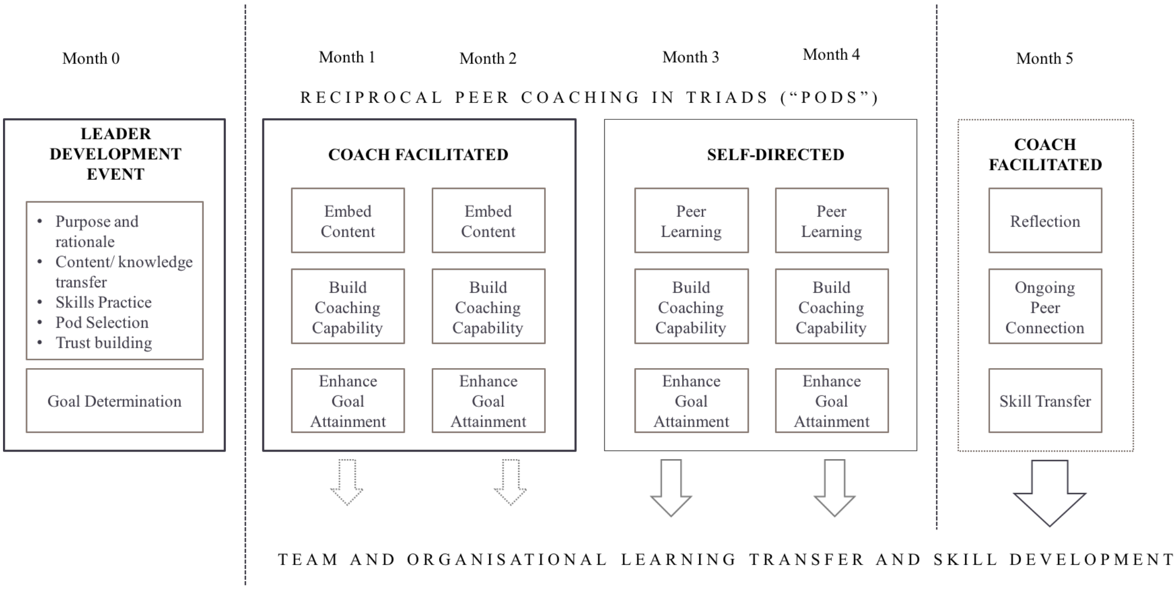


Figure 1 overviews the model. In the organisational program reported in this paper the Leader Development Event was a three-day residential program covering a wide variety of topics. I have also delivered the model where the Leader Development Event was more narrowly focused on enhancing the participants' ability to engage with their teams/clients with more of a coaching orientation.

In the model above, the Leader Development Event mirrors the best practice design discussed in the literature, including:

- Providing purpose and rationale, namely why leaders should participate and how participation will impact their leadership effectiveness.
- Sharing content on listening, asking questions and a coaching framework.
- Developing skills, including practising with the tools offered.

It also includes activities designed to get to know each other, which helps with selection of Pod colleagues and strengthens trust within the Pods (Step 1 from Parker et al's Peer (2018) coaching model). Finally, it includes an action learning component; in this case goal determination, related to their behaviour as a leader.

 

Pod meetings are spread over five months, a time period that allows new habits to be built, reinforced and sustained. Unlike Parker et al's (2018) model, the first two Pod meetings are facilitated by a professional coach. This allows the coach to hone the participants' use of a coaching framework, questioning and listening. During this period, learning transfer into the organisation (via how participants are sharing with their teams, and other important stakeholders) starts.

Participants then hold two further Pod meetings without the coach. Continuing to make progress on their goals and enhance their coaching skill is at the forefront, however peer learning (sharing ideas) is also a feature of the meetings. Learning transfer into the wider organisation is accelerated.

The final meeting is predominantly a reflection meeting, facilitated by the coach. Ongoing peer connection is re-negotiated (Step 3 from Parker et al's Peer (2018) coaching model) and the focus on skill transfer into the wider system is at the forefront.

## Findings

The analytic orientation for this project was to improve theoretical understandings of how reciprocal peer coaching can sustainably enhance coaching skills, increase goal achievement, and enable learning transfer into the broader organisation.

The program discussed in this paper was already established. Although requiring sign-off by the participants' managers, people self-selected to join. It commenced with a three-day residential program (that I neither designed nor delivered). I recommended replacing the post-workshop 3x30 minute 1:1 coaching external coaching sessions, with the model outlined in the previous section.

I was also one of the external coaches contracted to the program, supporting 65 Pods (178 people). At the time of writing, 30 of those Pods (81 people) had completed the redesigned coaching component.

My recommendation for the redesign came primarily from my own experiences and my understanding that to effect behaviour change is a lengthy process that isn't typically addressed in three short coaching sessions; in short it wasn't informed by a lengthy and in-depth review of the peer coaching literature. This paper has allowed me to do that. Consistent with an autoethnographical methodology, I tell the story of my own experience and what I observed in the participants (the dual lens of observer and member of the social context) and I interrogate that story against the literature.

My hope for the program was that the participants would build a relationship with each other during the first two Pod meetings that would make it more important for them to continue with the Pod meetings when I wasn't there, and ideally result in their engaging outside the formal Pod meetings to provide each other support.

During the workshop, participants selected their Pod colleagues (thus aligning with a key component of peer coaching success reported by Goldman et al, 2013 and Parker et al, 2008). These Pods met and did ‘work’ during the workshop, including designing three goals – one of which related to their development as a leader in the business context, aligning with Ladyshewsky’s (2017) approach.

Consequentially, Pod members knew each other coming into the first Pod meeting and had built a relationship during the workshop.

By contrast, I was the outsider, not even an employee of the company. I knew nothing about the participants beyond their names and email addresses. It was therefore important that I built trust and rapport quickly. After a short introduction by each participant, I declared my commitment to confidentiality and then asked them to do the same. This was helpful; this is an organisation undergoing massive transformation with many people, including the teams that the participants managed, and in some cases the participants themselves, facing retrenchment. My not being directly connected to the organisation was useful in this context because people could speak freely about the challenges they were facing with their colleagues, with their managers, and with the organisation generally. This added to the creation of a safe space (Bennett et al, 2013, Ladyshewsky, 2017, and Parker et al, 2018). This place of safety was mentioned regularly by participants during the final Pod meeting; for example, “it was good to have the conversation with the Pod; I don't trust everyone in my team [peers]. The Pod group was a safe group”.

Next, I asked each person to share how they were feeling coming into the meeting (a check-in) and modelled what I wanted by displaying a level of vulnerability about my own situation, both professional and personal. This check-in started each Pod meeting and set the tone for the meetings. I was pleasantly surprised about how open people were about their own circumstances, ranging from extraordinary challenges in their personal lives to stressful work situations. Personal sharing of this nature in many cases bonded the participants and I too felt part of their lives.

In the first Pod meeting I reacquainted the participants with the GROW coaching model that they had been introduced to in the workshop. I was interested to know what they had retained from the workshop a month before. Knowledge retention was highly variable, as was the percentage of participants who had actively tried to use the model since the workshop. So, in the first Pod meeting I played the role of both coach and teacher by demonstrating the GROW model in action, working with each of the participants, using their chosen leader development goal as the vehicle through which skill development and learning transfer would take place over the coming months. Participants could pick the goal on which they wanted to work, i.e. they set the agenda (Ladyshewsky, 2007, and 2017), as long as it was one that required behavioural change on their part that would enhance their leadership capability.

It was important to me that I demonstrate value in the first session to build, and then maintain the momentum, which I hoped would encourage participants to continue with the subsequent Pod meetings. I needed to work quickly with the participant to clarify the goal, understand the current reality, surface options and reduce these to a small number of actions that the individual would commit to achieving before the second Pod meeting. It was challenging, as I typically had about

 

20 minutes with each person and topics ranged from issues that were deeply personal to very work focused.

I followed up with the participants a few days after the Pod meeting, encouraging them to email each other and me, summarising their action commitments. My aim was to keep participants' attention on to what they had committed to, thus hopefully increasing the likelihood that they would actually complete their commitments before the next meeting!

In the second Pod meeting, participants coached each other and thus reciprocal peer to peer coaching began. I reminded the group that when they were coaching, their challenge was to step out of problem-solving mode (which most acknowledged was their default style when coaching their teams). I was aware from the behavioural change literature that 'telling' or 'suggesting' had a negative impact and Bennett et al (2013) and Ladyshewsky (2017) speak to the same point. As one participant later remarked, "I have moved to 'listener' versus 'answerer'. Staff want to talk; I let them talk versus me telling them. They are failing a lot more, but they are thriving and learning from their mistakes, and I shield them and create a safe place to do that".

The triad design of the Pods was deliberate; it was a design I had used frequently throughout my career in professional development. It offers a mutual learning environment where each role played by the participant (the coach, coachee and observer) provides a unique angle on the learning experience and consequential skill development. Many 'ah-ha' moments were had by participants in this second meeting, some from their own reflection, but often from the feedback from the observer and the impact reported by the coachee. As time progressed, it was pleasing to see either the coach catching him/herself asking a leading or a closed question and stopping and reframing the question, or that it only required me to 'stop the action' for the coach to realise what he/she was doing.

Moving out of 'solution mode' and from telling to asking, was frequently referred to in the final reflection meeting as being the biggest learning and behavioural shift participants made. This participant sums it up well; "before I would problem solve – usually I would lead the horse, but I have flipped it around. [My team now] present me their proposed approach. I say 'pretend you are the customer, show me the experience, what would you do? They come to the conclusion on their own. It has led to the upskilling of my team". Another commented, "the biggest learning for me was that previously if someone came to me, I went straight to solutions and fixing the problem. That was my automatic response. I have learned that coaching is about listening, hearing the problem and helping people find their own solution. It has absolutely changed my approach. I now go in with more of a coaching mindset".

It was also pleasing to see the level of progress that had been made on goal attainment following the first meeting, and in cases where there had not been a lot of progress, a re-commitment by the participant to "do better next time". In part, I put this recommitment down to participants seeing the progress of others, rather than any commitment to me as the external coach (Ladyshewsky, 2017, Goldman et al, 2013). As one participant said, "I would probably have achieved my goals over time, but it would have taken [me] longer and it helped getting different inputs along the way".

Finally, it was encouraging to see the participants begin to really engage with their colleagues' challenges and, at appropriate times, offering their own insights. In a number of cases, the participants agreed to catch up outside the format of the Pod meetings to brainstorm ideas or rehearse difficult conversations. Thus not only was peer coaching happening, learning transfer was taking place. Many commented on the value of "bouncing ideas around and getting input from others", versus "being on their own".

At the end of the second meeting I set up the two self-directed meetings. While not involved, nonetheless I checked in with people ahead of these meetings as a way of continuing to encourage the group to get together.

It was always with some trepidation that I approached the final Pod meetings. Not only had it been three months since I last interacted with the Pods, the first few cohorts had the coaching component of the program interrupted by the long summer holidays. Would they have met at all? What would have been accomplished in those meetings? Would the energy still be there or would it have dissipated? What had they taken and transferred to others in the organisation and what had been the results?

83% of the Pods had met at least once, and 70% had met twice, which was a relief. In a small number cases the Pods had met more regularly. It is noteworthy that participation in the Pod coaching was not required to 'complete the program'. Goals had shifted, but progress had been made, and almost all said that they wanted to maintain some form of ongoing contact with their Pod colleagues. In checking in with the some of the groups a few months later, I was happy to hear that many had maintained contact.

By and large participants had continued the coaching to help their colleagues with their goal attainment. One participant summed it up like this: "I found [the two self-directed meetings] useful. It became increasingly natural the more practice that we did and as we got to know each other. It reinforced the process and rounded it out for me, especially in using open questions. It forces you to check in and I found them to be invaluable". Participants continued to build a safe space to share challenges and get support at a very difficult time in the organisation.

Finally, what about the impact on system in which these leaders operate, bearing in mind that this organisation was in crisis at the time of writing this paper?

Many participants reported positive impacts with their teams, their peers and other important stakeholders, including their line managers (Bennett et al, 2013 and Ladyshewsky, 2007). As one said, "I previously thought I was okay at leadership, I would give my opinion, I would listen to others, and then I would go on with my own opinions. Now I am letting others have their opinion, they take ownership and recently I walked out from a meeting with no action items of my own!" Another said, "I am seeing a shift in my team, e.g. there is one person previously who was always calling, looking for validation, now I have given him the confidence to make decisions and I am seeing the number of calls fall away – he has gained the power to trust himself".

I joined with the participants for a small part of their lives. Some reached out to me outside the formal catch ups, for more individualised support. I increasingly realised that I was part of their support system (as a trusted 'outsider') and that the conceptual design outlined in the prior section was contributing to the participants' ability to embed new skills and transfer the learning into the wider organisation. Specifically:

- The non-evaluative and safe environment created when peers coached each other, together with a level of trust in the Pod, was central to the effectiveness of the approach.
- Reciprocal peer coaching developed a coaching capability in the participants that they took into other contexts in the organisation, most notably with their teams, but also with other important stakeholders, including peers, managers, clients and business partners.
- It supported goal attainment, often creating better outcomes than participants would have achieved on their own.
- My role as a professional coach was important in teaching participants the coaching skills they needed to set them up for success, and for encouraging them to maintain commitment with the program.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper has demonstrated when peer coaching is used as an integral part of a LDP and when an experienced coach facilitates the first couple of meetings, not only does it support the individual to achieve their goals and learn new skills, it creates a positive impact on the system, an impact that was continuing to be seen five months after the end of the LDP. Individuals took the coaching skills they learned in order to coach their peers, and applied them in multiple organisational contexts, enhancing the capability of their teams and contributing to a coaching culture in the organisation more broadly.

Based on the findings, I recommend organisations contemplating leader development consider adopting the conceptual model outlined in this paper. Specifically:

- Add a peer coaching component following the initial Leadership Development Event. This provides the vehicle for skill practice. As participants commented, "you spend so much time in the three-day workshop, but the real value is in the practice in your day-to-day activities. Without the Pod meetings to remind you, and a space for reflection, it would not have been so valuable".
- Ensure that the peer coaching period is long enough to embed the behaviours being practiced. "For me it speaks to the importance of time – you can't change overnight – the six-month period is critical".
- Provide a safe ongoing supportive environment and use "real work" (the participants' goals) as the vehicle for learning and to assist with goal attainment. As another participant said, "you go to the workshop, link arms and sing Kumbaya. But afterwards when you need the support, no one is there. So the workshop on its own is not necessarily the answer. The Pod meetings helped me maintain the changes I wanted to make".
- Teach participants how to use a coaching framework and how to ask powerful questions and in particular avoid joining their colleague in problem-solving/advice given. Use a professional coach to facilitate the first couple of peer coaching sessions to set the participants up for success. "Left to your own devices it would've been more challenging; as much as you think you get it, you realise you don't, [the coach's] contribution helped a lot".

Finally, organisations need to expand their understanding of what best practice leadership development looks like, and to measure the impact of LDPs on the individual and the wider organisational system. The challenge for the academy is to undertake quantitative and longitudinal studies to support the findings reported here and determine the long term impact of the recommendations provided.

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# Revisiting the Relationship between Leadership Coaching and Learning: The Problems and Possibilities

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It is implicitly understood that learning is at the heart of coaching, prompting change as self-development, individual performance improvement and whole-organisation alignment. This paper reviews a selection of learning theories to enable a richer understanding of the possibilities and problems of learning theories for coaching practice. It highlights the potential of more 'socially' and 'critically' orientated perspectives.

Executive Coaching, Learning

## Introduction

The purpose of this theory paper is to examine closely, a range of learning theories that underpin coaching practice. Specific claims have been made that coaching 'creates the conditions for learning' (Hurd 2002: 124), and provides 'a model for effective learning' (Griffiths, 2005, p. 55), while the coach's job is to 'deepen the learning' (Whitworth et al., 1998). This points to the significant potential for coaching to enhance the systemic link between individual learning and organisational learning (Swart and Harcup (2013). However, Griffiths and Campbell (2009) argue that 'there appears to be little research which explicitly examines the learning process in coaching and only minimal literature which currently draws links between coaching and specific learning theory' (p. 17). This paper looks at three broad theories of learning, namely Behaviourism, Cognitive Constructivism, Social Constructivism. Social Constructionism is also broached. For each it identifies its main features, illustrates the way that it may inform coaching practice and then makes more explicit the potential problems and possibilities linked to its underpinning philosophical assumptions. The paper aims to foster enhanced reflective practice amongst coaches so that they may better articulate their coaching choices. It also aims to encourage coaches to move beyond the use of habitual, popular or safe theories of learning and coaching practices, to engage with more fully social perspectives that acknowledge the role of power.

## Methodology

As a theoretical paper, it integrated two separate literatures, namely theories of learning and accounts of coaching practice. The aim is to clarify the practical implications of the one for the other, and to present a more nuanced understanding of their underpinning assumptions. Consequently, the approach adopted addresses the important relationship between the 'what' and 'how' of learning (Ellinger and Bostrom, 2002), but also the 'why'. Thereby, coaches may understand that theories of learning are more complex than a selection of statements concerning principles and processes. They are underpinned by contrasting philosophies that have different implications for understanding the purpose of coaching, the nature of the challenges clients are trying to address, the relationship between the coach and the client, how knowledge is gained of the client's challenge, the unit of coaching analysis, and the value position to which participants subscribe.

## Theories of Learning

### Behaviourism

Behaviourist theories of learning were at the height of their popularity in the early part of the twentieth century, emerging from the work of Pavlov (1897), Watson (1913), Thorndike (1905) and Skinner (1948) as an attempt to model the study of human behaviour on the methods of the physical sciences. Broadly, this approach contends that since only overt behaviour can be observed and measured (albeit as the potential external manifestation of mental or emotional states) it is the only appropriate focus for scientific attention. Behaviour can be changed through a process of 'conditioning'; associating a desired response with an external stimuli, which is then reinforced by positive feedback and repetition (Skinner, 1938; Thorndike 1905). Put simply, 'behaviour is a function of its consequences' (Peltier, 2010, p. 81). Thus, learning may be understood as the successive approximation of an intended behaviour as a result of systematic schedule of contingent stimuli from the external environment.

**Coaching Possibilities**

The popularity of the behavioural approach in coaching derives from a simple preference for focusing on what people do (behaviour) rather than who they are (personality), because 'behaviour is the only thing a manager can deal with' (Mukherjee 2015, p.60). Moreover, in the context of the contemporary focus on performance management, it provides a seemingly objective process 'to measure an observable, often exclusively behavioural, difference in performance' (Peel, 2005: 20). So, Peltier (2010) suggests that, 'thoughtful application of behavioral principles' (p.47) is the foundation of coaching and the creation of any healthy and productive organisation.

Many popular models of coaching, such as Skiffington and Zeus's (2003) Seven-step Behvioural Coaching model and Eldridge and Dembkowski's ACHIEVE model (2012) have their roots implicitly or explicitly in behaviourism. It involves coach and client relating a client's challenges to specific behaviours (sometimes in conjunction with stakeholders), reducing complex behaviour patterns to their simplest components, and then specifying clear, achievable and measurable action-orientated goals that will lead to performance improvement. For example, in his book *Coaching for Leadership,* Marshall (2005) explains the importance of identifying, 'what are the key behaviours that will make the biggest positive change in increased leadership effectiveness' (p. 37). The coach will then work with the client to shape client responses over time, using procedures such as modeling, demonstration, and repetition for closer approximations to the targeted response. Achievement is accompanied by both extrinsic positive feedback from the coach, and an intrinsic sense of accomplishment on the part of the client. Finally the coach and client will work on strategies to maintain the change.

Behavioural coaching can also help clients identify ways in which they have been conditioned by their context, their history and people around them in ways that produce limiting behaviour. As Eldridge and Dembkowski (2012) explain, 'coaches assist clients to make changes through learning what in their environment, causes them to do one thing instead of another and the consequences of a behaviour that either causes them to continue doing something or to do something different' (p. 302).

**Coaching Problems**

Behaviourism displays may of the features of a positivist tradition. It has a 'strong' objectivist ontology, assuming that a client's challenges have a tangible existence that can be definitively known as a result of observing and measuring her practice. The coach remains independent and objective, behaving in a value free way. The approach seems to offer a reliable predictive relationship between coach strategies and client outcomes. However, Behaviourism has been criticised for being overly rational and reducing complexity to a simplistic and highly structured cause and effect mechanism. Little consideration is given to clients' introspective thought processes and the importance of more complex concept development (Fosnot, 1996). Also, by focusing on symptoms rather than causes fails to address the complicated 'problems that disrupt executives' ability to function' (Berglas, 2002, p. 90). Constraining structures and political dynamics are ignored. Indeed, Statt (1994) observes that while it has a 'clearly stated, no-nonsense style concentrating on objective and apparently common sense view of the human condition', it is 'reminiscent of the principles of Taylorism' (p. 19). Consequently, coaches could be accused of being merely behavioural engineers, and clients positioned as passive conformists to external stimuli, rather than active agents.

