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Notes for Contributors

The *ICPR* is an international publication with a focus on the theory, practice and research in the field of coaching psychology. Submission of academic articles, systematic reviews and other research reports which support evidence-based practice are welcomed. The *ICPR* may also publish conference reports and papers given at the British Psychological Society Special Group in Coaching Psychology (BPS SGCP) and Australian Psychological Society Interest Group in Coaching Psychology (APS IGCP) conferences, notices and items of news relevant to the International Coaching Psychology Community.

Case studies and book reviews will be considered.

The *ICPR* is published by the BPS SGCP in association with the APS IGCP.

1. Circulation
The circulation of the *ICPR* is worldwide. It is available in hardcopy and PDF format. Papers are invited and encouraged from authors throughout the world. It is available free in paper and PDF format to members of the BPS SGCP, and free in PDF format to APS IGCP members as a part of their annual membership.

2. Length
Papers should normally be no more than 6000 words, although the Co-Editors retain discretion to publish papers beyond this length in cases where the clear and concise expression of the scientific content requires greater length.

3. Reviewing
The publication operates a policy of anonymous peer review. Papers will normally be scrutinised and commented on by at least two independent expert referees (in addition to the relevant Co-Editor) although the Co-Editor may process a paper at his or her discretion. The referees will not be aware of the identity of the author. All information about authorship including personal acknowledgements and institutional affiliations should be confined to the title page (and the text should be free of such clues as identifiable self-citations, e.g. 'In our earlier work…').

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THE SPECIAL GROUP IN COACHING PSYCHOLOGY

1st European Coaching Psychology Conference
17th and 18th December 2008

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The 2008 membership fee to join SGCP is £3.50. SGCP membership benefits include membership rates at our events and free copies of the 'International Coaching Psychology Review' and 'The Coaching Psychologist'. Join now and obtain the discounted conference fee.

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Michael Cavanagh & Stephen Palmer

WELCOME TO OUR first issue for 2008. This edition of the *International Coaching Psychology Review (ICPR)* is the second special edition of the *ICPR* and the sixth edition since our beginning in 2006. As you will see in this special issue, drawn together by Dr Anthony Grant as special editor, coaching psychology in particular continues to grow in both theoretical breadth and sophistication and practical application. This edition brings together theoretical perspectives from sports psychology, appreciative inquiry, and cognitive behavioural approaches.

This reflects the diversity of work that is continuing across the coaching world. Our understanding of coaching and the dynamics within and without the coaching relationship continues to develop at pace. In our networks we are seeing an increase in the level and sophistication of the research being undertaken in coaching. This will no doubt result in more articles and other publications further building the foundation of coaching psychology.

The range of coaching conferences, symposia and other gatherings also echo this aliveness. In the UK, our own British Psychological Society Special Group in Coaching Psychology National Conference in December was again a great success. We hope to be publishing some of the important papers in the *ICPR*. This year we are sponsoring the 1st European Coaching Psychology Conference. We are inviting coaching psychology researchers and practitioners to submit papers, posters and symposiums to the Conference Academic Board for consideration. For further details please see the full-page announcement in this publication.

In Australia, the third APS Interest Group in Coaching Psychology Symposium is being prepared for August this year. More imminently the First Australian Positive Psychology and Well-being Conference will be getting underway soon after this edition goes to press. This conference is significant in that it has been sponsored by 11 Australian Universities and will contain a significant coaching contribution. It would