**Cognitive Constructivism**

By the middle of the twentieth century, interest in people as collections of behavioural responses to external stimuli was diminishing, as the focus shifted to what went on in the mind of the learner. The emergence of the computer provided a useful metaphor for the learner as an information processor, and there was concern to ensure the efficiency of the cognitive operations involved in receiving, organising, storing, rehearsing and retrieving new information. By the 1970s a more fully developed constructivist theory of learning had developed. Learners were no longer regarded as passive recipients of information that needed to be processed efficiently. Rather, in response to their experience of the world, people were considered to actively interpret and produce hypothetical conceptual 'constructions' of their encounter with 'reality' (Merriam et al., 2007). These mental structures are continuously reorganised as the learner encounters new ideas, information or situations that challenge or contradict the way they have previously come to think, and a state of disequilibrium or cognitive conflict is created. Piaget (1977) explains that balance is restored when we associate new information with what we already know, in effect *assimilating* it into our existing knowledge. When we are unable to do this, we *accommodate* the new information by restructuring our present knowledge to reach a deeper level of understanding; constructions become more differentiated, integrated and complex (Batchiroka and Cox 2007). This is sometimes regarded as a key characteristic of the adult mind (Huitt, 2004).

**Coaching Possibilities**

Cobb (1994) explains that, 'constructivists are typically concerned with the quality of individual interpretive activity' (p.15). Intriguingly, 'quality' may be understood along a continuum. At one end is a concern that someone's mental map corresponds with reality. So as Gray (2006) suggests, the task of the coach is to challenge the validity of a client's perception, raising awareness of erroneous beliefs and correcting 'cognitive errors' when sense making has not been rational or logical. This is also evident when Cox et al (2012) suggest that coaching 'can be viewed as a type of extended cognition…to move a little closer to a more complete understanding of the task and its resolution'. Clearly, this retains the objectivist assumptions of positivism. At the other end of the continuum is a concern that a client's constructions are viable, rather than true. Concern is with *reframing* understanding of an issue, rather than *revealing* a truthful understanding of an issue. This pragmatic orientation focuses more on the consequences of their worldview, and the utility of alternative constructions. Most Cognitive Constructivist coaching is positioned towards the former end of the continuum, but we will see the latter become more central to Social Constructivism, considered later.

The former position can be seen in the popularity of Cognitive-Behavioural Coaching. Some 'radical' Behaviourists have accepted that people do not simply respond to stimuli, but are influenced by their beliefs, attitudes and goals. As Athanasopoulos and Dopson (2015) explain, 'thoughts serve as mediators between a stimulus and an event and person's emotions, in the sense that the interpretation of an external event determines a person's emotional response and not the event itself' (p. 38). Consequently, coaching has an important role to play in helping a client examine, and potentially change, their belief system, especially where they are dysfunctional. Good et al (2010) point out that, 'by becoming aware of how thoughts create feelings, and eventually states of being, clients begin to learn the value of checking interpretations in context' (p. 18). So Cognitive-Behavioural Coaching (CBC) involves a 'psychological track [that] helps to remove the stumbling blocks to change such as procrastination, excessive self-doubt, indecisiveness, self-depreciation while the practical track assists clients to develop an orderly sequence of goal directed action steps' (Neenan 2008).

Some advocate the relevance of adult learning theories for coaching due to their underlying constructivist principles (Cox, 2006: 193). Gray (2006) argues that this collection of theories sees the manager 'as a problem-solving professional practitioner' (p. 477) taking an active role in engaging in and reflecting on their experiences. Knowles' (1978) notion of 'andragogy' is often regarded as a 'foundational' (Bennett and Campone 2016) theory in adult learning. His model proposes four principles: relevance of the learning to the learner, self-direction and control over learning, use of life experience as a learning resource, and the importance of intrinsic motivation. Cox (2006) charts the relationship between these assumptions and coaching (p.196) arguing that there is significant alignment because of their common depiction the learner as 'a mature, motivated, voluntary, and equal participant in a learning relationship with a facilitator whose role is to aid the learner in the achievement of his or her primarily self-determined learning objectives' (p. 195).

Adult learning theory positions experience at the core of learning. Learning can be enhanced by an explicit process of reflecting (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984). As Gray (2006) explains, using notions such as Donald Schon's (1987) 'reflection in and on action' means that the 'framing of situations can be made visible and raised as an object for discussion and public reflection' (p. 486). The GROW model (constructed by Graham Alexander in the mid-1980s and made popular by Whitmore, 1996) maps directly onto such experiential learning models.

Another popular constructivist model of adult learning is Mezirow's (2000) notion of Transformational Learning. He uses the term 'meaning schemes' to describe 'sets of immediate specific expectations, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and judgments— that we judge, typify objects, and attribute causality' (p. 18) as we grasp experience. The transformative element refers the way in which taken for granted assumptions may be challenged to such an extent that they produce a radical change in perspective. These assumptions can relate to psychosocial (our understanding of our selves as individuals), sociolinguistic (social norms, language use, and cultural codes that can lead to stereotypical judgments and prejudice), and epistemic (people's beliefs about what they know and how they come to know it) issues. The coach's role focuses on 'articulating and questioning' their client's premises (Cox 2006: 198) potentially drawing on techniques derived from Nancy Kline's 'Time to Think' (2001) and Susan Scott's 'Fierce Conversations' (2002). Mezirow (1991) sees this sort of reflection as an 'emancipatory action' that frees an individual from received models and fosters self-authoring.

**Coaching Problems**

As mentioned at the beginning of the last section, ontologically, there is disagreement as to whether the process of sense making helps us discover an external reality, or makes reality. There clearly remains the undiminished attraction of a true and final understanding of actors' reality in cognitive contructivism, an 'objectivist' impulse to get *accurate* interpretative accounts, despite the imperfect nature of subjectivity (von Glaserfeld, 1990). It is assumed that the more the person learns, the deeper and broader is her experience, and the closer the correspondence between that person's interpretations and objective reality. Others, although not dismissing the possibility of an objectively real world, argue that the only reality we can know are the multiple, 'idiosyncratic' (Richardson, 2003, p. 1623), and changing interpretations ascribed by actors to their experience through processes of sense making; this implies an idealist (the world is a creation of the mind/all we can know is our mental representations) ontology. Consequently, 'the world we inhabit is much more of our own making than we are usually prepared to recognize' (Morgan 1990, p. 21). Epistemologically, constructivism combines empiricism (all knowledge is based on experience derived from the senses) with subjectivism (knowing is in the cognitive activity of an individual as they make sense of the world), and rationalism (certainty about our constructions afforded by our ability to reason and apply logic to our experiences). It can also draw on pragmatism (we judge whether a conceptual model 'work' on the basis of its viability, adequacy or utility).

However, this approach has been criticised for being over-optimistic about the role of the individual sense maker. Simultaneously, the client plays the role of subject-who-reflects and the object that is reflected upon (Nadler, 1989). This heightened capacity for self-awareness is echoed by an expectation for autonomy and agency, an unfettered and equal ability to make rational choices and assume responsibility for decisions and actions. However, human experience is not wholly consciously organised or orchestrated, it is impacted by others, material conditions and social structures to the extent that as we will see later, some argue the client is potentially disempowered.

**Social Constructivism**

In the last few years, concerns have been expressed about the individual, isolated mind constructing the world from their experience, in a social vacuum. Psychological Constructivism had focused on personal meaning making, now Social Constructivism recognises learning to be socially mediated; not only is there a focus on coherence between different cognitive patterns within an individual's mind, but also consensus between the plurality of cognitive patterns of different individuals. This third wave of cognitivism recognises learning as a shared rather than an individual experience (Prawat and Floden, 1994). Social interaction is key to the approach. Shared meanings evolve inter-subjectively, as learners collaborate, share perspectives and negotiate meaning to co-construct new knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Realin, 2001; Senge, 1990).

For example, Shotter (1993) focuses on the way that interaction cannot be attributed to one or the other person in a social exchange; rather they are entirely interdependent. Learning occurs in spontaneous momentary 'joint action' in the immediacy and authenticity of lived experience from within the moment of a 'flow of events' (p. 7). The focus is on the synergistic 'middle space' that emerges in dialogue when we are 'fully present', and that becomes more than each person interacting. He characterises these 'singular, shortlived, poetic moments' (Katz and Shotter, 1996, p. 928), where we are 'struck' (Shotter and Cunliffe, 2003), as 'withness thinking'. He contrasts this with 'aboutness thinking' where we intellectually analyse from a distance to give a pre-planned technical response. The former has a generative quality, producing new possibilities for action.

Inevitably, any collaborative activity is 'situated' *in* a specific context, rather than taking place in the abstract. Indeed, socio-cultural versions of social constructivism have drawn attention to the way in which our understanding of 'reality' is mediated through pre-existing, culturally-specific conceptual frameworks and cognitive tools, such as language, artifacts and material conditions. For example, there has been a keen interest in the way people draw on an enduring stock of stories to make meaning, 'larger cultural narrative frames' (Drake 2010 p.121) that provide legitimate or authorized meanings to situations *for* others (Boje, 1995). They can also choose new stories to make a different sense of the challenges facing them. So, here context is understood as a backdrop or container. As Schuh and Barab (2007: 74) explain, 'the individual mind, although influenced by social context, is not one with social context', thus retaining a subject/world dualism.

**Coaching Possibilities**

Social constructivism can be seen at the root of a growing interest in the way that the coach and client construct a reality together. For example, Bachkirova (2017) describes coaching as 'a complex interpretative process' involving 'joint meaning-making' and (p. 31). Armstrong (2012) describes this as a dialogue between coach and coachee that takes the form of 'joint action' (p. 34) to explore 'the ways that the coachee constructs meaning about any given situation'. As this exploration develops, '"Aha" moments or new learning' (p.36) occurs where 'meaning is re-authored and solutions to dilemmas or problems emerge' (p. 33). Armstrong draws directly on Shotter's work to explain that such dialogic coaching requires the skill of 'reflexive relational-responsiveness' (Shotter 2006) which relies on 'presence, acting "into" opportunities (by asking questions and responding to invitations), as well acting as "against" barriers and restrictions that coachees offer us (by gently but persistently disputing these barriers)' (p. 42). Similarly, Critchley (2010) advocates the practice of relational coaching. He says that the 'coach and client are engaged in a process of reciprocal influence' (p.855. The coach needs to be capable of 'self-awareness and reflexivity, to allow themselves to be subject to the process of relating rather than to be in control of it and hence to be open to being changed [themselves] by the interaction' (p. 855-6). Indeed some writers have proposed that individual coaching can never be as impactful as team or group coaching (Clutterbuck, 2013). While there is the added the complexity of team dynamics to manage, nevertheless it affords a collaborative scenario for sharing, challenging and transforming interpretations.

Drake is a champion of narrative coaching as, 'a powerful method for helping coachees to (1) become more aware of their own stories, (2) recognize how these stories shape their identity and behaviour at both conscious and unconscious levels, (3) understand that these stories are personally and socially constructed, and (4) be more authorial in aligning their stories with identities and actions that would enable them to authentically embody a new way of being in the world' (Drake 2010 p. 130). Vogel (2012) recognises the power of the numerous social narratives to which we are subject, when he says that they can be 'mutually contradictory and confusing, even disempowering, for the client. People can end up playing involuntary roles that they have not chosen'. Coaching that is sensitive to narrative can help clients 'to make sense of the web of stories of which they are a part and to exercise more discretion in how they are influenced by and, in turn, influence them' (p. 3).

**Coaching Problems**

Social constructivist coaching accepts that multiple realities may be co-constructed, reflecting the consensus arising between client, coach and other parties, and the circumstances of the particular context, including cultural, economic, political arrangements. However, the co-creation of coaching insight ignores social conflict. A picture of unity and consensus, and the comfortably liberal sense of plurality inherent in the approach, fails to acknowledge the embeddedness of interaction in asymmetrical power relations. Relationships are mediated by participants' position in hierarchies of power and privilege constructed around such factors as class, caste, gender, age, and sexualityIt ignores the struggles between participants to exert control over different aspects of practice, including the coach/client dynamic. Moreover, there is a concern about the way that this can lead to social conformity. Gee (1999) is concerned that 'workers are tacitly immersed and tamed in taken-for-granted values, norms, cultural models, and narratives of the company' (p. 65) such that it 'inherently serves rather than challenges the system' (Lois and Fatien Diochon 2018, p. 3).

More sociological versions - social construct*ionism* - prioritise the social over the individual, arguing that context precedes and constructs what we take for granted as 'real'. For example, *discourses,* institutionalized ways of speaking or writing about reality, define what we can say, do, think and feel. Indeed, this has resulted in a questioning of the central psychological construct of the knowing subject. It is argued that, rather than being 'born' as a self-conscious agent with intrinsic qualities - the essential me - the self is 'made' in response to an address by social meanings that position the person in the world 'in a certain way prior to the individual having any sense of choice' (Alvesson and Deetz, 1999: 199). The modern world has 'produced' a view of persons as productive, docile conforming workers, in keeping with the requirements of progressive, capitalist economic system

This has led some to take a critical or sceptical stance to towards the often taken-for granted assumptions about the categories we use to interpret and divide the world, and the interests they serve. The work of Foucault (1991) has been significant here leading some to argue that learning, and indeed coaching, is a means of disciplining individuals to become a particular type of person, one that is productive and efficient to facilitate the economic needs of this consumer age. Indeed, Askeland (2009) suggests that a continuous focus on improvement may result in the exhaustion of the client. In response, some see the need to educate the 'responsible' (Gray, 2004 p.180) manager who has a 'complicated understanding' (Dehler *et al* 2001, p. 498) of the social processes that sustain historical and culturally specific 'truths' that limit our thinking and acting, something that may be facilitated through more critical forms of coaching. For example, Shoukry & Cox (2018) suggest that coaches should help their clients to analyse how they are affected by the 'socio-historical processes, organisational politics and power dynamics' (p. 11) of their context. They see coaching as a social process that is both 'a product of and a contributor to the reshaping of its social context' (p.2), and want to ensure that coaching 'will not merely be a tool for conformity that serves the powerful but also an enabler of change that empowers everyone'.

## Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to review a selection of theories of learning and identify their possibilities and problems for coaching practice. It was motivated by a concern about the disconnect between claims that learning is at the heart of coaching, and the limited articulation of the commitments underpinning different theories of learning. Each learning approach has a distinct philosophy that can have a profound impact on expectations and practice.

We all have implicit ideas about the nature of reality, how we engage with the world and what we value that inform theories of learning. These are fundamental issues that in turn have an impact on the purpose, process and conduct of coaching. Consequently, it is incumbent on researchers to make their framework of assumptions explicit when they present their work. It is also valuable for us all to take a moment to identify and reflect on our own assumptions, introducing an honesty about their consequences, both positive and negative.

This paper celebrates the multiplicity of perspectives on learning. It is important to stress that we need to move beyond our obsession with 'the true nature of learning' and appreciate that each approach sheds a different light on aspects of learning. The review considered the reassuring certainty of the causal relationship between measurable inputs and outputs that underpins systematic models of coaching, the multiplicity of personal interpretations of experience that coaching can reveal and explore, the rich complexity involved in the collective construction of 'reality' and potential offered by coaching to facilitate multiple dialogues, the facilitation of client learning embedded in the spontaneity of joint action, along with the role of 'critical' coaching to support clients' identity work amidst context-specific discourses. There is a significant resource for both researchers and practitioners to embrace, highlighting the value of stepping outside habitual and conventional approaches.

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# Shift the perspective: pay attention to those who are "not in the room"

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**Abstract:** Executive coaching is generally considered an individual intervention. In many circumstances, however, the identified individual behavior is a symptom of the wider group or organizational system. Selected psychology literature on group relations is reviewed, and two real-life executive coaching cases are analyzed, to support a holistic and systemic approach that encompasses multidimensional interrelationships.

**Key words:** Executive coaching, systemic thinking, group-as-a-whole, intergroup relations, transformational learning

## Introduction

In remedial coaching engagements, coaches are often called upon to "fix" the "trouble-maker" on a team. In many cases, this approach will not work. According to Tobias (1996), "coaches may inadvertently participate in the scapegoating of an individual by an organization or by a boss who is unable or unwilling to look deeply enough at the ways that the environment may be supporting conditions underlying the individual's seemingly maladaptive response" (pp. 88-89). The identified individual behavior may not occur in isolation, but instead be a symptom of the wider group or organizational system. The individual contributes to the situation, but the underlying cause can lie with the wider system. Additionally, executive coaching clients have leadership responsibility or seek to develop their leadership capacity and are typically embedded within the team/organizational context. They expect coaches to serve as their thought partners, which requires a capacity to think systemically. The success of the coaching engagement depends on incorporating knowledge of the behavior of the group and the organization. The paper is structured into the following major sections: (1) methodology, (2) review of selected literature and case studies, (3) summary of major findings, and (4) conclusions and recommendations.

## Methodology

Integrated literature review and case study serve as the foundation of the paper. Two real-life executive coaching cases conducted by the author are illustrated and analyzed to demonstrate the application of the theory and concepts. Data collection is primary from observations and filed notes. The analytical results of the case studies are then compared to outcomes grounded in a review of the literature.

## Review of literature and case studies

This paper integrates peer-reviewed journals, books, and articles related to group relation theories of W. R. Bion, L. Wells, and C. P. Alderfer as well as concepts mainly from two practitioners: M. Cavanagh and Dr. P. Hawkins.

### Literature Review

**Definitions:** The core concept in group relation theories is "group-as-a-whole" (Bion, 1961; Wells, 1995). It introduces the group dynamic as an interplay between individual needs and the mentality and culture of the group. Table 1 illustrates the definition of "group-as-a-whole" from selected sources.

Table 1*:*

*Descriptions of group-as-a-whole*

| **DEFINITIONS OF GROUP-AS-A-WHOLE** | |
|---|---|
| **Author/Source** | **Description** |
| Bion (1961) | Group life exists above or below that of individual group members. Basic assumption mentality incurs when the group tends to avoid work on the primary task, which is often unconscious.<br><br>In basic assumption mentality, the group's behavior is directed at attempting to meet the unconscious needs of its members by reducing anxiety and internal conflicts. |
| Wells (1995) | "when a co-actor (individual group member) acts, he or she is acting not only on his or her behalf but behalf of the group or parts of the group. Co-actor behavior from a group level perspective cannot be simply examined by assuming that the motivation and genesis of the co-actor is merely a function of his or her idiosyncrasies. The co-actor is seen as a vehicle through which the group expresses its life." (p. 54) |

Bion and Well's research shifted the subject of analysis unit from the level of a person to the interpersonal and group level. Bion's (1961) concept focuses on group mentality and he asserts that there is a group life which exists independently that of individual group members. He distinguishes three basic assumptions mentality in the group life– dependency, fight-flight, and pairing – to explain particular group feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. Groups unconsciously exhibit these behaviors to cope with anxiety and conflict. Well (1995) stresses the interdependence between a group member and the group-as-a-whole phenomenon's impact on that member.

Group-as-a-whole explains why an individual's behavior must be viewed in synthesis with its interaction with the life and mentality of the wider group. Bion (1961) asserts that the essential issue of individuals in groups is the tension and ambivalence created by the struggle between belonging and separation by the group. The way to deal with this frustration is through projective identification as a coping mechanism. Projective identification (Melanie Klein, 1946) is the process in which the individual splits off certain (usually undesirable) parts of themselves and unconsciously projects them onto an external object. For example, an individual might project their feelings of dependence and of lack of confidence onto others so as to maintain their image of independence and competence. On the other hand, if the individual prefers to be perceived as group-oriented and cooperative, they may tend to project their self-reliant nature onto others. The group setting allows them to use other group members as objects for expressing aspects of themselves. As a result, each group member, if they respond to this projection, may become a receptacle for the projected qualities of their cohorts. Through projective identification, group members connect to one another through feelings and emotions originally belonging to themselves, such as love, hate, guilt, contempt, etc.

Whether the group members' response to the projection and their tendency to response to certain types of projections are defined as valence (Bion, 1961). According to Wells (1995), "The projective identification between the individuals (subject and object) involves unconscious collusion" (p.65). Wells (1995) further explains that, an individual's personal and social identity drives their valence. This includes their psychological status, their personality, and attributions ascribed to their identity group. For example, men usually respond to aggressiveness and dominance and play a competitive and rational role, while women tend to respond to agreeableness and deference, and are associated with the nurturing and affective roles. Therefore, valence plays a vital role in formalizing an individual's roles in the group, which structures group life when dealing with a task, resolving a conflict, and managing the group's emotional life.

Wells (1995) postulates that all roles have the purpose. Common roles include task maker, caretaker, clown, scapegoat, protector, etc. Among these, scapegoating is most common, most costly, and most destructive to the group and to the individual, particularly in work groups. The group creates the scapegoat to absorb their undesired negative feelings, such as anxiety, self-doubt, or weakness. The scapegoat serves as an imperfect solution for the group to maintain group life on the surface while leaving the cause of the negative feelings unexamined. According to Wells (1995), "the group-as-a-whole phenomenon often defined as personality problems or personal incompetence may, in reality, be a manifestation of the group's struggle with its anxiety and tension. It can explain a large portion of the variance in individual behavior within groups" (p. 85). The section on case studies will describe scapegoating in detail.

Intergroup relationship theory (Alderfer, 1986) emphasizes the importance of the broader context (organization or social group) on shaping the relationships between individuals or groups. According to Alderfer (1977), the basis for intergroup relations can develop from two categories of groups: identity groups, i.e., those sharing a common worldview (such as race, ethnicity, or age), and organizational groups, i.e., those sharing a common view of the organization (such as type of work, or place in the hierarchy). He postulates that the interaction between two individuals should be viewed as the interaction between the salient social and organizational group memberships those two individuals represent. The salient memberships in a given situation depend upon the presence of representatives of other groups and upon the relationships among social groups. Since the individuals serve as representatives of groups, which are in turn embedded in the broader system of the organization, the interactions between individuals and groups parallel system-level affects, cognitions, and behaviors. Therefore, observation of individuals and groups can provide crucial data about dynamics at a broader level (Orenstein, 2002).

The research of two practitioners, M. Cavanagh and Dr. Hawkins, sheds additional light. Cavanagh (2006) explores coaching activity through the lens of a systemic perspective. He stated, "Working with an individual is working with the team and the wider organization which this individual involved. Similarly, one cannot work with a team without having an impact at the level of the individual" (Cavanagh, 2006, p. 326). Hawkins & Smith (2010) shows that raising awareness of people or relationships that are "not in the room" is key for clients to experience "perspective transformation" (Mezirow, 1991), which leads to transformational learning. According to Hawkins & Smith (2010), transformational coaching sits at one end of a spectrum of coaching, and targets the second order change, that is, radical change in assumptions about significant elements of life. The linkage between transformational coaching and systemic thinking is that transformational coaching requires the coach to equip a client with the mindset of systemic thinking. In application, the coach starts to understand a client's situation from a broader view of the system of which they are a part, and then moves from there to the specifics presently at play. To be aware of the broader view of the system, Hawkins & Smith (2010) argued that coaches need to enhance their listening capacity and consciously pay attention to elements in the system beyond the client in the room.

**Origin:** The concept of individuation introduced by Jung (1921) serves as the foundation of group relation theories. Individuation is the process in which the unconscious and conscious are integrated and stresses the significance of the role of the unconscious in individual and group behavior. The unconscious has two layers: the personal and the collective. Whereas the nature of the personal unconscious is a storehouse of temporarily forgotten or repressed memories specific to the particular individual, the collective unconscious is inborn and contains archetypes (Jung, 1947), images and thoughts with universal meanings across cultures, including the persona, the shadow, the anima, the animus, and the Self. Jung argued that these archetypes are products of the collective experience of humans living together. According to Jung, the therapist serves as a vital instrument to help the individual enhance the individuation process through identifying and bringing the unconsciousness, both personal and collective, into consciousness.

**Related concepts:** The boundary is a related concept, key in the open systems theory that helps to better understand these core concepts. The boundary regulates, protects, and separates the system from the outside environment. According to McCollom (1995), "the group boundary refers to observable and subjective measures that people use to distinguish members of a group from outsiders" (p. 38). "Observable" group boundaries, according to Alderfer (1976), are physical, spatial, and temporal. For example, a group sitting area creates the physical boundary that describes the group. "Subjective" boundaries are the "psychosocial basis of group structure" (Hartman and Gibbard, 1974, p. 155). They separate those who belong from those who do not.

The "fit" between the permeability of a system and the need for the system to receive external resources plays a critical role in a system's vitality. According to Alderfer (1976), there are three statuses of permeability: under-bounded, over-bounded, and optimally bounded. Over-bounded represents a system shut off and unable to incorporate information and resources from the external environment. Under-bounded describes a system which fails to regulate or organize its activities. Optimally bounded signifies a boundary permeability that fits and supports the exchange of activities between the system and the external environment.

## Case Studies

**Case I:** It was initially a remedial coaching engagement; an executive at one of the top companies in the market called upon a coach to help Mike, one of her "mentees," deal with his integration into a new company. Mike had more than a decade experience at start-ups before joining this large, heavily matrixed, and rapidly growing organization. He was excited to open a new chapter in his career, but after almost six months, he found himself very frustrated and unfulfilled. He had not yet produced any concrete and tangible deliverable. During coaching, Mike was open and expressive. He was overwhelmed by the massive quantity of information he needed to learn, much of which was not available in any shared resource, but only accessible by asking coworkers, a substantial detriment to productivity. On top of this, Mike struggled with the organization's "self-service" culture. There was virtually no onboarding and integration support. Mike was expected to figure out how things "really work" on his own. Mike's boss was concerned about his ability to deliver and questioned his "asking too many questions," which created a perception of lack of competence. When the coach asked, "What has been your most significant impact in these six months on the job?" he replied with a confused look. "I was too busy struggling my way up the learning curve. I took the initiative to organize several learning sessions among different team members to create a collective learning environment. Every member joined, even the team leader. Everyone seemed happy, even though no one else had an interest in organizing it." Mike's previous experience had not prepared him to operate in an environment of independence and self-reliance. Mike was less sensitive towards the values, norms, and guiding assumptions that define acceptable behaviors in the new organization. What colleagues in other companies might have seen as thoughtful consultation with others was in this new setting viewed as indecisive or lacking conviction. Some of his behaviors negatively affected how others perceived his intentions and capabilities. On its face, it looked like a typical on-boarding challenge: an outsider enters into a new and unfamiliar environment and struggles to fit into the culture, a problem that a change in behavior can address. But is this really the whole story?

Two interesting points attracted the coach's attention. One was Mike's 360 review results, in which everyone gave high praise for his efforts at enhancing team collaboration but would not show overt support by initiating or facilitating team sessions themselves. Second was an incident with Ray, who had the longest tenure on the team. When Mike sought help from Ray, Ray publically shouted at him, "Why do you ask so many questions? Do you want me to do the work for you?" Mike felt humiliated. This exchange destroyed Mike's confidence and changed his behavior. Why did Ray react in such an extreme and angry way?

Those two points encouraged the coach to delve deeper into the team dynamic. It turned out that the team's manager exercised an authoritarian leadership style that focused on results. The "self-service" culture manifested in how work was distributed and in undertaken. Each person chose their project and then worked alone, in a silo. Collaboration within the team, both formal and informal, was limited. Moreover, the team experienced a 50% turnover rate over the previous year, half due to dismissal for performance issues, and half due to voluntary resignations. Surveys of team members expressed employee dissatisfaction with their job. The team had serious systemic issues.

This situation was the result of a confluence of several factors: the demands of group-as-a-whole, personal valence, and boundary permeability.

Mike played a couple of important roles in his group. First, he served as spokesman for the group. Horwitz (1985) assigned the term spokesman to an individual who assumes a leadership role in expressing the dominant theme of the group. The group used its collective wisdom to select this expressive, group-oriented new member to fill this role in order to address the team's collaboration deficiencies. The group members clearly enjoyed their spokesman and were at least partly consciously aware that Mike expressed the shared need. However, according to Horwitz (1985), "the group is content to disown the spokesman" (p. 29), a phenomenon manifested in the covert, anonymous means of expressing their appreciation. He did what the other members didn't dare to contemplate, but unconsciously wanted, because it could be perceived as challenging the effectiveness of the culture and norms of the system. The team had failed to deal with the pressing issue of gaps in knowledge, until Mike exposed the issue in addressing it on the team's behalf.

Second, Mike played the role of scapegoat, the depository of projected attributes and emotions that group members found difficult to accept in themselves and in one another. These were generally negative and unexpressed emotions, experienced as threatening (Wells, 1995). The organization had a reputation for intelligent, competitive, and innovative employees, recognized as geniuses. Behaviors like "asking questions" or "seeking help" were perceived as signs of incompetence and vulnerability, unwanted characteristics in this elite group and in a corporate culture of self-reliance. Ray's extreme reaction to Mike, reinforced by team leader's orientation towards results and individual work, reflected the group's increasing inhibition towards expressing their negative feelings for the leadership and the culture. These feelings resulted in Mike bearing the cost of the destructive dynamic. As the process continued to unfold, Mike became alienated and scapegoated. Mike, being vocal and expressive, made his frustration and struggle visible, and thus became viewed as the "problem member." The scapegoat is unconsciously utilized to act out a shared collective issue of the group (Banet & Hayden, 1977). Mike suffered the team's emotional stress openly. Since the focus was on the individual, the social system can appear emotionally stable and healthy (Napier & Whitaker, 1978) and the destructive aspects of the system remain unexamined.

Group membership was essential to Mike's identity and success. Therefore, Mike might have been inclined to collude with the group as a receptacle for other members' unwanted emotions. According to Gemmill (1989), the scapegoat is a willing victim who does not fit into the social system and tends to personalize their failures as a result of their own attributes. Mike coped with his difficulties through self-criticism and working an extreme number of extra hours, which only exacerbated the pressure and frustration. It was a vicious cycle.

In this case, opportunities for a coach to intervene at individual level were limited. The coach helped the client understand how the system played a role in his failures, and provided support for him to maintain an objective, less self-critical view. However, the misalignment between the team culture, leadership style, processes, and individual motivation remained untouched. The individual coaching engagement brought to the surface the systemic problems requiring team coaching or organizational consultation.

**Case II:** A young and gifted female executive director of a giant global financial banking institution shared her struggle to balance her local and regional responsibilities. This dual responsibility structure happened by design. Her primary responsibility was regional governance with a direct reporting line to a regional director. However, since she was part of the local headcount (due to personal reason, she had to stay at local), she also had a dotted reporting line to the country head to support operational activities at the country level. Although there was a clear line of authority along one dimension and strong coordination along another one, in reality, the distinction between the direct line and the dotted line was fading. Both bosses assumed their request was the primary priority. Moreover, her peers at both regional and local levels had very different understandings and expectations of her role. She had difficulty managing the steady stream of competing deadlines coming simultaneously from two bosses. Interestingly, though both bosses had the same rank and reported to the same regional head, they did not communicate with each other very well. The client said: “Everyone wants a piece of me, so managing conflict becomes my major role on a daily basis.” The client wanted to enhance her stakeholder management and communication skills through coaching in order to cope with the multiple bosses' dilemma. When I asked her to explain her role explicitly, she paused for a while, and said: “I do not know how to answer you since I am not sure about that.”

The boundary, the demands of group-as-a-whole, intergroup relations (social identities), and understanding of parallel processes play important roles in this case.

By asking “What is the cause?” the coach directed the client's attention towards the organizational structure and responsibility scope. The dual reporting structure was created to address the headcount allocation initially. More than the dual reporting structure, it was the ambiguity of her role and responsibilities which served as the root cause of conflict. The boundaries of her role were neither clearly specified in advance nor agreed upon by all stakeholders. As a result, the boundaries were subverted, and when conflicts arose, there were no standards to follow. The boundaries thus failed to serve as a constraint in support of task operation. She was unable to escalate the issue due not only to a lack of political capital, but also to the relationship between her two bosses. The bosses personally and professionally maintained a highly impermeable boundary (over-bounded). They purposefully avoided direct communication and were reluctant to clarify respective roles and responsibilities – a state of affairs that revealed much about the power dynamic between their two teams. At the same time, she could see how and why the organization set her into the scapegoat role which reinforced her inability to function well: by unconsciously emphasizing her incompetency, attention would be deflected away from ambiguities in her role, and thus maintain current structure intact. Furthermore, as long as the struggle remained at the individual level, organizational members could unconsciously share in the fantasy that her stakeholder conflict management issues could be rectified on their own, miraculously creating harmony and efficiency without any changes on their part.

When the client causally mentioned the role of gender, the coach guided her to explore its impact on her. In the process, she discovered how the formal, highly hierarchical structure of the organization, with roles of power and authority held predominantly by males, contributed to a prevailing culture of rationality and linearity, that relegated all other groups, including hers, to lesser status, and she became aware of how this culture inculcated her self-imposed feeling of obligation to outperform in order to gain status.

As a second key intervention, the coach brought focus back to the client by posing a challenging question: “What is your contribution to this situation?” Her high standards also contributed to the permeability of her boundary. She was committed not to let herself or others down, especially her bosses. For her, this meant giving her best to everything, and not doing anything – like saying no -- that might give a different impression. For her, coping with her dilemma by better managing the stakeholders was about protecting or defending the self she wanted others to see, or the way she wanted to see herself, even when the costs were high.

The client's confusion and frustration resulted from her personal and social identity in concert with pitfalls in the larger system operating around her. The coach's intervention raised her awareness of the ineffectiveness of current boundaries, both personal and organizational. By allowing intrusions into her personal boundary, she had unconsciously colluded with the organization to place herself into the role of victim of the power struggle between local and regional teams, and to maintain lack of clarity in the design of her responsibilities. Her experience paralleled the organization's struggles on a large-scale level.

## Findings

Literature review and case studies identify the following patterns.

The focus of a systemic approach is the interdependence, relationships, and impact of each element within the system. The wider system present in a coaching engagement raises awareness of the role played by the individual in the team or group, rather than of the individual alone. Group roles operate largely outside of awareness. Attention needs to be given to the unconscious elements which drive an individual's and group's behavior and play a powerful role as not only context, but likely as the cause of problems under consideration (Orenstein, 2002).

Psychological boundary permeability plays a crucial role in determining to what extent the external environment can influence an individual's behavior. The coach can enhance the boundary awareness through asking provocative questions and can support clients to optimize boundary permeability.

A systemic approach plays a pivotal role in a client's learning and changing experience by shifting their perspective from the internal to the relational and external. This perspective shift broadens and enhances their understanding of the situation, providing a more holistic, complete, and objective viewpoint that helps clients grow to be fully present and responsive.

## Conclusion

First, coaches should keep a "think systemically, act locally" mindset. An identified individual behavior is sometimes a symptom of problems in the wider system, so coaches must first get an understanding that starts with a broader view of the system, and must be able to distinguish causes from symptoms, in order to accurately diagnose the situation. Only then coaches should cautiously approach the specifics at play. This contrasts sharply with what we're usually told to do in the contracting phase, that is, to narrow down the topic under consideration as specifically as possible. Through intentional inquiry, coaches can facilitate a shift in the client's perspective. A systemic approach thus provides an additional lens essential in examining a behavior or situation.

Second, both elements – the client and the system – contribute to a behavior. Therefore, the coach should help raise clients' understanding that their circumstances are only part of an issue in which the surrounding system also plays a part, often the most important part. It is vital for the coach to stress the fact that the individuals are vehicles through which the group or system expresses its life and mentality. Therefore, the client has to deal not only with their own emotions, but also with the repressed emotions of other group members. This factor is critical in certain high-context culture environments, since people tend to personalize issues, as well as with the ones whose boundaries are highly permeable, resulting in low self-esteem and high self-criticism.

Third, given the interdependent nature of the systemic view, coaches need to be mindful that intervening on an individual also intervenes on the system through the individual. On the one hand, coaches should design their intervention employing both individual and collective dimensions, leveraging feedback and feed-forward conversation. On the other hand, it is important to consider how the client's behavioral change will be perceived within the system with which the client is connected, and what potential unintended consequences might ensue. A change in behavior can raise others' anxiety and elicit defensive responses.

Understanding the limitations of executive coaching with an individual and the boundary between team coaching and organizational consultation allows us to suggest that clients seek the services of other professionals or disciplines when appropriate. A holistic approach that encompasses work from other disciplines can enhance coaching's impact. Given that executive coaching is situated in an organizational leadership context, the organization will benefit from the results, and can leverage individual executive coaching as a sound and effective channel for bring awareness of related unconscious team or organizational issues.

Finally, the ability to understand the situation and the capacity to diagnose the issues on team and organizational levels requires extensive knowledge of clinic psychology and of psychological concepts and technologies on group and organizational dynamics. Enhancing knowledge in these areas is essential for developing a systemic mindset.

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# Value and ROI of Coaching & Developing Women Leaders: Why it makes an impact for the individual and the organization

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**Abstract.** Investing in women leaders is important. Yet business leaders rarely understand the in-depth data behind why developing women leaders makes a financial impact to organizations. Studies show gains of 34% increase in profit margins (Adler, 2001), 16% return on sales (Joy, et. al 2007), improved problem-solving capabilities (Hong & Page, 2004 and Woolley et. al., 2010), increased innovation (Leung, et. al., 2008) and more when companies invest in women leaders. But research doesn't explain why investing in women pays off. We wanted to uncover exactly what makes a difference in the coaching and development of women leaders, how it truly makes a tangible change for women and organizations and why it leads to monetary gains.

**Key Words:** ROI, return-on-investment, financial value, women leaders, systemic change.

## Introduction

This is a qualitative and quantitative case-study paper that uses surveys and interviews to capture qualitative data from individuals and is focused on the "whole-person", as well as quantitative financial data reflecting the "whole-organization" value and impact. Surveys with rating scales on topics ranging from setting goals and gender intelligence to strategic thinking and behavioral changes provide a way to collect insights on individual change at the "whole-person" level. Additionally, financial data on the ripple effect of change provided insight on "whole-organization" level. This allowed us to gain a rich understanding of the impact of developing women leaders. This financial data, including ROI metrics, was collected through women participants to further the understanding of the fiscal impact of coaching and developing women leaders.

## Methodology

Over a period of six (6) months, a women's leadership- development program that included group and individual coaching was provided for twelve (12) women leaders. Data was collected throughout the study and three intervals: the start, the mid-point and at the end of the study. Survey instruments were designed to answer the following questions:

1. Do women value experience of participating in a leadership program designed specifically around women's issues?
2. Do women report improvements in personal effectiveness as a result of leadership development?
3. Do women report improvements in clarity on topics related to specific issues they face in organizations?
4. Do insights gained by women turn into action?
5. How committed are women to the organization as a result of the program?
6. How does a development program specific to women result in a monetary improvement within the organization?

7. Does investment in a development program specific to women produce a monetary return-on-investment for the organization?

Data was captured throughout the program. Interview data was organized, coded and reported by theme. Survey items are reflected in Table 1-5. Survey data was captured from the women participants, organized and reported. All data was shared with the organization at the conclusion. Financial data was validated by the organizational sponsor.

**Literature Review/ Conceptual Framework**

Investing in women leaders is important. And yet, even though investing in the development of women leaders from the perspective of a social and human responsibility is necessary, business leaders rarely understand the in-depth data behind why developing women leaders makes a tangible, measurable impact to organizations.

Research consistently demonstrates that there is real financial value in women as leaders. Studies show gains of 34% increase in profit margins (Adler, 2001), 16% return on sales (Joy, et al 2007), improved problem-solving capabilities (Hong & Page, 2004 and Woolley et. al., 2010), increased innovation (Leung, et. al., 2008) and more when companies invest in women leaders. In a recent study, meta-analysis of the direct effects of women in leadership roles on the financial performance of the organization continues to support existing research that a valid business case for women's leadership exists (Hoobler et. al., 2018). While the financial business case for elevating women to positions of leadership seems unarguable, high-level research that examines the relationship of women to the overall financial performance of the organization doesn't explain why investing in women pays off.

This study was designed to uncover exactly what makes a difference in the development of women leaders, how it makes a tangible change in organizations and why it leads to monetary gains. To dissect the reasons why investment in developing women leaders makes a financial impact for organizations, it was necessary to conduct this study within an organization where real, financial value could be captured and measured.

**Conceptual Framework**

The intent of the intervention was to support the development of women leaders through content related to women's issues, followed by group and individual 1:1 coaching. The overall goal was to prepare women for future leadership roles.

Over six months, women participated in the program covering nine (9) topics ranging from setting goals and gender intelligence to strategic thinking. To aid in retention and accommodate different learning styles, content was provided online, in facilitated meet-ups, 1:1 coaching, reflection exercises and worksheets.

The intervention was conducted online and face-to-face. Support materials were provided.

Data was collected at the start, mid-point and end of the intervention.

## Findings

Overall, all 12 women made the most progress in growing their awareness. In fact, women gained clarity in eight (8) of the nine (9) topics covered.

Upon closer inspection, it is evident that not only did women learn about what it means to be leaders, they also gained awareness how their gender could get in the way of their success. In addition to clarity gained, behavior change was also measured. Interestingly, there were only two (2) areas where behavior change was significant: taking leaps and amplifying the contributions of others.

While this change may seem small, it proved to be a catalyst for something much bigger. These new behaviors led to a significant chain reaction, providing financial impact. To be specific, the
program generated financial monetary gains of $2,306,040 with an ROI of 2,271%, which was validated by the Sponsor.

The following research questions were answered by the results. Details to answer each of the research questions are provided in the following pages. Research topics:

1. Response and perceived clarity gained on topics related to specific issues women face in organizations
2. Self-report of skills gained throughout the program
3. Organizational commitment as a result of the program
4. Financial impact to the organization due to the program.

### Individual Impact

**Do women value experience of participating in a leadership program designed specifically around women's issues?**

Twelve women participated in the leadership program specific to women. Reaction to the program at the end of the program was positive. Using a scale of 1 to 7 (1 = low and 7 = high), women provided a 96% positive rating, using scoring of four (4) and above as positive (Table 1).

Table 1.
*Women's response to a Women's Leadership Development program.*

| Women's Leadership Development Experience | % Positive Agree |
|---|---|
| Ease of access to the content when and where needed. | 100% |
| Likeliness to recommend this program to others. | 92% |
| The value of the facilitated meet-ups. | 92% |
| The value of the online content for time invested. | 100% |

**Do women report improvements in personal effectiveness as a result of leadership development?**

Women also provided responses about their perceived personal impact (Table 2) and effectiveness (Table 3) and the results illustrate that perceived personal impact and effectiveness were positive. Using a scale of 1 to 7 (1 = low and 7 = high), women provided an 98% positive rating on both personal impact and personal effectiveness, using scoring of four (4) and above as positive.

Table 2.
*Women's response to perceived personal impact.*

| Women's Perceived Impact | % Positive Agree |
|---|---|
| Rate your clarity for what skills you need to develop to reach your next professional goal. | 92% |
| To what degree do you feel empowered to be authentic and bring your unique strengths to your team? | 100% |
| How would you rate your current contribution to your work group's successes? | 100% |
| How would you rate yourself when asked, "Are you utilizing your full potential at work?" | 100% |

Table 3.
*Women's response to perceived personal effectiveness.*

| Women's Perceived Effectiveness | % Positive Agree |
|---|---|
| Understanding and navigating gender differences at work. | 91% |
| Work/life balance. | 100% |
| Leadership effectiveness and strategic thinking. | 100% |
| Communication and influence. | 100% |
| Self-confidence. | 100% |

**Do women report improvements in clarity on topics related to specific issues they face in organizations?**

The intervention was designed to equip women with new insights about themselves and the common issues women face in the workplace so that they could empower themselves to have a greater organizational impact. Specifically, online content was provided for women to work through at their own pace. That information was then discussed in a facilitated coaching-like meetup. Overall, women reported they gained at least some new insight on every area in which it was expected they would from the online learning content (Table 4).

 

Table 4.
*Women's response to new insights gained.*

| Learning Topics | % Positive Agree to at least some clarity gained |
|---|---|
| What it means to be an effective leader. | 100% |
| My core values. | 100% |
| The ways I want to grow. | 100% |
| How I let my inner critic get in my way. | 100% |
| How to be more influential. | 100% |
| The way that gender gaps play out in the work environment. | 100% |
| How to be a more effective communicator. | 100% |
| The ways that I second-guess myself. | 100% |
| My core strengths. | 100% |

**Do insights gained by women turn into action?**
Finally, at the individual level, we wanted to understand how women turned their gained clarity into action. Again, using a self-report rating scale, women reported they applied at least one new approach to a total of 10 actions, based upon clarity gained (Table 5). The two highest rated items were Taking Leaps (average rating of 2.27 on a 1-3 scale where 1 = have not tried anything new, 2 = tried at least one new approach and 3 = significant change) and Amplifying the Contributions of Others (average rating of 2.18 on a 1-3 scale).

Table 5.
*Women's self-report of application of new clarity gained.*

| Areas of Change | % of Women who reported they applied at least 1 new approach |
|---|---|
| Taking leaps. | 82% |
| Amplifying the contributions of others. | 91% |
| Having courageous conversations. | 82% |
| Being more intelligent. | 82% |

| | |
|---|---|
| Problem solving. | 73% |
| Communicating authentically. | 73% |
| Speaking up. | 82% |
| Interacting with emotional intelligence. | 73% |
| Acting with confidence. | 64% |
| Acting decisively. | 64% |

**Organizational Impact**

**How committed are women to the organization as a result of the program?**
Unique to this organization, 100% of the women were committed to the organization at the start of the intervention. To further understand this commitment, organization impact was captured by looking at women's clarity of organizational goals set at the start of the program. 100% of women established specific goals at the start of the program and 75% of the women were able to connect their goals to an organizational monetary value.

**How does a development program specific to women result in a monetary improvement within the organization?**
The primary catalyst for measuring the individual and organization impact of this intervention was driven by the organization. Data was captured from women at the start of the intervention about their goals and the forecasted ripple effect of successful attainment of those goals on the organization. Additional data was captured at the end of the intervention by asking women what they had achieved. All monetary values were provided by the women in the study and their responses are represented in Table 6.

Table 6.
*Monetary values provided by women.*

| IMPROVEMENT | VALUE |
|---|---|
| I am more productive and save time on a specific metric call out. I used to spend 13 hours on the call outs per week. And now spending 10.5-11 hours per week. 40% is due to the intervention. | $4,040 |
| I changed teams – I completely changed what I do on a day-to-day basis and I am happier. | $0 |
| I am setting short-term goals for myself, and that has helped me get more things done. I'm getting the conversation started about what the team strategy should be going forward. | $0 |

| | |
|---|---|
| In the last week or so, I’ve decided to take a 180 on a project that I’ve been working on that impacts my work and the work I’ve worked on for the last 8 months. It’s taken me a week to understand why and that’s because I’ve been in a lot of these meetings. I see that this change would have taken a bit longer. | $0 |
| No measurable financial impact. | $0 |
| The confidence to actually approach this team and the confidence to talk w/people several levels above me; you’re a VP and it’s taking the leap forward and letting people know that I have expertise that they need. | $0 |
| I was promoted. | $0 |
| We have faster delivery time because we aren’t arguing so much. We are talking about the right priorities, and we reduced headcount needs. We saved 4 headcount totaling about $1m in savings; one-half is due to the intervention. | $500,000 |
| Working relationship with retail and how to encourage retail to go after those big vendors and negotiate bigger cost discount. We actually achieved a lot of savings over our original estimate and goal – we targeted $17.6 million savings and we have already met this goal. 10% is due to what was gained from the program. | $1,760,000 |
| I am setting short-term goals for myself and that has helped me get more things done. I’m getting the conversation started about what the team strategy should be going forward. | $0 |
| I discussed with another manager that we reduced the need to hire 1 contractor – and we saved time in looking for, hiring and we still met the goal. Not sure of the cost of the contractor (estimated at $210k fully loaded). 20% of that cost savings was due to the program. | $42,000 |
| The main thing I gained was awareness, and I have ideas about how to deal with some leadership issues. | $0 |

**Does investment in a development program specific to women produce a monetary return-on-investment for the organization?**

To calculate the return-on-investment of the intervention, costs were captured from the organization providing the intervention. The costs of the intervention were $97,270 and the total of monetary gains provided by women was $2,306,040. Using the standard return-on-investment formula, the ROI was calculated as ($2,306,040 - $97,270)/ $97,270, or 2271% ROI (Table 7). In other words, for each dollar that the organization invested in this intervention, they gained $22.71 in return, taking into consideration their investment costs.

All monetary values were validated by the organization sponsor at the conclusion of the intervention.

Table 7.
*Financial return-on-investment of intervention.*

| **ROI Calculation** | |
|---|---|
| Total Monetary Savings from Women | $2,306,040 |
| Cost of Program | $97,270 |
| ROI | 2271% |

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

The final results beg the question we started with: Why does it work? In other words, why did the intervention create an overall ripple effect of monetary impact and financial improvement? What was happening on a daily level that created this change and impact?

A piece of insight, though not part of the original data collection design, came after the conclusion of the program. Specifically, as a part of the debrief where the financial values were captured, each women anecdotally shared her version and her insight about how the program personally impacted her.

Each woman described how being among peers, sharing their stories, hearing the ways they overcame challenges and participating in these conversations validated their experiences and observations. This gave them the confidence they needed to take leaps.

More importantly, these women became champions for each other by amplifying each other's contributions, so their voices could be heard.

Women reported they had gained the courage and the confidence to have meaningful conversations with their male colleagues, which resulted in negotiating better contracts with vendors and reducing costs. Additionally, they collaborated more effectively with other male-dominated teams, resulting in improved productivity or reduced headcount, saving associated costs.

These stories provided insights that might lead to future research design methodology.

In spite of this, the study illuminated the following:

1. All reported a change in understanding on issues and topics specifically related to women in the workplace.
2. On average, women made significant gains in only two behaviors: taking leaps and amplifying the contributions of others.

3. These behavioral changes were the basis for organizational change when measured in the financial values.

Supporting women and encouraging their development by sharing common issues and challenges women face empower them, give them the courage and confidence to persist in conversations and negotiations with others, including their male colleagues.

For the future, the following areas may be investigated:
1. Do women's managers, peers or direct reports see the same behavioral changes?
2. Do women's male colleagues see the same behavioral changes?
3. How would women's male colleagues describe the individual and organizational impact?
4. How would mentors play a role in the development of women?

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# Thinking Preferences: Do they help to achieve Flow?

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**Abstract.** This paper aims to find if there is a significant relationship between *Thinking Preferences* and ability to achieve *Flow*. Background literature regarding the Four Quadrant Theory and neurophysiology of attention is presented. A longitudinal study comparing results of the NBI Thinking Preferences Assessment with an Assessment to measure flow (EPI) is also discussed, along with the main implications for coaching practice.

**Key Words:** Thinking Preferences, Flow, Neuroscience, Whole-Person

## Introduction

Recent developments in Neuroscience and Cognitive Behavioral Sciences have helped to improve coaching practices. Concepts such as metacognition, acceptance, mindfulness, personal values, and spirituality are frequently used in a coaching session. Common concerns of clients are related to their professional work: e.g. their capacity to work with attention, their level of concentration, their level of distractedness, their ability to finish tasks at hand, etc. A specific behavioral intervention that shows great promise in helping clients in this area is the capacity to learn how to achieve a state of flow or optimal experience at will (Csikszentmihalyi, M., 2008, 2014). Attention is a prerequisite for being able to maintain goals and execute goal-oriented action (Raz and Buhle, 2006).

This interdisciplinary paper borrows concepts from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) to help with the analysis of how *Thinking Preferences* can influence the capacity to achieve flow. We present the concept of flow and we use an inventory that can be found in optimalwork.com, a useful tool focused in the Whole Person, as the tool that integrates concepts from CBT and ACT to help clients to work at their best and to achieve levels of attention dominated by a transient hypo frontality (Dietrich A, 2004). The basic question in our research is to see if there are certain brain profiles that are more prone to achieve flow.

The first section of the paper summarizes the Methodology and Assessments used. The second session briefly explores the literature around the *Four Quadrant Theory* and the *Flow* and *Neurophysiology of Attention*. The third section explains the results of the correlations between the Thinking Preferences and the capacity to achieve flow. The last section discusses the implications these findings have for coaching and the conclusions.

This interdisciplinary study, focused on the Whole Person, could have important implications for systemic coaching. The findings could help coaches not only to better understand the client's needs but it will also build bridges connecting Coaching, Neuroscience, CBT and ACT.

 

## Methodology

This section presents (1) The Assessments, (2) Data Collection and (3) Methods for Data Analysis.

### The Assessments

To measure flow, clients filled out the Enhance Professional Inventory (EPI)[1]. To understand the Thinking Preferences, clients filled out the NBI™ Thinking Preferences Assessment.

**The Enhanced Professional Inventory (EPI):** The EPI is a survey designed to assess the client's capacity to achieve Flow at will. It was created by adapting the six areas of ACT: (1) acceptance, (2) cognitive defusion, (3) being present, (4) self as context, (5) values and (6) committed action. The inventory consists of 24 questions and each question is measured in a Likert 1-10 scale.

The questions of the inventory group into four domains: (1) Biological (Work-life balance), (2) Psychological (Flow), (3) Social (Collaborating with others), and (4) Ideals (Spiritual).

The second domain -the psychological dimension- is the one that is going to be used to measure the ability to achieve flow. When evaluating this dimension, the client measures items such as: the capacity to not give in to distractions, to avoid multitasking, the degree of challenging of each small block of time, among others, which are aligned with the characteristics of flow described by Csikszentmihalyi (1997), that are going to be explained in the "Literature Review/Conceptual Framework" section.

**NBI™ Thinking Preferences Assessment:** The NBI General Adult Profile is an internationally used self-assessment developed by Dr. Neethling and it consists on a 30-question diagnostic survey that indicates thinking preferences.

The NBI divides the brain in four quadrants. The four quadrants are bifurcated into two hemispheres: left and right; and into front –cerebral- brain and back –limbic- brain, resulting in four distinct quadrants. Each quadrant represents a thinking style preference.

Table 1a shows the main characteristics of the Thinking Preferences in each of the four quadrants.

[1] This inventory can be found in www.optimalwork.com. A comprehensive explanation of the OptimalWork model can be found in the same webpage. We want to express our gratitude to www.optimalwork.com team for having shared with us the results of the EPI questionnaires of those clients that previously took the NBI test.

Table 1a:
*NBI™ Thinking Preferences Quadrants*

| NBI ™ | |
|---|---|
| **L1 (Left Front): "What?"** | **R1 (Right Front): "Why?"** |
| Clear, Rational, Focus, Essence, Accuracy, Factual memory, Concrete, Mathematical, Factual reasoning, Performance-driven, Logic, Objective, Diagnostic, Analysing (digging deeper) | Curious, Strategic, Imaginative, Intuitive, Risk-Taking, Visionary, Creative, Simultaneous, Visual Thinker, Unconventional, Experimenting, Big Picture, Challenges Status Quo, Opportunity Oriented |
| **L2 (Left Back): "How?"** | **R2 (Right Back): "Who?"** |
| Orderly, Neat, Structured, Reliable, Consistent, Diligent, Methodical, Detail Oriented, Prepared, Systematic, Habitual, Routine, Punctual, Efficient, Organized | Sociable, Approachable, Perceptive, Empathetic, Understanding, Supportive, Harmony, Relational, Loyal, Tolerant, Sensitive, Affectionate, Feeling, Emotionally, Expressive, Cohesion |

Source: Neethling, K. (1998).

Each quadrant has at least two possible dimensions, generating the eight subdimensions. A person may be strong in one and low in the other, or quite balanced in each of the two divisions.

Table 1b:
*NBI™ Thinking Preferences Subdimensions*

| NBI ™ | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **L1 (Left Front): "What?"** | | **R1 (Right Front): "Why?"** | |
| **L1-Realist (L1R)** | **L1-Analyst (L1A)** | **R1-Strategist (R1S)** | **R1-Imagineer (R1I)** |
| Clarity, No distractions, Focused, Set goals, No mental clutter, define target, Pros and Cons, Simplicity, Clear Guidelines, Factual | Assess, Monitor Performance, Dig Deeper, Financial, Clinical, Logical, Priorities, Claculate, Probing, Examning | Visionary, Future-connected, Predictions, Change, Risk-taking, Big Thinking, Experience the unfamiliar, Variety, Design, Challenge Status quo | Inner voice, Picture thinking, Daydream, Fantasized, Unsystematic, Unconventional, Zigzag thinking |
| **L2 (Left Back): "How?"** | | **R2 (Right Back): "Who?"** | |
| **L2-Stalwart (L2S)** | **L2-Organizer (L2O)** | **R2-Socializer (R2S)** | **R2-Empathizer (R2E)** |
| Well-proven, Discipline, Order, time-conscious, Methodical, Cautious, Loyalty, Experience, Stability, Traditional | Action, Hands-on, Plan, Systematic, Supervise, Persevere, Checklist, Schedules, To-do list, Organize | Groups, Sharing, Consensus, Networking, Co-operation, Gatherings, Entertaining, Outgoing, Connecting, Sociable | Encourage, Assist, Care, Service-oriented, Intuitive, Hopeful, Reaching out, Sensitive, Special Attachments, Nurturing |

Source: Neethling, K. (1998).

**Data Collection**

Results of 742 EPI taken by 29 different clients have been collected over the past 18 months. Clients who have not taken the EPI consistently were excluded. Also, clients have taken the NBI Assessment at some point in time. Results from the longitudinal data obtained from EPI and the results of the NBI constitute the ground for the statistical analysis.

**Methods for Data Analysis**

The detailed dimensions of EPI and NBI are listed below.

- NBI Dimensions
  - Four Quadrant (L1, R1, L2, R2)
  - Eight Sub-Dimensions (L1R, L1A, L2S, L2O, R1I, R1S, R2E, R2S)
  - Top (Cognitive) /Down (Limbic)
  - Right/Left

- EPI Dimensions
  - Biological
  - ***Psychological (Flow)***
  - Social
  - Ideals

In this paper we will focus our analysis on the correlation of the Psychological dimension (Flow) of the EPI with all the dimension of the NBI listed above. We will also run the same correlations analyzing the Rate of Growth.

## Literature Review/ Conceptual Framework

In this section we briefly review the literature of: (1) Four Quadrant Theory and Cerebral Dominance and (2) Flow and the Neurophysiology of Attention

**Four Quadrant Theory and Cerebral Dominance**

Neuroscience offers a new perspective in coaching and has become a key player in understanding the future of this discipline. The four-quadrant theory is an appropriate approach, within the field of Neuroscience, to understand the thinking style preferences.

The first four-quadrant instrument was developed in 1981 by Ned Herrmann, known as the "Father of brain dominance technology". Although everyone uses both sides of the brain, typically individuals tend to prefer to use one hemisphere of the brain versus the other (Clayton and Kimbrell, 2007); this concept is known as "cerebral dominance" which produces a dominant mode of thinking preference.

Building on Herrmann's concept of cerebral dominance, Kobus Neethling determined that both the left and right brain processes could be divided into two definitive categories, effectively dividing the brain into four quadrants. In the late 1990s, Neethling concluded that there were two specific thinking processes present in each quadrant. Subsequently, his perspective on brain research evolved from the brain having two hemispheres – to four quadrants – to eight dimensions (presented in the previous section).

The four–quadrant brain theory assumes that the brain is divided in two hemispheres (left/right) with four distinct functions, including behavioral indicators that produce (1) analytical thinking, (2) sequential thinking, (3) interpersonal thinking and (4) imaginative thinking (Morris, 2005).

When there is a flexibility in using thinking styles preferences, and therefore not a clear dominance of one hemisphere, the individual can use and integrated thinking style with the possibility of being analytic or emotional. This “mixed dominance” is also known as “Whole Brain Thinking” because the individuals are able to use both hemispheres with proficiency and have the ability to shift between them.

The Whole Brain Thinking doesn’t refer to a perfectly-equal brain profile it just refers to the capacity of using both sides when appropriately. “While there are some mixed dominants that do not develop clear brain lateralization (…) others are highly lateralized and perform in the task-appropriate hemisphere depending on the needed skills. Some whole thinkers develop a more generalized thinking style and perceive the whole scene, not just the task at hand” (Clayton and Kimbrell, 2007).

**Flow and the Neurophysiology of Attention**

Attention is a requirement to be able to maintain goals and execute goal-oriented action (Raz and Buhle, 2006). The level of attention of an individual is determined by the interaction between the cerebral cortex (prefrontal cortex) with the limbic system (the amygdala) at a particular point in time.

Depending on what part/s of the brain is/are activated, there are three levels of attention:

**Dominated by the limbic system**: The person is highly distractive, more impulsive, and easily notices the surrounding environment.

**Dominated by the prefrontal cortex:** The person is in a mindful state, capable of recollecting when working. There is little to no distractibility or impulsivity.

**Dominated by a transient hypofrontality** (Dietrich A, 2004) and increased brain communication, called flow or Optimal Experiences: in this state, one’s attention is wholly invested in the present and freely invested to achieve one’s goals. There is an intense and focused concentration on what one is doing at the present moment; a merging of action and awareness; a loss of reflective self-consciousness; a sense of being in control of one’s actions; a distortion of temporal experience; and an experience of the activity as being intrinsically rewarding (Csikszentmihalyi, M., 2014).

The concept of flow was coined by Csikszentmihalyi (1975) to describe activities were the person is fully engaged in the task at hand, enjoying what he called “optimal experiences”. Flow is considered productive, fulfilling, satisfying and positively feeds back into you, that has the following nine main elements (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997):

1. There is clarity of goals every step of the way (progressive realization of the next small goal)
2. There is clear feedback to one's action (awareness of one's performance).
3. Challenge-skill balance (the task is challenging but matches in difficulty to the skill of the person- this element is known as the golden rule of flow).
4. Action and awareness are merged (being focused on what we do).
5. Distractions are excluded from consciousness (the task at hand becomes the exclusive content in the working memory buffer).
6. There is no worry of failure (sense of control: one-pointedness mind).
7. Self-consciousness disappears (no negative thoughts).
8. The sense of time becomes distorted (shortening of time).
9. The activity becomes autotelic (the task is rewarding in itself and performance is accompanied by positive affect).

Most of the above characteristics are included in the EPI inventory under the "Psychological" category. Nevertheless, not all the above dimensions have to be present at the same time in order to achieve flow and the importance of each of them depends on the individual. In fact, Brann, A., (2017) has summarized recently the above nine elements into five characteristics: (1) intense focused concentration on the present task; (2) action and awareness are merged; (3) sense of autonomy; (4) feeling as if time has passed quickly and (5) activity intrinsically rewarding.

There is no doubt that the capacity to achieve flow has many benefits both for individuals and organizations; we have summarized them in Table 2.

Table 2:
*Benefits of Flow*

| BENEFITS OF FLOW | |
|---|---|
| **For the individual** | **For the organization** |
| **High levels of self-efficacy:** An individual's sense of his or her ability to successfully control and impact the work environment is enhanced | **In-role jobe performance:** The officially required outcomes and behaviors that directly serve the goals of the organization are enhanced |
| **Momentary positive mood:** Individuals feel happy, active, sociable, cheerful, and other similar emotional states right after experiencing flow | **Extra-role job performance:** Individual behaviours that promote effective functioning of the organization are fostered |
| **Delayed positive mood:** Individuals who experience work-related flow during the workday experience positive emotions and serenity during the evening | **Individual spontaneity /creativity:** Individuals are more likely to look for ways to try new and more effective ways of performing their jobs |
| | **Task interest:** Flow enhances the desire of individuals to explore, assimilate new information, find new opportunities for action and develop new skills. |

Source: Ceja, L. (2011)

Some studies have correlated flow and flow proneness with the underlying biology or with other traits such us general intelligence, neuroticism or personality (Ullén et al, 2010), but it is still a challenge to confirm if there is a direct relationship between the anatomical area of the brain that is activated with a specific neurophysiological response (i.e. what part of the brain is activated to achieve a specific level of attention). Interestingly, some scientists have used the four-quadrant brain theory (Siegel, 2012) to try to map this out. For example, research on the four quadrants theory has shown that quadrants L2 and R2 are predominantly dominated by the limbic system. Also, scientists know that when there is "neural integration", meaning, linking of different parts of the brain, the result is that one achieves Optimal Self-regulation (Siegel, 2012). The state of flow falls into this category.

If the four-quadrant brain theory is right, when a client is predominantly L2 R2 thinking style, the logical conclusion would be that the client be more easily influenced by the limbic system. Consequently, the client would have significantly more difficulty achieving attention at will than a client in the L1R1 thinking style, who tends to engage predominantly the prefrontal cortex. As far as we know, there are no research studies showing this relationship.

As Brann, A., (2017) says: "It is plausible, although untested, that some brains are currently better wired than others to facilitate the state of flow (…). When we are focusing well we tend to enjoy what we are doing more and experience undesirable ruminating and inefficient distractions. We end up performing better – quicker and with fewer mistakes – when we are focused".

## Findings

This section is structured as follows: (1) Correlations of NBI & Flow and (2) Correlations of NBI & Rate of Growth (RoG) of Flow. Although we are going to show all the correlations with all the dimensions of the EPI, for the purposes of this research, we will center our attention only on the correlation of the Psychological dimension (Flow).

### Correlations of NBI dimensions and Flow

The correlations between the NBI Dimensions and flow are shown in Table 3.

Table 3:
*Correlations NBI dimensions (Four Quadrant, L/R & T/D) and Flow*

| Correlations NBI dimensions (Four, Quadrant, L/R & T/D) and Flow | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **EPI Dimensions** | **Four Quadrant** | | | | **L/R & T/D** | | | |
| | L1 | L2 | R1 | R2 | Left | Right | Top | Down |
| Ideals | -9.4% | 19.1% | -20.0% | 7.4% | 7% | -7% | -29% | 29% |
| ***Psychological (Flow)*** | ***-2.4%*** | ***16.4%*** | ***-20.9%*** | ***5.0%*** | ***9%*** | ***-9%*** | ***-23%*** | ***23%*** |
| Biological | -6.0% | 29.7% | -29.8% | 3.6% | 15% | -15% | -36% | 36% |
| Social | -10.2% | 23.7% | -28.2% | 10.7% | 9% | -9% | -38% | 38% |
| **Total Score** | **-5.9%** | **23.1%** | **-26.7%** | **6.7%** | **11%** | **-11%** | **-32%** | **32%** |

The psychological dimension (flow) is positively correlated with the L2 (16.4%) and negatively with R1 (-20.9%) and the cognitive part of the brain (-23%). Interestingly enough, and in disagreement with what we assumed in the section of "Flow and Neurophysiology of Attention", cognitive brains (top part of the brain) are not better wired to obtain a better score in the psychological dimension.

It's also relevant to mention that the correlations between the left and right parts of the brain with the flow are not especially high or low (+9%/-9%).

Table 4:
*Correlations of the Eight NBI Subdimensions and Flow*

| Correlations of the Eight NBI Subdimensions and Flow | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **EPI Dimensions** | **Eight subdimensions** | | | | | | | |
| | L1R | L1A | L2S | L2O | R1I | R1S | R2E | R2S |
| Ideals | 25.4% | -26.9% | 14.5% | 3.0% | -12.6% | -2.2% | 1.7% | 4.3% |
| ***Psychological (Flow)*** | **30.7%** | **-27.0%** | **20.7%** | **-5.5%** | **-20.8%** | **7.3%** | **23.9%** | **-17.7%** |
| Biological | 17.2% | -18.1% | 37.8% | -9.7% | -22.3% | 0.3% | 10.2% | -6.6% |
| Social | 7.1% | -12.2% | 16.9% | 4.0% | -8.5% | -15.8% | -4.2% | 11.5% |
| **Total Score** | **27.0%** | **-26.1%** | **25.5%** | **-4.2%** | **-20.5%** | **1.4%** | **15.9%** | **-9.3%** |

Table 4 reveals that the positive correlation of L2 with Flow comes from the L2-Stalwart subdimension (20.7%). L1-Realist (30.7%) and R2-Empathizer (23.9%) have a high positive correlation with flow, whereas the two brain subdimensions with a negative correlation with flow are R1-Imagineer (-20.8%) and R2-Socializer (-17.7%).

**NBI & the Rate of Growth (RoG) of Flow**

Since this is a longitudinal study, the data has been analyzed to understand how fast the clients improve in any of the EPI subdimensions: the rate at which they have improved is what we have called Rate of Growth (RoG). It's key to understand the implications of this analysis because it will help us to understand whether certain Thinking Preferences help to improve faster the capacity to achieve flow than others.

Table 5 shows the correlations between the NBI dimensions and the RoG of flow.

Table 5:
*Correlations of NBI (Four Quadrant, L/R & T/D) & RoG of Flow*

| Correlations of NBI (Four Quadrant, L/R & T/D) & RoG of Flow | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **RoG EPI Dimensions** | **Four Quadrant** | | | | **L/R & T/D** | | | |
| | L1 | L2 | R1 | R2 | Left | Right | Top | Down |
| RoG Ideals | 27.1% | 10.7% | -7.6% | -24.1% | 22.5% | -22.5% | 18.3% | -18.3% |
| **RoG Psychological (Flow)** | **10.8%** | **3.5%** | **-22.3%** | **6.9%** | **8.5%** | **-8.5%** | **-12.1%** | **12.1%** |
| RoG Biological | 13.7% | 7.6% | -11.8% | -7.6% | 12.8% | -12.8% | 1.3% | -1.3% |
| RoG Social | -26.6% | 19.5% | 2.6% | 2.0% | -3.0% | 3.0% | -22.8% | 22.8% |
| **RoG Total Score** | **10.1%** | **10.4%** | **-13.7%** | **-5.6%** | **12.4%** | **-12.4%** | **-4.0%** | **4.0%** |

All the correlations of Flow with the NBI brain dimensions are in a rather narrow range (-22.3% to +12.1%). R1 are at the lowest end of that range, whereas limbic brains are at the highest.

Within that range, we find negative correlations with those who have preference for the cognitive part of the brain (-12.1%).

RoG of Flow is negatively correlated with R1 (-22.3%) and positively correlated with R2 (+6.9%). Lastly, the correlations are low enough to say that there are not significant correlations in the brain dimensions with the RoG of the Flow.

Table 6:
*Correlations of the Eight NBI Subdimensions and RoG of Flow*

| Correlations of the Eight NBI Subdimensions and RoG of Flow | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **RoG EPI Dimensions** | **Eight subdimensions** | | | | | | | |
| | L1R | L1A | L2S | L2O | R1I | R1S | R2E | R2S |
| RoG Ideals | -0.9% | 18.1% | 32.5% | -20.7% | 16.5% | -29.2% | 3.1% | -21.4% |
| **RoG Psychological (Flow)** | **2.9%** | **4.7%** | **24.9%** | **-19.8%** | **6.0%** | **-29.5%** | **19.1%** | **-11.7%** |
| RoG Biological | -10.0% | 17.6% | 15.4% | -7.4% | -11.7% | 4.3% | -24.4% | 15.8% |
| RoG Social | 8.4% | -23.7% | 1.6% | 15.4% | 8.5% | -8.5% | -20.3% | 19.9% |
| **RoG Total Score** | **2.5%** | **4.7%** | **24.5%** | **-13.4%** | **7.5%** | **-22.9%** | **-1.9%** | **-2.6%** |

The subdimension R1-Strategist is the most negatively correlated RoG of Flow (-29.5%), whereas the two highest positive contributors are L2-Socializer (24.9%) and, surprisingly enough, R2-Empathizer (19.1%). Finally, R2-Socializer and the L2 -Organizer have negative correlation with RoG of Flow (-11.7% and -19.8% respectively).

## Summary of Major Findings

Since this paper is a first approach to this field, conclusions regarding thinking preferences and flow still have to be made with great caution, however the main findings of the analysis are the following.

There is not a significant correlation between the Right/Left brains and the capacity to achieve Flow or to develop this capacity. The limbic part of the brain plays a more important role than the cognitive part, both to achieve flow and to develop the capacity. It's surprising to notice that clients with high R2-Emphasizers have a big positive correlation with flow, being the dimension with the second highest score, only surpassed by L1-Realist. A plausible explanation may be that to empathize it's necessary to be present and the capacity to connect with people (to assist, to care, sensitive, nurturing…) is an enabler to achieve flow.

It's also interesting to notice that although the quadrant with higher negative correlation with flow is R1 (-20.9%), the subdimension with the most negative correlation is L1-Analyst (-27.0%) followed by R1-Imagineer (-20.8%) and R2-Socializer (-17.7%). This is a data that would need to be explored further.

 

In terms of RoG, the correlations are not significantly high in any of the four quadrants or in the L/R or T/D. The only data that should be pointed out is that the RoG is negatively correlated with R1 (-22.3%). When running the correlations of the RoG with the eight brain subdimensions, there is a high negative correlation with R1-Strategist (-29.5%).

The sub dimension that draws the attention out them most to the task at hand is R1-Strategist. The characteristics of this Thinking preference are connected with the future state of things (visionary, Future-connected, Predictions, Change, Risk-taking, Big Thinking,). Therefore, the biggest hindrance to obtain higher levels of attention is not to have a great imagination (R1-Imagineer), which can always be used to go deeper into the task at hand, but rather to flee from the task at hand. In other words, to not being in the present but in the future.

On the other hand, L2-Stalwart profiles seems to be better equipped to get to into flow faster (24.9%). This means that there are some characteristics, like discipline, order, time-conscious, to be methodical and to prefer stability, that also enhance the capacity to achieve flow.

The last to findings have interesting consequences: we've seen that a state of flow happens when there is "neural integration" and different parts of the brain are connected. What the results suggest is that there are subdimensions of the brain that are enablers (L2-Stalwart) or inhibitors (R1-Strategist) of that neural integration. Interestingly enough, these two subdimensions are in opposite quadrants. Herrmann (1996) suggested that the successful manager is one that has ‘‘equal access’’ to all four quadrants, so that when a situation calls for a given type of mental function, he can give his best response. We can add, that to have access to the neural integration and to connect all the different parts of the brain, the successful manager should also pay attention to develop some brain subdimensions.

Nevertheless, it's an open question whether to achieve optimal experience, where more areas of the brain communicate freely, is a process that is more influenced by brain profiles, by habit or other component of the client's system. This study is a first approach that provides some more clarity on how the Thinking Preferences relate to the capacity of achieve Flow. Correlation is not the same as causality.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

We believe that this paper opens up a new research field in coaching that could potentially help clients and coaches to create a collaborative culture where employees can work at their best. Higher levels of flow in the employees, can help organizations and managers to be more aware on how to create environments in which everyone is performing at their best with the least effort.

There have been different interventions to foster the capacity to achieve flow by shaping activity structures and environments or assisting individuals in finding flow (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Flow has a direct impact not only in the person, but also in the organization. The positive benefits of flow described in the section of "Flow and the Neurophysiology of Attention" are essential in development-focused and performance-focused coaching, which, according to the Global Executive Coaching Report (2016) are the first and the third most demanding coaching requests from clients.

Coaching for flow is an approach that definitely helps the client to achieve higher levels of personal effectiveness which would eventually impact not only the professional sphere, but also the personal life of the client: the whole person is at stake. Therefore, a coaching practice, grounded in ACT and CBT, focused on helping clients to achieve flow, would have benefits that will go beyond the coaching engagement (overcoming addictions, anxieties and cravings), proving this approach as a great intervention to help the whole person.

The fact that the Thinking Preferences do not determine the capacity to achieve flow it's a great piece of information for coaches and clients. Therefore, all clients and coaches are candidates to benefit from it. Some of the practices suggested by Brann (2017) can be used to incorporate flow into coaching: (a) Encourage them to read about flow, (b) Ask them to keep a note during a normal day of how many times they think they were in the state of flow, and what specifically they were doing at that time, (c) Look for ways to increase opportunities to get into the state of flow, and (d) reevaluate with them their values and connect them with the mode they work (the Wheel exercise might be helpful).

Lastly, flow is also an efficient approach to "expand" the brain. According to Mintzberg (1976) managers with that use the whole brain more efficiently will be more prepared to develop in their careers since they will be better equipped to face complex tasks they will encounter in the future. This capacity to "expand" the brain is not determined by the Thinking Preferences.

Table 7 shows how flow enhances some of the principles of neuroplasticity.

Table 7:
*Principles of Neuroplasticity enhanced by Flow*

| PRINCIPLES OF NEUROPLASTICITY ENHANCED BY FLOW | |
|---|---|
| **PRINCIPLES OF NEUROPLASTICITY** | **PRINCIPLES ENHANCED BY FLOW** |
| Use it and improve it | FLOW*:* moments of peak intensity that **expands** the capacity |
| Specifitity matters | **Clarity** of **goals** at every step |
| Dificulty and Challenge matters | **Challenge**-skill balance |

Source: Adapted from Kleim, J. A., & Jones, T. A. (2008).

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**Coaching Millennials: is the future bright or just ambiguous?**

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**Abstract**
As workplace challenges evolve, new opportunities arise. One question arises and that is how do we support the new generations entering organizational life? Current research offers little on developing the leadership skillset and sense-making abilities of these new generations instead focusing more on marketing and adjusting to Millennials. This paper discusses the preliminary qualitative findings of a broader study designed to understand the potentially nutritive influence of coaching on Millennials in a university-based program.

**Key Words:** Generation Y, Millennials, Coaching, Leadership Development, VUCA

## Introduction

This paper is a preliminary report on a broader qualitative study. Many scholars agree that the Millennial generation (born after 1980) will impact organizations in multiple ways (Balda & Mora, 2011)(Anderson, Baur, Griffith, & Buckley, 2017). Over the last two decades, scholarly research on the topic focuses on marketing products to or assimilating Millennials into the workplace. There is little research that has focused on developing the leadership skillset and sense-making abilities of these new generations despite the general agreement that the world into which they graduate is a VUCA one (Horney, Pasmore, & O'Shea, 2010). This study is framed around four logical assumptions:

1) The size of the Millennial generation alone will create an organizational impact
2) A VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) world is upon them and will require a new kind of thinking and leading.
3) There are and will be more leadership holes to fill in organizations as the baby boomer generation retires. So, with more leadership roles available, Millennials will be called upon earlier than previous generations to lead effectively.
4) Coaching enables seasoned leaders to make sense of and thrive within their complex environment but is rarely embedded into their academic experiences

The broader study aims to understand the impact of coaching on this population in a university-based program.

## Methodology

Originally, this research aimed to use a grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to understand the impact of coaching, through a one-on-one interview protocol, on a subsection of 203 business school graduates. As it evolved, so too did my suspicions, lending this qualitative approach to be more aptly described as "inductive" in nature. As Maxwell states in *Qualitative Research Design,* my design intended to uncover "unanticipated phenomena and influences (Maxwell, 2013, p. 30)" pertinent to this population's experience around coaching. Further, my approach hinged on an "openness and flexibility" allowing me to modify the design to pursue emergent "discoveries and relationships (Maxwell, 2013, p. 30)." I have truncated the scope here as this paper represents a report on preliminary findings after interviews have been completed and coding begun on a 7-interview subsection of the original 30 interviews.

To understand the factors impacting this population, I have designed with help from my dissertation advisor Dr. Richard Boyatzis, a qualitative study of former graduate students and their experiences with business coaching. The first step of this research took place in the summer of 2018. It included a sample size of 30 former business graduate students who were born after 1980 and have taken at least one business coaching course during their graduate education at a midwestern state university. Through peer identification I was able to establish two distinct groups.

Initially, and after IRB approval, a survey was administered to 203 former students asking them to "*identify anyone in your class that seemed to get a lot out of coaching*." Those who were identified by at least 2 of their classmates we classified as *Group 1*. From this group, I culled out those having birthdates before 1980 or after 1996 and called this the *Peer-identified group*. Peer identification is a process also called nominations that has been shown to be more accurate than ratings or rankings and was done particularly to identify possible variables that could inform an ultimate quantitative study (Boyatzis, 1982)(ALewin & Zwany, 1976). Moreover, I used a random table to sort the remaining students inviting numbers 1 to 20 for interviews. I was able to complete 12 interviews from this group at which point I deemed "theoretical saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 381)" had taken place and labeled them the *Random group*. The interview protocol was as follows:

- *"For 5-10 minutes please tell me about yourself, most specifically the level of graduate education you have completed, your current job and your role responsibilities."*
- *"What did you expect to get out of graduate school?"*
- *"Please describe a time in graduate school in which someone helped you? [Probes used: What was the situation? Who else was involved? What did you say or do? What did you do next? What were you thinking and feeling?"]*
- *"Please describe a time in which you helped someone in graduate school? Same probes used."*
- *"If your life were perfect in 10-15 years, what would you be doing? Who would you be with? Please describe this optimal dreamscape to me."*
- *"Tell me about your experience in coaching class? What was your experience coaching others and being coached? What else?"*
- *"How serendipitous was learning about coaching at this time in your life?* NOTE: This question emerged thematically, and I started including it in my qualitative interviews after interview #10."

## Literature Review / Conceptual Framework

What follows is a general review of three areas of the literature that supports this research design. First I will explore what we know about the population in question, Millennials. Next, I will cover the context in which they operate using the VUCA model. Finally, I will comment on how Millennials could possibly interact with their environment and the ultimate implications for coaching as an enabler for Millennial learning and flourishing.

## What Do We Know About Millennials?

The Millennials, also known as Gen Y, are those born after 1980 (Howe & Strauss, 2009). They will make up nearly 100 million people in the U.S., over 20% of today's population (Howe & Strauss, 2009). According to Brownstone, Millennials have already passed Generation X in the workplace in size alone (Brownstone, 2014). There is a seemingly endless array of articles on preparing the workplace for and adapting to their impending emergence. In fact a simple Google search for "managing Millennials" yields thousands of pages of practitioner advice and speculation (Anderson et al., 2017). Very little, however, approaches the situation from a developmental position.

Most literature discussing Millennials and their younger counterparts, Centennials, use descriptive titles such as *All work and no pay (Bauerlein & Jeffrey, 2011)*, *Managing Gen Y* (Eisner, 2005), *Managing the Millennials: Discover the core competencies for managing today's workforce* (Espinoza & Ukleja, 2016)*, the M-factor: How the Millennial generation is rocking the workplace* (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010)*, Millennials the me me me generation* (Stein, 2013). Much of this literature is speculative and focuses primarily on how other generations can adapt to the Millennials and vice versa. Additionally, another Google search for "marketing to Millennials" yields over 38 million entries. This is due, most notably, to their massive size and potential buying power.

The aim of this research, conversely, is to understand what makes members of this generation truly flourish holistically. Articles like *Rising Stars: Developing Millennial women as leaders* (Kelan, 2012), *Millennials Rising: The next great generation* (Howe & Strauss, 2009)*, What works for you may not work for (Gen) Me (Anderson et al., 2017)* and *Emergent leaders as managers of group emotion* (Pescosolido, 2002) are more in line with the developmental direction this research hopes to go.

A conceptual image of this generation is emerging. Though the Millennials are known for a wide range of characteristics, some far-fetched and some relevant, the primary characteristics that have informed this research thus far describe Millennials as tech savvy (Stein, 2013), hands-on learners, over-confident (Hewlett et al., 2009), and comfortable around diversity and working on teams but fearful of mistakes (Sweeney, 2012). They also seem skeptical of existing organizational structures and seek out flexibility in their roles (Balda & Mora, 2011). Some also suggest that the impending immersion of Millennials into leadership roles will require a paradigm shift in organizations and leadership practices (Balda & Mora, 2011). Moreover, as Frederick LaLoux postulates in his pioneering work *Flourishing Organizations,* we are arguably on the brink of a new stage of human consciousness, one that should harken in an era which celebrates the whole person more soulfully and completely and allows us to solve the complex or wicked problems for which we presently can merely manage. One of his predictions is that organizations will evolve practices that address deeper human needs, such as deeper collaboration and self-managing teams. LaLoux posits that Millennials, because of their sheer size combined with their nature to have their wholeness more fully represented in the workplace, may be the tipping point to a new organizational world order (Laloux, 2014).

## VUCA as Context for Millennials

Using social scientist Kurt Lewin's model B=f(E, P), we can see that members of the Millennial generation have a unique "P" or personal individuality and are faced with an equally unique "E" or approaching environment. To explore Lewin's concept of "E" I engaged several ideas from the military and business strategy, most notably the idea of "headwinds" drawn from writings on VUCA and complexity theory. The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 harkened in the concept of VUCA making it commonplace among military leaders. In 1991, Harry Yarger's *Strategic Theory for the 21st Century: The little book on big strategy* discusses at length the concept and headwinds of a VUCA world. He characterizes for military purposes ideas that have since been adopted by business strategists. He describes "four earmarks--volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) (Yarger, 2006)." Yarger described this headwind VUCA environment more specifically as:

- Volatile: change happens blindingly fast and on a global scale
- Uncertain: past tools of predictability are obsolete or growing more so
- Complex: challenges have multiple causes and no clear solutions and enact chaos faster than they can be sorted out
- Ambiguous: making meaning of events and their fallout is more mysterious than ever

These definitions of VUCA have been editorialized by later scholars and practitioners, but he gist remains the same that these environments prove hard to manage (Perrow, 1986; Snowden & Boone, 2007). Ronald Heifetz calls these "adaptive challenges (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009)" in which it is not possible for any one individual to know the solution or even define the problem. Instead, adaptive challenges call for collaboration between various stakeholders who each hold a different aspect of the reality and many of whom must themselves adapt and grow if the problem is to be solved. This sends out a call that a new range of competencies that focus on collaboration and influence skills which yield the engagement and competence required (Petrie, 2011). Further studies of leaders have yielded another idea around these headwinds and what they signal. Some suggest that something more significant may be happening – the end of a phase or cycle, the dawning of leadership dominated by the individual (hero), and the beginning of another, which embraces networks of leadership (Petrie, 2011).

Thomas Friedman's book on of the rapid flattening of the world announces a similar tome to VUCA. In it he proclaims how difficult leading is in such an environment (Friedman, 2007). He notes that as skills quickly wane, there is a call for greater leadership adaptability and agility. These are difficult competencies to attain but important in the present environment. A VUCA world combined with an immature workforce calls loudly for a strategy. This strategy needs to help individuals (and firms) build the agility, resilience, and knowledge needed to face these complexities. As Horney, Pasmore, and O'Shea state "leaders must make continuous shifts in people, process, technology and structure (Horney et al., 2010)." This requires the development of greater flexibility and quick decision making (Horney et al., 2010). David Peterson, PhD., who leads coaching efforts at Google hints at these headwinds when he says "…the world is messy. Although certain elements are simple and predictable, our lives and our interactions with others contain complicated, ambiguous, and unpredictable variables that may change over time (Peterson, Stober, & Grant, 2006)." So the Millennials are here, some form of VUCA is, arguably, too. Further, Baby Boomers (the last huge professional generation) is primed for retirement, and their absence will hasten the need for Millennials to take up leadership roles perhaps sooner than prior generations. The question then arises, whether and how coaching can serve as an enabler to this population within this environment?

**Millennials and Implications for Coaching**

Research suggests that coaching is a positive and productive experience. Surveys of outcome studies indicate that executive coaching is superior to peer coaching and to an absence of coaching as well (Peterson et al., 2006). The efficacy of coaching is currently supported by over 40 randomized controlled trials (Passmore, 2014)(Robinson, Morrow, & Miller, 2018) while a recent meta-analysis of coaching yielded positive correlations in coachee (or client) performance, coping skills, well-being and self-regulation (Theeboom, Beersma, & van Vianen, 2014). Further, factors that impact the effectiveness of executive coaching as gleaned by recent brain scanning technology support the ideas that coaching that enacts clients sense of dreams as opposed to merely goals is more effective (Boyatzis, Rochford, & Taylor, 2015)(Boyatzis, Smith, & Blaize, 2006). Moreover, definitions and descriptions of coaching and coaching relationships relevant and informative to this research include, according to the coaching governing body, International Coaching Federation (ICF), that "coaching is partnering with clients in a though-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential." Which is marked further by the coaching relationship between coach and coachee which can be seen as a type of "recharging station where coaches tap into the source of energy they need in order to get over the hurdles in their lives (Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House, Sandahl, & Whitworth, 2018, p. 20).

Table 1.
*Definitions of VUCA, Executive Coaching, and Millennials*

| Author/Source | Description |
| --- | --- |
| **VUCA**<br>(Yarger, 2006) | "…volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA)—the strategic environment is always in a greater or lesser state of dynamic instability or "chaos." The role of the strategist is to exercise influence over the volatility, manage the uncertainty, simplify the complexity, and resolve the ambiguity, all in terms favorable to the interests of the state and in compliance with policy guidance." (p.18) |
| **Volatility**<br>(Lawrence, 2013b)<br><br>**Uncertainty**<br>(Kinsinger & Walch, 2012)<br>**Complexity**<br>(Boulton, Allen, & Bowman, 2015, p. 8)<br>**Ambiguity**<br>(Lawrence, 2013b) | "**Volatility** is turbulence, a phenomenon that is occurring more frequently than in the past."<br><br>"The "U" in the VUCA acronym stands for **uncertainty**, or the lack of predictability in issues and events."<br><br>"When we say the world is **complex** we are saying it is: systemic, path-dependent, sensitive to context, emergent and episodic."<br><br>**Ambiguity** is the lack of clarity about the meaning of an event |
| **Executive Coaching**<br>(Kilburg, 1996) | "Executive coaching is defined as a helping relationship formed between the client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organization and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioral techniques and methods to assist the client to achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and |

| | |
|---|---|
| | consequently to improve the effectiveness of the client's organization within a formally defined coaching agreement." (pp. 65-67) |
| **Millennials** (Howe & Strauss, 2009) | Howe and Strauss (2000) coined the term Millennials to refer to a particular generational cohort in the United States born between 1980 and 1999, which possesses a number of attributes that define a distinct "peer-personality" or subculture. In a previous text by Strauss and Howe (1991), three other generational cohorts were proposed: Silent (1925–1945), Baby Boomer (1946–1964), and Generation X (1965–1979). |

So, through the literature we can better understand the contextual framework within which this population, Millennials will hope to thrive, using coaching as a possible enabler to flourishing.

**Conceptual Framework**

It is important to understand the consensus image of these Millennials so that we can better understand what may or may not inspire, motivate or repel them. One aspect of their characterization is where they presently are in their life stage. According to E. Erickson's *The Life Cycle Completed: A Review* there are 8 stages of life, starting with Infancy and spanning through Early Childhood, Play Age, School Age, Adolescence, Young Adulthood, Adulthood and Old Age, with a ninth added later. Erickson and Erikson's work inspired Levinson's *Life Cycle* and ultimately G. Sheehy's *The New Map of Adult Life* and its visualization of Provisional Adulthood (18-30), First Adulthood (30-45) and Second Adulthood (45-85+)(Erikson & Erikson, 1998). These stages correspond too to Jung's Archetypes and his claim that in the first half of your life we negotiate with the world and in the second half with ourselves (Jung, 1971). For this study, understanding the life stage gives us some data on the characteristics we seek, mainly the values driving them.

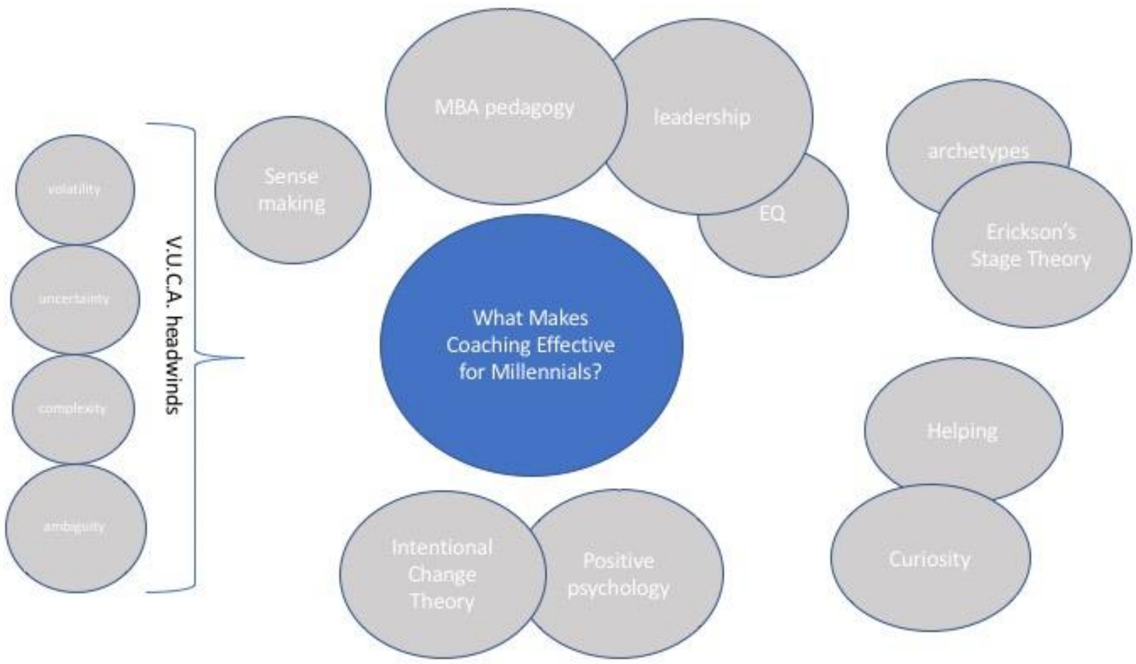
Business coaching and its effectiveness are relevant to this study. Therefore, the theories that inform modern coaching, flourishing, and desired change include Intentional Change Theory (Boyatzis et al., 2006) which encourages an identification of the ideal vs. ought self. As Boyatzis and Akrivou state, "the ideal self is composed of three major components: an image of a desired future; hope (and its constituents, self-efficacy and optimism); and a comprehensive sense of one's core identity (past strengths, traits, and other enduring dispositions)(Boyatzis, Akrivou, & Akrivou, 2006)." Additionally, the concept presented by positive psychology and the work by Fredrickson on the subject of flourishing will also inform this research (Fredrickson, 2004). Broaden and build theory illuminates that positive emotions not only make room for flourishing, but also, in fact, produce the state of flourishing (Fredrickson, 2004).

The external environment into which these subjects will emerge could be influenced by the Life Stage theories as well as Lewin's Psychological Field Theory. Lewin was one of the first social psychologists to propose that the development of an individual, in this case, the emerging Millennial, is a product of the interaction between inborn predispositions (nature) and life experiences (nurture) (K. Lewin, 1946). As such, Lewin accounted for human behavior by emphasizing forces and tensions that influence it and his equation helps this study examine multiple factors when coding for significant factors. Further, in an effort to understand how the subjects gauge their *context* (what's happening) their *content* (why it matters) and their *conduct* (what actions they may take), sense-making theory will be employed (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). “Sense making involves turning circumstances into a situation that is comprehended explicitly in words and that serves as a springboard into action (Weick et al., 2005).” I sought to understand how this population makes sense of their current environment and ultimately, responds to it.

The longer-term study will explore the perceptions Millennials have on the effectiveness of coaching. *Figure 1* can be used to see how this study fits into a broader concept and where this research hopes to go. This situational map is comprised of six clusters that can help us understand the factors that inform this broader study. Each helps us understand (1) the context in which Millennials exist, (2) how they could make sense of that context, (3) what aspects of learning impact or are available to them, (4) how they fit into a broader life arch, (5) general coaching enablers, and (6) theories that enable flourishing.

1. VUCA headwinds (context)
2. Sense-making (how they understand their context)
3. MBA pedagogy, leadership, EQ (how and what they learn)
4. Archetypes, Erickson’s Stage Theory (how they fit into a broader life arch)
5. Helping, Curiosity (possible prerequisite enablers)
6. Intentional Change Theory, Positive Psychology (how they flourish)

Figure 1.
*Situational Map*



## Preliminary Findings

"Qualitative research is a form of research in which the researcher…collects and interprets data, making the researcher as much a part of the research process as the participants and the data they provide."(Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 4). Because of the personal topic of coaching, rendered even more so by my personal connection to these students who engaged in one or two half-semester courses on Organizational Business Coaching, I sought to explore the "inner experiences of" these students. I was privileged to have a glimpse of this inner world through the reflection assignments I graded as their professor. In these personal reflections I found a robust and revealing inner world. I became aware of the travails from whence these students emerged, the futures for which they yearned and the obstacles they stacked before themselves or saw stacked before them by their environments. I was then inspired by a consistent external story (from the somewhat myopic view from a business school) of the complex world outside of campus.

Further, the school at which I teach went through (and is presently continuing to go through) a pedagogical review of its MBA curriculum to better address the expectations of the hiring world. This atmosphere inspired my curiosity and, in turn, my research. How were we supporting the growth of these students relative to the world unto which we released them? Much like a conscientious member of an animal reserve, I was both hesitant and concerned about releasing my metaphoric birds back out into their natural habitat. Also, much like the assumed intent of this same wild animal rehabilitator, I was curious how my students would make sense of their external worlds and, in turn, flourish within them. How might I lend more effective support to this end as well? Was coaching and its inherent sense-making components enough? Was the framework of Intentional Change Theory manageable amidst the expectant headwinds? What was I missing?

As stated earlier, what follows is a preliminary view of what I hope is a more robust paper once coding is completed and analyzed for all 30 interviews. For the sake of this paper, I thematically coded seven of *Group 1*, the *Peer-identified Group.* I was guided by thematic analysis to identify a set of codes that "at minimum describes and organizes possible observations or at the maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon (Boyatzis, 1998)." As a matter of process, all my interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Names and key identifiable information (i.e. business affiliations, etc.) were removed before uploading into NVivo 12 software, whereby I sought to inductively draw themes and codes from the interview data of 7 interviewees. Although, at present writing, I have identified over 90 possible codes, the three that I would like to explore more deeply here are what I've titled (1) *Balance; (2) I don't know,* and (3) *Serendipity".*

<u>Theme 1</u>: *Balance* seems to be oriented around a sense of juggling of agendas and passions. It also seems to indicate a sense of self-awareness. One student claimed that "while I do want to do good, I also know that I can't sign up for too much and then be no one for everybody." This statement conjures up a sense that the student is grappling with a world that offers up opportunities (there seems to be no worry that there's good work to be done), but the quest for those opportunities must be placed about the impact the pursuit may have on loved ones. Another, in describing the perspective they gained from coaching said "That's something that I need to face and essentially tell myself to get over it. We've got to be uncomfortable to grow and move on." Though the scope of this study was not solely aimed at refuting the stereotypes in the popular media about "lazy or self-absorbed" Millennials, it is quotations like this that reveal a glimmer of a different paradigm, one that accepts that life's valleys can yield later peaks. Additionally, an interviewee homed in on the challenge of figuring out how she could thrive as a woman in the workplace, saying "almost every woman leader that we interacted with throughout the summer was either divorced or very

unhappy or expressed some sort of regret." She went on to insinuate that the terms of work were like playing a game in which someone else shaped the rules. "I have no interest in playing this game whatsoever," she continued.

Balance also comes in the form of gauging the effective ratio of hard-work and pleasure that is appropriate to living a full life. "I just need to do what would make me happy. I need to find that job that's right for me." This same notion is shared as a learned experience when one former military student lamented the lack of balance he had experienced prior to school.

> "Through seven years in the military, as an officer you're taught to be humble, you're taught humble leadership. You're taught to put in the good work, get the job done, but then step back from the spotlight, pump up the folks that helped you accomplish it, give them the credit and then move on. What I learned had bled over into my personal life with my family and so…10 years down the road, what's going to happen is you're just going to be completely burned out and have no sense of appreciating the finer things in life or work-life balance."

Here the student hints at another preliminary code that I call "I don't know." This sentiment came up generally when students were faced with, as Dr. Richard Boyatzis' research would ascribe, the Positive Emotional Attractor (PEA) question. The PEA is enacted when a coachee is asked certain questions that arouses a positive state which includes both neurological and hormonal activation (Boyatzis et al., 2015). Two questions were designed into this study's interview protocol to elicit just such a response. They were the "who helped you" question and "if your future were perfect" question. These questions also link to Intentional Change Theory (ICT)'s identification of the "ideal self" and its nemesis, the "ought self." The military officer's quote speaks to his understanding that the military had provided him a list of things he "should" or "ought" to do and over time it encroached upon how he behaved as a civilian or how he envisioned he would 'ideally' behave. This same interviewee stated later that he missed out on a real honeymoon due to an assignment and would have instead told his commanding officers "Hey look, if I'm deploying…I need to go on a legitimate honeymoon." Here again he seems to be making sense around what he would ideally like to do and what he should do.

<u>Theme #2</u>. The "*I don't know"* response or code, used mainly in response to the "if your future were perfect" question, and as I have begun to explore it, has a multiplicity of possible meanings. The one the glimmers the most presently is that the interviewee is having trouble understanding what a perfect future looks like because they need to answer for themselves, "who's future" first. Their ought-selves are fueled by what their parent's, neighbor's, peer's, professor's and friend's think a perfect future would be. ICT, instead asks them to explore their own ideal selves. This idea is supported by quotes like "I did it because it's my family. It's because engineering is a quick path to success," and "college was prescribed for me and my family dynamic."

<u>Theme 3</u>. Finally, I mentioned that a question emerged after interviews had begun that I felt was supporting my sense that coaching and the conversations and introspection that it elicits fits well into the Millennial graduate student's life stage. So, I began to ask how "*serendipitous"* they found coaching. The responses I heard were "I'd say it was pretty good on the timing. Where I was personally, with the relationship that I was in, I needed to find a way to get away from the arguing and better into what is it that both of us want out of this entire situation that we're in. Then, I was able to realize what I wanted and how I wanted it." Another said, "it probably came at a really

important time for me, kind of unknowing to me as I was going through such a rough patch." A new leader said "It had an immediate impact and I felt very fortunate to have it come into my life at a time when I was taking over a group, leading people … who I wanted to develop."

Finally, I expect more perspectives to emerge upon coding Group 2 and comparing their responses to Group 1.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

Building upon these preliminary themes about this population and the phenomenon surrounding them, I will endeavor to hone more deeply into these emerging themes. Most especially, I am curious around three ideas that Millennials in this study have identified. First, the concept of balance comes up often in the interviews, balance around work and life, balance around practical pursuits (a job) and ideal pursuits (a dream). Further, the impact of their digital lives (being always logged on, awareness of its impact on personal relationships and relationship building) seems to be an aspect of their future lives that they perceive as only getting more complex and perhaps less manageable. Finally, I was intrigued by several references to enjoying the ride. There is an indication, drawn by some through their reflection upon their parent's career satisfaction and a distrust in existing corporate systems (that rely on a long-term buy-in), that is seemingly anathema to their desired career path. These three initial emergences, I'm sure, will be contextualized more broadly once all is coded and analyzed.

The next leg of the study will be to identify variables that can inform a quantitative study. Because my research draws from a large, unique sample that has not been studied this way before, I believe a developmental model or curriculum could emerge from this research which in turn could support practitioners such as leaders working with Millennials, Talent Development Officers, Directors of corporate coaching programs and MBA program leaders. Finally, Centennials, the cohort right behind Millennials could serve as another population to study in the same fashion with similar scholar-practitioner goals.

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# *Whole Person Well-Being Powered by Character Strengths: Evidence-Based Coaching Tools for Increased Well-Being, Resilience and Engagement*

*Fatima Doman, Authentic Strengths Advantage and VIA Institute on Character*

## Abstract

In a growing body of studies, the consistent use of character strengths predicted well-being, resilience and engagement, among other positive outcomes with important implications for the field of coaching. A review of selected literature contributes to the standard of excellence in coaching, exploring evidence-based positive psychology tools and concepts such as the VIA Classification of Character Strengths, PERMA, strengths-related job fit and the ASA Resilience Model.

***Key Words:*** Whole Person, Well-Being, Resilience, Engagement, Character Strengths, Coaching

## Introduction

The World Health Organization (2017) estimates depression affects 300 million people worldwide. It is the leading cause of workplace disability. Both absenteeism—feeling too low to come into the office—and presenteeism—being in the office but too energy-depleted to accomplish much, take a toll on the workplace. This paper adds relevant knowledge to the field of coaching by gathering research connecting the use of character strengths in whole person coaching to an increase in the coaching client's well-being, resilience and work engagement.

This paper reviews a selection of studies to provide insights into the latest research. The literature reviewed shows that when individuals discover and consistently utilize their strengths of character, overall well-being and resilience tends to increase, which often leads to improved engagement, performance and goal attainment. This has many positive implications for using character strengths in the coaching relationship. I will show in this paper a literature review of what the field is saying about these topics.

## Methodology

This *literature review* represents a summary of selected literature describing the use of character strengths for increasing whole person well-being, resilience, work engagement. Since many studies on character strengths are now available, this paper focuses primarily on recent research studies that provide insights into the benefits of using character strengths for the coaching client's overall well-being. Evidence-based tools that increase the afore-mentioned positive outcomes in the coaching relationship have been highlighted in this paper. A Google search of terms such as "character strengths and well-being", "character strengths and resilience", and "character strengths and work engagement" was employed in searching for relevant character strengths research, and various publications were reviewed. In addition, a review of the research pages of the VIA Institute on Character website was conducted, in which research terms and topics such as "well-being", "work and employee engagement", "strengths-related person-job fit", "resilience", "performance" and "work/life satisfaction" were selected and reviewed.

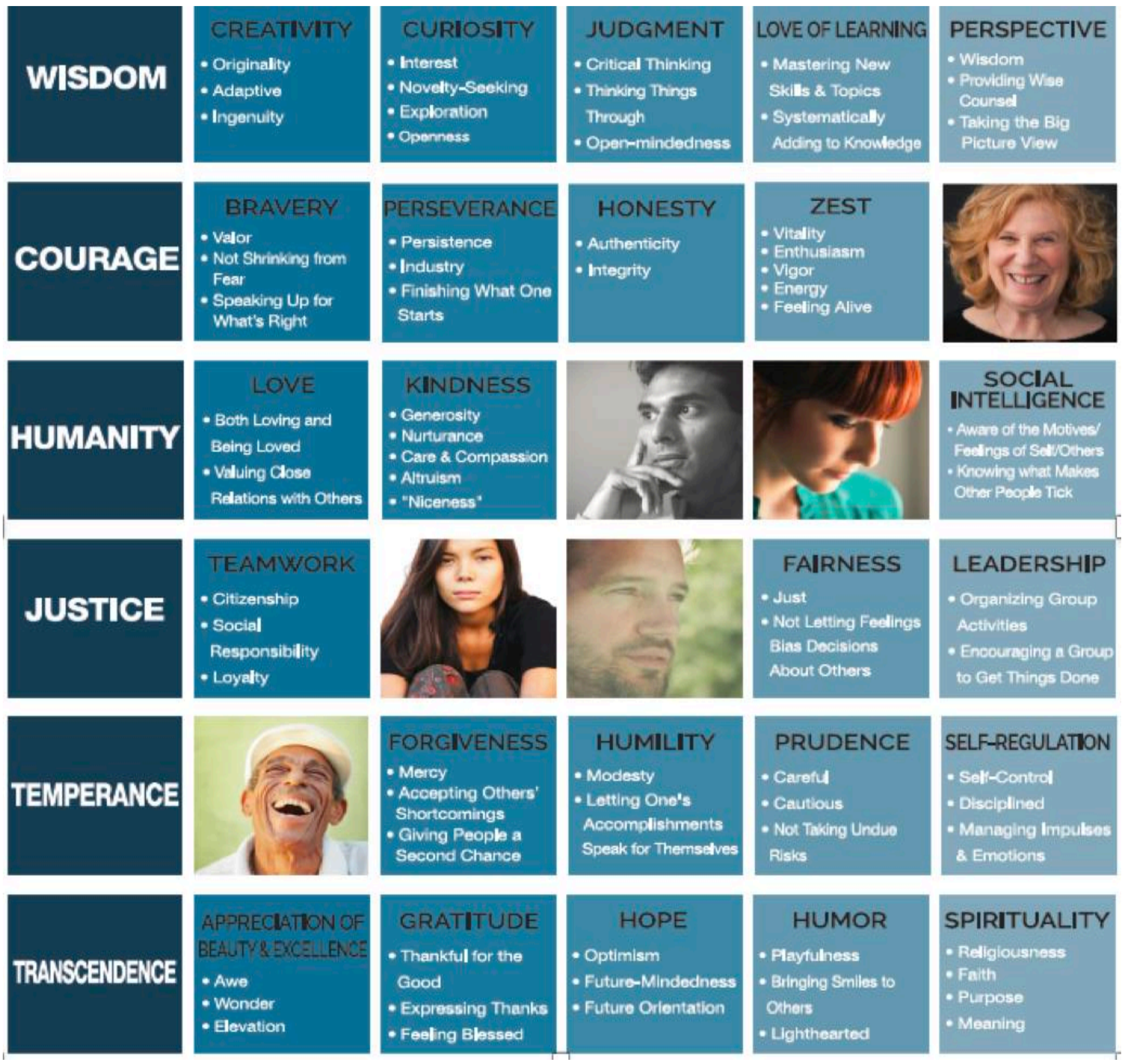
## Literature Review

### Character Strengths

In the mid 2000's positive psychology research revealed that once people know what their best qualities are, they can open up a vital pathway to well-being—at work, at school, in relationships and in life (Peterson & Seligman 2004). Due to this relatively new field, the result of a three-year collaboration involving 55 scientists from around the world, we now can help people identify the character strengths that define who they are at their best. The qualities that, when nurtured, can lead to positive outcomes in all aspect of their lives (Peterson & Seligman 2004). As various studies have shown, when individuals make the consistent shift from focusing on what is "wrong" (their weaknesses), to focusing on what is "strong" (their strengths), they tend to be happier, more resilient, more engaged, less stressed and higher achievers—in short, overall well-being is increased (Buschor, Proyer, & Ruch, 2013; Brdar & Kashdan, 2010; Crabb, 2011; Gallup, 2013; Govindi & Linley, 2007; Minhas, 2010; Park & Peterson, 2009; Wood et al., 2010).

Positive psychologists have studied the role of character strengths within the aspects of well-being, using the VIA Classification of Character Strengths. Peterson and Seligman (2004) defined character strengths as positive, morally valued traits of personality that are beneficial to self and others. They proposed a classification of 24 character strengths, assigned within six "virtue categories," represented in the following Figure 1.

Figure 1: *VIA Classification of Character Strengths, copyright © VIA Institute on Character, 2018*



Character strengths are an important aspect of ourselves that we want recognized and understood by others, and they are collectively responsible for our greatest achievements and fulfillment (Peterson & Seligman 2004). The 24 character strengths can be understood as the basic building blocks that represent our individuality, psychologically speaking; we each possess all 24 in varying degrees and combinations. Each strength is equally important to human development and is universally valued around the world, leading us to positive emotions, relationships, and into purposeful and meaningful life activities where we can flourish (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

**Strengths Coaching**

A growing body of knowledge reveals that with work and dedication, individuals can learn to effectively utilize and to build upon any of these 24 character strengths, and that trained coaches can coach others to do so in what is being referred to as strengths-based coaching (Linley & Harrington, 2006; McQuaid, Niemiec & Doman, 2018). The use of such strengths tools has increased considerably over the years, showing the previously mentioned benefits of increased well-being and resilience, lowered stress, increased energy and engagement, and higher work/life satisfaction, among other benefits within the coaching relationship (Biswas-Diener, 2010; Elston & Boniwell, 2011; Gibbs & Larcus, 2015; Kaufman, Silberman & Sharpley, 2008; Linley & Harrington, 2006; McQuaid, Niemiec & Doman, 2018).

Strengths coaching is founded on the assumption that positive attributes exist within every person and that these can be built upon to enable human potential. While recognizing that weaknesses, problems, and obstacles also exist, it counterbalances the brain's natural negativity bias (Kahneman, D. 2011; Rock, D. 2009) to help clients focus on the true, the good, and the possible in any chosen domain of their life, and supports them in taking tested, practical steps to realize their goals. This focus on strengths fundamentally changes the nature of assessments, the interventions, and the questions coaches draw upon (Linley & Harrington 2006; McQuaid, Niemiec & Doman 2018).

**Well-Being and Resilience**

Well-being is also a central concept in positive psychology that can benefit the field of coaching. Deiner (2009) proposes a definition of “subjective well-being” as “consisting of a person's cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life.” In a more recent definition, Seligman describes well-being as follows: “Well-being has five measurable elements referred to as (PERMA) that count towards it. No one element defines wellbeing, but each contributes...” (Seligman, M.E. 2011)

Seligman’s five elements of PERMA have been summarized below:

1. **P**ositive Emotions: Happiness and life satisfaction are considered aspects of positive emotion.
2. **E**ngagement: The concept of 'flow' is a perfect example of engagement.
3. **R**elationships: Relationships and social networks affect well-being.
4. **M**eaning/Purpose: For many, this means religion or spirituality; for others, this may mean connection to something greater than oneself.
5. **A**ccomplishment: Achieving goals simply for the satisfaction entailed.

Lawton-Smith (2017) addresses the PERMA model and it’s use in the coaching relationship to increase well-being and resilience, “coaching can be a valuable approach to increasing resilience and many alternative coaching philosophies can show positive outcomes…PERMA and other positive psychology models have therefore been suggested as valuable for coaches working with resilience.” In addition, a number of authors have identified how alternative coaching models can be used to address wellbeing and resilience (Cooper et al., 2013, Green & Humphrey, 2012; Neenan, 2009; Pemberton, 2015).

The benefit of increased well-being has been shown for individuals who regularly use their strengths, along with individuals reporting lower levels of depression, higher levels of vitality and generally good mental health (Gander, Proyer, Ruch, & Wyss, 2012; Mitchell, Stanimirovic, Klein, & Vella-Brodrick, 2009; Seligman et al., 2005).

Because well-being is considered to be supported by high levels of resilience, both terms are often used together. Resilience and well-being are considered to be fundamentally related, and in some instances, resilience is measured using well-being instruments (Davydov et al., 2010; Harms et al, 2018; Windle, 2011). Researchers have argued that higher levels of well-being serve as an antecedent of resilience (Harms et al, 2018; Kuntz, Näswall, & Malinen, 2016). Resilience has been described as the capacity to maintain or recover high levels of well-being in the face of life adversity (Ryff et al., 1998). Although some individuals can become overwhelmed by life's challenges, many people display resilience, and are able to function well (Bonanno, 2004). Previously, Klohnen (1996) described resilience as a personality characteristic that allows individuals to adaptively encounter and shape their life circumstances.

**How Character Strengths Increase Well-being and Resilience**

Recent studies find that character strengths predict resilience and well-being (Martínez-Martí & Ruch, 2016). According to Martinez-Marti and Ruch (2016): "The three individual character strengths that showed the largest correlations with resilience were hope, zest, and bravery, all large in size." These researchers point out that hope and zest can be easily related to other resilience-related factors previously identified in resilience research (i.e. optimism and positive affect, respectively), and have shown repeatedly their importance for well-being in character strengths research (Martínez-Martí & Ruch, 2014).

In addition to the positive affect on resilience, a recent study showed character strengths and strengths-related person-job fit as predictors of work-related well-being, among other outcomes (Harzer, Mubashar, and Dubreuil, 2017). As described by the study's authors, the study examined, among other factors, the relations between the possession of character strengths, three indices of character strengths-related person-job fit (i.e., signature strengths fit, demanded strengths fit, happiness strengths fit) and work-related outcomes (i.e., work related well-being, job performance, workplace deviance). Results showed that the most important predictors of work-related outcomes are signature strengths fit (signature strengths that are applied at work) and the strengths of teamwork and creativity. Those character strengths that most highly correlated with total workplace well-being (positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and achievement) were zest, teamwork, hope, love, gratitude, leadership, and perseverance (Harzer, Mubashar, & Dubreuil 2017). This is in line with previous research indicating that there are positive relationships between signature strengths fit, specific character strengths, well-being and performance (Harzer & Ruch, 2012; 2013; 2014; Littman-Ovadia et al., 2017).

In a study of 832 employees across 96 departments, strengths use support reduced absenteeism among workers with a high workload and high emotional demands (van Woerkom, Bakker, & Nishii, 2016). Another study of 1,031 working adults, showed signature character strengths had the highest unique contribution to performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and lower counterproductive work behavior, while “happiness strengths” (zest, hope, etc.) had the highest unique contribution to work meaningfulness, engagement, and job satisfaction (Littman-Ovadia, Lavy, & Boiman-Meshita, 2016). In addition, a workplace intervention study found a correlation with participants’ increase in strengths use and well-being while those reporting highest strengths use had significant increases in work performance and harmonious passion (Dubreuil et al., 2016). Yet another character strengths intervention in the workplace found short-term increases in positive affect and short and long-term increases in psychological capital (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2016).

## Summary of the Literature

A summary of the selected areas of literature reviewed shows that character strengths are a valuable tool for informing evidence-based coaching practices and contributing to the standard of excellence in personal, systemic and executive coaching, now and in the future. Research reviewed indicates coaches and clients would benefit from using character strengths as a tool to address the client’s overall well-being, resilience and engagement, which in turn can boost performance and goal attainment. This can be done by viewing the individual coached as a “whole person” and taking into consideration all aspects of the client’s personality and well-being that influence the attainment of coaching goals, more specifically the client’s strengths of character (Brdar & Kashdan, 2010; Buschor, Proyer, & Ruch, 2013; Crabb, 2011; Govindi & Linley, 2007; Harzer et al, 2017; Martínez-Martí & Ruch, 2016; Minhas, 2010; Park & Peterson, 2009; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Seligman, M.E., 2011; Wood et al., 2010). In addition, the literature reviewed showed that consistent character strengths use at work is connected with not only increased well-being, resilience and job satisfaction, but also higher productivity, organizational citizenship behavior, positive emotions and engagement (Lavy & Littman-Ovadia, 2016).

## Conclusions and Recommendations

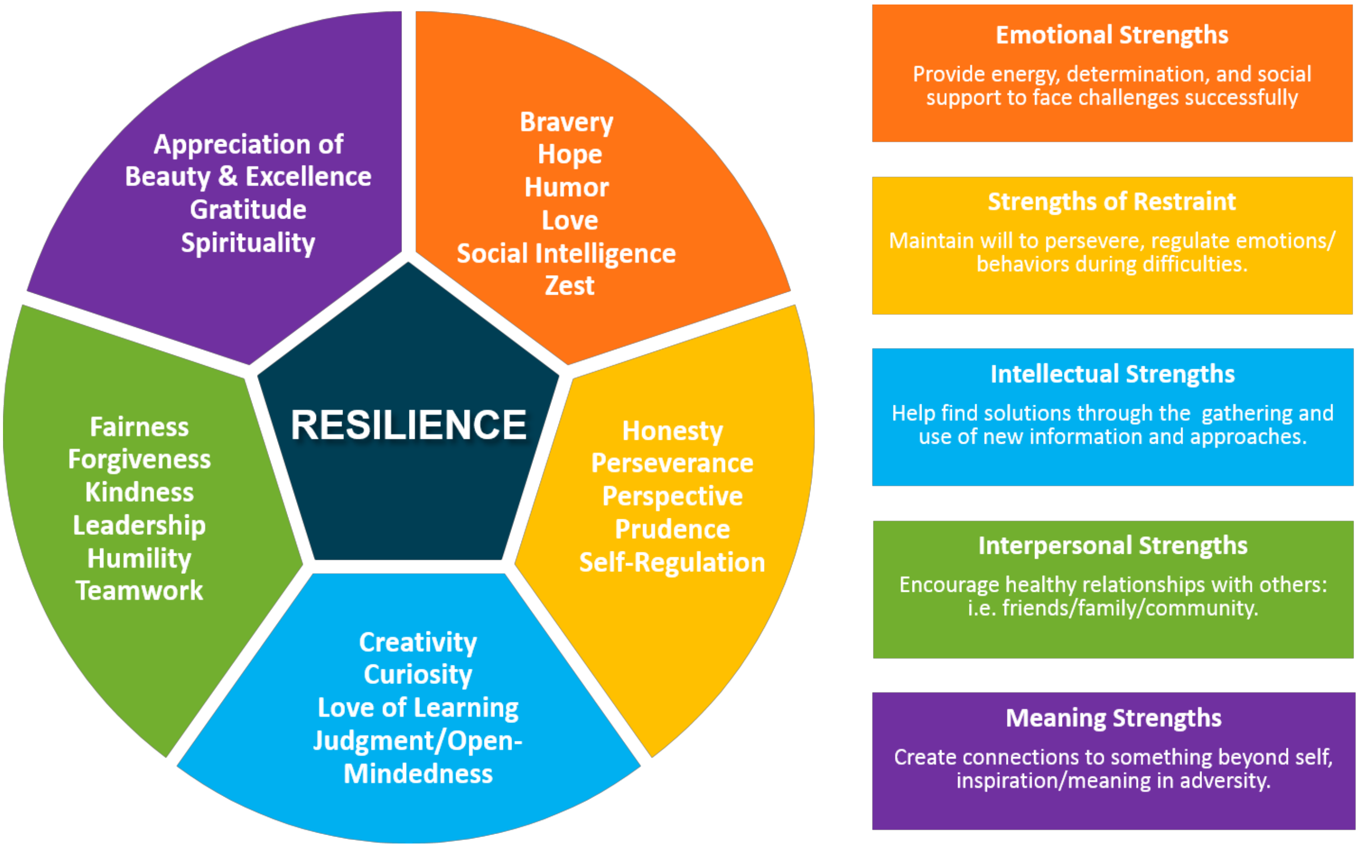
The role that positive psychology and the science of character strengths can play in coach development is well established. Findings have shown important implications for the field of coaching. Inspired by the theme of the 2018 International Columbia Coaching Conference, "Systemic Coaching: Whole Person | Whole Organization Engagement", this paper explored current approaches to personal, systemic and executive coaching by developing an understanding and proficiency in using evidence-based positive psychology tools such as character strengths in coaching the whole person.

While investigating the large body of positive psychology research one can see many ways in which character strengths can be used beneficially in the coaching relationship (Brdar & Kashdan, 2010; Buschor, Proyer, & Ruch, 2013; Crabb, 2011; Govindi & Linley, 2007; Harzer et al, 2017; Martínez-Martí & Ruch, 2016; Minhas, 2010; Park & Peterson, 2009; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Seligman, M.E., 2011; Wood et al., 2010). As more coaches begin to utilize positive psychology tools, more will be known about their optimal use. The existing body of research is extensive, encouraging, and warrants the attention and continued exploration of the coaching community at large.

In reviewing the literature on the connection of the 24 character strengths to resilience (Martínez-Martí & Ruch, 2016), I see implications for future research. Offered below is a model, based on the research of Martínez-Martí & Ruch (2016), which enables viewing the many ways in which resilience can be increased (and the resulting well-being) through the optimal expression of character strengths, represented in the following Figure 2. Given the literature review I have presented in this paper, I would like to research and validate the model below in my future coaching interventions and explore further connections between character strengths, resilience and well-being, to learn if there are more connections between specific strengths and specific resilience factors. From my coaching experience thus far, I anticipate I might find similar results as previous research, further validating those findings on resilience and well-being, but I may also find some surprising new information with implications for the field of coaching.

Figure 2: ASA Resilience Model, Copyright © Authentic Strengths Advantage, 2018.


Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence
Gratitude
Spirituality
Bravery
Hope
Humor
Love
Social Intelligence
Zest
Fairness
Forgiveness
Kindness
Leadership
Humility
Teamwork
RESILIENCE
Honesty
Perseverance
Perspective
Prudence
Self-Regulation
Creativity
Curiosity
Love of Learning
Judgment/Open-Mindedness
Emotional Strengths
Provide energy, determination, and social support to face challenges successfully
Strengths of Restraint
Maintain will to persevere, regulate emotions/ behaviors during difficulties.
Intellectual Strengths
Help find solutions through the gathering and use of new information and approaches.
Interpersonal Strengths
Encourage healthy relationships with others: i.e. friends/family/community.
Meaning Strengths
Create connections to something beyond self, inspiration/meaning in adversity.

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# Your Brain on Coaching: Implications for coaching practice of neuroscientific research on learning and change

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Abstract: *Neuroscience and executive coaching is a hot topic. A challenge has been that many seemingly relevant findings have not been carried out specifically in a coaching context. Recent articles (2018) cite rigorously conducted research specific to a coaching context, providing evidence about practices useful in coaching and why they work. This paper summarizes a few of these and connects them to feedback from three coaching clients who have been exposed to the concept of neuroplasticity.*

Keywords: **Executive Coaching, Neuroscience of learning, Neuroscience of behavior change, Neuroscience of executive coaching**

## Introduction

This paper is primarily an integrative literature review, though it bridges to "concrete practice area" in that it provides brief feedback from three clients about their experience of having been exposed to neuroplasticity and related tools.

Much literature and training on executive and other coaching acknowledges coaching as involving cognitive, behavioural and emotional aspects. The recent explosion of neuroscientific research on learning and behavioural change provides evidence that such change is also physiological – it requires re-wiring neural pathways in the brain. This fact invites us to reframe the role of coach to one of being an "expert in facilitating neuroplasticity" (Rock and Schwartz, 2006) and the role of the client to one of intentionally fostering one's own neuroplasticity. This provides both coach and client new tools in the endeavor of learning, and leverages the physiological component of "whole person" change.

This paper begins with a literature review, focused on recent journal articles published in 2018, though some earlier work is also cited. It then moves on to summarize a qualitative pilot study in which I interviewed three coaching clients with whom some basic information about neuroplasticity had been shared during the coaching process, along with related tools, ideas or frameworks.

Though there remains skepticism about the "fad" of neuroscience as it relates to coaching, in the words of Robert W. Eichinger, "What we really know, for sure, is very little compared with what we are going to know. But is it enough to get started? My bias, yes" (Eichinger, 2018, p.90).

[1] Though I am a full-time employee of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), I am writing and presenting this paper in my personal capacity, and not as a representative of UNFPA or the United Nations.

## Methodology

This paper combines a literature review with a qualitative pilot study soliciting feedback from coaching clients on their experience of having been exposed to concepts related to neuroscience, particularly neuroplasticity.

The purpose of the interviews was to solicit from clients their experience of having been exposed to these ideas, including what, if anything, they found to be particularly useful in relation to their own learning- and change-related goals. This is in service of testing the implicit assumption in my recent coaching practice that exposing clients to such information is helpful to their own learning- and behavior-change goals – a deductive or theory-driven approach to analysing client feedback.

Three clients were selected for interviews, those with whom I had shared the information under study, who were also available during the interview period. I did one interview in person, one using Webex and one by telephone; all interviews were recorded, following the required client consent. A list of pre-established questions was used consistently for each interview, with minor variations in probing. I transcribed all three interviews, analysed the findings and drew the conclusions found below.

On study limitations, it should be noted that I, the author of this paper, am also the coach of these three clients and their interviewer, where we are all colleagues within the same organization (an internal coaching context). While it was made clear to each client that "there are no right or wrong answers – only what is true for you," and that even a negative finding like "that tool was completely unhelpful" would be useful, there is potential for bias in both client responses and in my analysis, given the existing relationships between these clients and the coach/researcher/colleague.

Finally, one of the interviews conducted remotely had several technical problems and the call was cut off more than once. Some data was lost and I probed this interviewee less than the other two, given the technical conditions.

## Literature Review/Conceptual Framework

As Patricia Bossons et al. put it, "… an understanding of the neuroscience that underlies, for instance, decision-making, problem solving, creativity, emotional regulation, the effect of social isolation, motivation and other aspects of individual behaviour would be a major asset in a coach" (Bossons et al., 2015, p. 16). Of the coaching definitions cited below, the one credited to Jeffrey Schwartz about coaches being "experts in the facilitation of self-directed neuroplasticity" makes explicit the neurological underpinnings of learning and change.

*Table 1*

*Definitions of Coaching – with a focus on learning and change*

| DEFINITIONS OF COACHING RELEVANT TO THIS REVIEW | |
|---|---|
| **Author/Source** | **Description** |
| D. Rock and J. Schwartz (2006) | A coach is an expert in facilitating "self-directed neuroplasticity, or the ability of an individual to alter his or her own brain activity through the active practice of focusing attention in constructive ways." (p.6) |
| Bowman et al. (2013) | "At first pass, coaching might be described as a process to facilitate the learning (and remembering) of new behaviors." (p.96) |
| Peterson and Hicks (1996), Hall et al. (1999), cited in Howard (2015) | "Executive coaching is a far-reaching practice to enhance the performance of 21st century professionals facing constant workplace change, challenge and stress. Coaching is generally understood to involve practical, goal-focused forms of one-on-one learning and behavioral change." (p.2) |

Several findings, published in 2018, provide specific neuroscientific evidence confirming practices found to be effective with respect to executive coaching. These include findings: on the relationship between the brain chemical oxytocin (OT), "pro-social behavior" and high trust organizations (Zak, 2018); on a variety of practices related to *"Resilience training that can change the brain*" (Tabibnia and Radecki, 2018); and confirming with fMRI studies the long-standing work of Richard Boyatzis and colleagues about the impact of using "positive emotional attractors" (PEA) and "negative emotional attractors" (NEA) during the coaching process (Boyatzis and Jack, 2018).

At the close of their article, Tabibnia and Radecki conclude "Importantly, believing in the malleability of the human brain can itself improve learning and behavior change. Thus, perhaps it is the case that sharing with clients the evidence that the brain can change…may itself help boost their ability to learn and implement new coping skills" (Tabibnia and Radecki, 2018, p.78).

Again, this paper concludes with feedback precisely on this question from three coaching clients, to test the implicit assumption in my own coaching practice that "It is useful to clients in their efforts at learning and change to understand the basic physiology behind neuroplasticity," particularly the following:

1. Our brains can change and do change throughout our lifetimes.

2. Patterns of thought and behavior are "wired" in the brain along various neural pathways that are reinforced by frequency of usage.

3. Neurons build more neurotransmitter receptors for those neural pathways used frequently – making them easier to use, even if the behavior they represent is not useful to the individual in question.

4. This "wiring" can be changed. In particular, to use Eichinger's words, "The 'wiring' can also be changed by the owner of the brain!" (Eichinger, 2018, p.90).

**Boyatzis et al. – Coaching for Compassion, Compliance and Beyond**

Richard E. Boyatzis and colleagues' foundational work on "Intentional Change Theory (ICT)" has been published for more than a decade and details on that can be found elsewhere. I focus here on recent additional findings that support their work on ICT with functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) study data.

Boyatzis' further work builds on the earlier-mentioned PEA/NEA distinction to describe "coaching for compassion" (more PEA-focused) and "coaching for compliance" (more NEA-focused). Boyatzis and McKee "claimed that effective leadership relationships are characterized as resonant rather than dissonant relationships," where the "parties feel in sync or in tune with each other" (Boyatzis and McKee, 2005, cited in Boyatzis and Jack, 2018, p.20). Further, "effective coaching relationships have been shown to be more resonant" (Van Oosten, 2013, cited in Boyatzis and Jack, 2018, p. 20). "The four experiences often associated with being in these relationships are hope through vision, caring through compassion, awareness through mindfulness and joy through playfulness" (Boyatsiz and McKee, 2005, as cited in Boyatzis and Jack, 2018).

A 2018 article by Boyatzis and Jack, *"The Neuroscience of Coaching,"* provides evidence from two fMRI studies specifically carried out in relation to coaching interventions, some with a PEA focus, contrasted with others using an NEA focus. The article connects these two approaches with two different brain networks, each of which is more activated by a particular approach. The study found that the default mode network (DMN) is activated by a PEA coaching state, while the task-positive network (TPN) is more activated by the NEA coaching state. It has been "demonstrated that the brain divides very clearly between social/emotional concepts (e.g., "communal," "mental," "social," and "emotional"), stored in the DMN, and perceptual/analytic concepts (e.g., "visual," "tactile," "abstract," and "numeric") stored in the TPN." (Huth et al., 2016, cited in Boyatzis and Jack, 2018, p.15). To summarize,

> "We need the TPN to solve problems, analyze things, make decisions, and focus (i.e., limit one's awareness to focus attention on a task or issue). On the other hand, we need the DMN to be open to new ideas, scanning the environment for trends or patterns and being open to others and emotions, as well as moral concerns (i.e., being fair and just and promoting well-being, not the more analytic act of judging and action as right or wrong)" (Boyatzis and Jack, 2018, p.16).

Yet, these two networks, while both essential, "are not just distinct but in some ways are fundamentally opposed to each other," in that when one is use the other tends to be turned off (Jack et al., 2012, cited in Boyatzis and Jack, 2018, p.15).

Among many implications for coaching, the authors assert – supporting conclusions of their earlier work on PEA-focused vs NEA-focused coaching – that "coaching is most effective when the coach is highly DMN-oriented – the focus is first and foremost on listening to and understanding the client" (Boyatzis and Jack, 2018, p. 17).

**Zak on Oxytocin and Trust**

While the work of Paul J. Zak is framed in terms of organizational culture and related interventions, the conclusive data on the neurochemical oxytocin, trust, prosocial behavior and empathy remains of interest to coaches.

In brief, the work of Zak's lab has shown, over a decade of human experiments, that oxytocin (OT)

> "is the biological basis for the golden rule: If you treat me well, my brain will synthesize OT and this will motivate me to reciprocate… OT makes it feel good to cooperate with others. It does this by increasing our awareness of others' emotional states – OT is the neurochemical substrate of empathy. By simulating how another feels, OT produces more effective cooperation among social creatures such as humans." Further, "by taking blood samples before and after various types of social interactions, [Zak's] experiments have demonstrated that when one is trusted, one's brain produces OT in proportion to the degree of trust shown" (Zak, 2018, p.46).

Zak goes on to propose a model to help build trust in organizations. Of note, "In a high-trust organization, a leader's role is more like a coach or counselor than an omnipotent dictator." The "coach" approach to leadership is one that generates more OT and more trust (Zak, 2018, p. 50). Zak concludes, "Neuroscience now provides consultants with insights about specific practices and behaviours that can directly improve organizational performance by nurturing a culture of trust" (Zak, 2018, p. 55). I would speculate that it does something similar for executive coaches. An area for further study could be the role of trust and OT in relation to the effectiveness of coaching outcomes.

**Tabibnia and Radeki from *"Resilience Training that Can Change the Brain"***

This article summarizes many studies related to: resilience, well-being, emotion regulation, social affective neuroscience, and stress, presenting a model covering 15 cognitive, behavioural and mindset strategies that "can boost resilience and lead to long-term change in the nervous system" (Tabibnia and Radecki, 2018, p. 63). I will focus on specific sections that related to the client interviews carried out for this paper.

One "take-home on cognitive training" relates to mindfulness. "Mindfulness training aims to improve one's ability to bring attention to the present moment, rather than the past or future. By bringing awareness to one's present thoughts and emotions, mindfulness reduces the psychological burden of ruminating about past stressors or worrying about future stressors…" (Tabibnia and Radecki, 2018, p. 72).

The authors recommend an "additive" approach to coaching clients for resilience. "Another benefit of amassing a large repertoire of coping skills that increase the likelihood of finding the skill set that best fits a given circumstance. Recall that the efficacy of a strategy depends in part on the context. As such, coping flexibility, or the ability to flexibly adopt different coping strategies across different situations can have a moderate effect on coping success" (Cheng, Lau, and Chan, 2014, as cited in Tabibnia and Radecki, 2018, p. 74).

Finally, the authors conclude with several points on mindset related to coaching clients for resilience which are relevant to this study.

1. "Although adaptive coping techniques can be learned, training is more successful when clients have confidence in their own ability to learn, believe in the efficacy of the intervention, and do not feel threatened. And, coping is more successful when the client has a wide repertoire of coping strategies to draw from and the flexibility to apply the appropriate strategy in a given circumstance."

2. "Interventions aimed at teaching coping skills can be more effective when the client believes that new skills can be learned. Thus, prior to training, it could be helpful to remind clients of the plasticity of the human brain and of their inherent ability to learn new skills."

3. "More generally, interventions may be more effective if the client believes in the intervention."

4. "Understanding the underlying neuroscience of the intervention may help increase clients' trust in the intervention and help boost its outcome" (Tabibnia and Radecki, 2018, p.75).

**Client Interviews**

The purpose of this pilot study with three client interviews is to test with clients themselves the assumption implicit in my recent coaching practice[2] that it is useful to share with clients basic information about neuroplasticity, as well as sharing with them related ideas and tools, in support of their own learning- and change-related goals.

The specific ideas and tools about which I interviewed clients are noted in the table below.

[2] To date, I have not shared this information with *all* of my coaching clients. It has been something I pull out of my "coach tool box" when it seems needed and I mainly use it in longer client engagements (10 sessions or more). None of this was explicitly designed. This pilot study is an opportunity to examine these intuitive coaching decisions.

*Table 2*
*Four Models Covered in Client Interviews*

| FOUR MODELS COVERED IN CLIENT INTERVIEWS | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Author/Source** | **Title** | **Description/Notes** |
| No specific reference | Neuroplasticity | As noted above, I share with clients some basic facts about neuroplasticity. |
| Kathleen Taylor and Catherine Marienau | Anxious Brain/Curious Brain | From the book *Facilitating Learning with the Adult Brain in Mind*, the idea is that the brain is always in one of two basic states – "anxious brain" (What do I have to do to save myself?) or "curious brain" (I'm also stimulated when…) |
| Dr. Merilee Adams | Judger/Learner Framework | From the book *Change your Questions, Change your Life*, Adams proposes that questions are a powerful reflection of mindset and can be significant in determining outcomes. The model includes lists of questions and a visual "choice map" including "switching questions" that help one to switch from a "judger" to a "learner" state. |
| Doug Silsbee's | Mindfulness | Of the many possible mindfulness references, I shared with 2 of the 3 clients Doug Silsbee's Habit Loop/Self-Generative Loop model, with mindfulness as a tool that supports use of the Self-Generative Loop option. |

While Dr. Merilee Adams work on "judger" vs "learner" questions is not presented as specifically neurologically related, I would speculate (perhaps for further study) that this dichotomy is related to Boyatzis' PEA/NEA distinction and perhaps to the engagement of the associated brain networks he discusses - TPN vs DMN. I would further speculate that the use of "learner" questions with colleagues (more than the use of "judger" questions) would generate more oxytocin, which Zak describes as the "neurological substrate of empathy" (Zak, 2018, p. 46), with the multiple positive effects in the workplace noted in Zak's findings.

It should be noted that while I shared this information with clients – with visuals, when available – I didn't undertake to "teach" clients as such. That is, I did not use any particular instructional or other methods to share the information and I did not have a specific plan to repeat or reinforce the information with clients, though this did spontaneously happen across sessions.

## Findings

Among their conclusions, Tabibnia and Radecki note that, "Understanding the underlying neuroscience of the intervention may help increase clients' trust in the intervention and help boost its outcome" (Tabibnia and Radecki, 2018, p.75). Having been doing just this as a part of my coaching practice over the past two years, the three clients I interviewed on this seem to agree, saying, "It's been very hopeful, like a guiding light," (Client 1) and, "I had not thought of the brain in that perspective before… it's been very powerful for me" (Client 2). One explained, "Maybe I have been less hard on myself when I have realized that my state of mind at the time was so negative and that, when there was even a physical explanation, it sounds a little bit easier to accept and to be more accepting of myself" (Client 2).

Tabibnia and Radecki also propose an "additive" model of resilience building, in which "another benefit of amassing a large repertoire of coping skills is that it increases the likelihood of finding the skill set that best fits a given circumstance" (Tabibnia and Radecki, 2018, p. 74). Two of the three clients I interviewed have spontaneously made the point noted above. According to one, "Just having all these different… frameworks or techniques or tools, I think that in itself is useful…I think, over time, as well, for certain situations, this model really is helpful vs. another situation – 'Oh, this framework is helpful.' So to have… all those tools in the toolbox" (Client 1). And another, "it seemed like you had… a library of tools [laughs] and you were just, 'This one may be useful…' So you were very good at taking the right tools… at the right time. So that was very helpful" (Client 2). Two out of three clients also spontaneously mentioned *additional* tools, not included in this study, as having been particularly useful, so the four considered here are not the *only* tools clients found useful.

All clients indicated some lack of clarity about the details of each tool or model. For example, "Maybe I've mixed it up in my mind… It's all one big cocktail for me" (Client 1). And, "…to me they are the same or is there maybe some nuances?" (Client 2). Again, as coach, I did not think of myself as "teaching" the four tools. From memory, I did spend more time with clients discussing neuroplasticity and the judger/learner model. Together, these could explain the confusion clients expressed.

Where clients have been able to apply concepts and tools, many things have been cited as having made them useful, including: credibility of the tool ("science-based… fact-based… so they feel very convincing" –Client 2); a visual aid to summarize the concept ("cheat sheets" "a little drawing" –Clients 1 and 2 respectively); use of the tool in the session and planning for use of the tool outside the session (Client 1); prior familiarity with a concept ("mindfulness… is familiar to me" – Client 1); and general ease of applicability ("practical…pragmatic" – Client 2). In the words of Client 3, "…having a model organizes your thoughts. Or having a model around which to conceptualize how you may effectively do the change, I think that's very valued-added…They provide you… a map to follow or … a mental schematic with steps to go through until you reach a point where you want to be."

When asked what hinders them from applying the tools and ideas reviewed here, two clients pointed to their own self-described limitations ("laziness" "I'm not good at practicing that" – Clients 1 and 2 respectively) while one cited external factors ("the environment, the context doesn't help you" –Client 3). Similarly, two clients said that having information about neuroplasticity was helpful ("powerful" "it has helped me at work" –Clients 2 and 3 respectively) while the other said it was "a double-edged sword," both "hopeful – like a guiding light" and "also hard – that puts a lot on me" (Client 1). This may point to baseline mindset as a differentiator in clients' ability to implement the ideas under discussion, given that "People's mind-sets influence whether and to what degree they exert effort in difficult situations" (Dweck, 2008, cited in Tabibnia and Radecki, 2018, p.73).

One striking finding is that all three clients spontaneously indicated that making an effort to be in a "learner" or "curious brain" state (speculatively, using a PEA approach, perhaps activating the DMN and even generating oxytocin), as described above, enabled them to take the perspective of or otherwise have empathy for a colleague, as noted in the examples below.

> "Instead of taking this personally … just being curious, like, 'Gee, maybe there's something going on with that manager that he's so unsupportive or angry or out of touch.'" (Client 1)

> "Typically… I have felt that it's me, it's my fault, I did something that made the colleague… irritated and I just would put it on myself and now I can maybe put it a little bit at a distance and think that… yeah, there is insecurity or whatever it is with that colleague that makes the colleague react in a certain way." (Client 2)

> "I believe that it helped me at work in terms of changing my own attitudes and behaviours… in meetings, I would be very rigid and very… closed to specific ideas from other colleagues and I wouldn't listen… It took me some time to do this, to control my own… temptation to stop someone from speaking or to say, 'No, I'm right. No, I think that's how it should be.' …[Now I use] a persuasive kind of attitude, rather than more of a rigid… tense… anxious kind of attitude…now… there is a lot of harmony, and people approach you more and more and they want to work with you more and more, because they feel you are easy to work with and they value the fact that you listen to them…" (Client 3)

In addition to furthering empathy with others, two of these three quotes indicate that this approach enabled the client to let go of the assumption that *they* were the source of the colleague's anger or frustration, avoiding self-blame (which one could speculate is an "anxious brain" or "judger" or NEA or TPN function at work). This invites further study into whether developing empathy with others, can also improve self-acceptance, simply by virtue of the brain areas that are activated – and, importantly, de-activated - in that process.

> "It is not just that different brain areas are involved in empathetic and analytic understanding. In the last 5 years, a third crucial discovery has been made. It has been found that analytic thinking not only engages the TPN but also tends to turn off the DMN – the brain regions essential for empathy. On the other hand, empathetic thinking not only engages the DMN but also tends to turn off the TPN – the brain regions essential for logical thinking and task execution" (Jack et al. 2012, as cited in Boyatzis and Jack, 2018, p.15)."

While I have no fMRI evidence directly from the brains of my three clients, this DMN/TPN "toggling" effect would seem to precisely reflect their experience, above. In turning off their "judger" or "anxious brain" functions, they are able both to connect with the experience of others and, to let go of their own anxiety and/or self-judgement.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

This pilot study suggests that, in complement to the growing body of quantitative work on neuroscience as it relates to executive coaching, there is room for qualitative work, to better understand how clients' subjective experience relates to the emerging quantitative findings. Many modifications or additions could be made to the current study design, particularly having interviews conducted by someone who is not the clients' coach, to reduce risk of bias in clients' responses. Further, having a second reviewer to "code" the interview findings could also reduce the risk of bias during analysis.

While small, this study seems to confirm aspects of Tabibnia and Radecki's "Take-home on coaching resilience," namely that interventions can be more effective "when clients believe that new skills can be learned" and that "understanding the underlying neuroscience of the intervention may help increase clients' trust in the intervention and help boost its outcome" (Tabibnia and Radecki, 2018, p.75). Therefore, where relevant in a coaching engagement, I will continue the practice of sharing with clients basic information about the neuroscience that underpins learning and change.

Where there is particular client interest, I may more intentionally teach/present such models, with the aim of increasing clarity and retention, using visuals where possible. I will also more consistently support clients to plan for the use of the tools covered in this study both within and outside of a coaching session. I may also share additional information gleaned during this research, particularly on the DMN/TPN networks and on the range of resilience-related interventions that are proven to create sustained neurological change in their practitioners. All of this is with the intention of supporting clients to increase their ability to apply these tools in order to achieve their learning- and change-related goals.

In summary, many recent neuroscientific findings have important implications for coaching individuals, including findings that relate to the neurology of learning and change. Such findings suggest specific actions coaches can take with clients, including explaining neuroplasticity and the *physiological* nature of learning or behavioural change – a key part of coaching the "whole person." Feedback from three clients indicates that better understanding some basic neuroscientific findings supports their learning and change efforts.

While the field of applying neuroscience to human behavior is complex, inter-disciplinary and still very young, there *are* some clear findings relevant to coaching available to those coaches who wish to "get on board" what Eichinger calls "the brain train" (Eichinger, 2018, p. 89). Whether we're on board or not, the brain train does appear to be leaving – and a least three clients seem to appreciate being on it.

## Appendix 1

*Table 3*
*Neuroplasticity and its Relevance to Coaching*

| NEUROPLASTICITY AND RELEVANCE TO COACHING | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Concept** | **Source** | **Description** | **Relevance to Coaching** |
| Neuroplasticity | A. Brann (2015) | "…the property of the brain to change." (p.77) | Coaching can be thought of as the process of enabling clients to undertake "self-directed neuroplasticity" - which could be a cognitive and/or emotional process – and is also physiological. |
| | D. Rock and L. Page (2009) | "Once a habit or emotional reaction or train of thought has been hard-wired, it is useless to try to erase it… It is, however, possible to pay attention to what we want to replace it with." (p.178) | "By choosing what we want to shine the spotlight of our attention on, we can effect changes in the very structure of our brain." (p.180) |
| Attention Density | D. Rock and J. Schwartz (2006) | "…how much attention we pay or the number of observations we make over a specific time…. It is a term to describe our mental focus on concentration." (p.7) | "…the power is in the focus. Where we choose to put our attention changes our brain and changes how we see and interact with the world." (p.7)<br>An ongoing coaching process can help clients maintain "attention density" on their goals and, thereby, reinforce learning and change. |

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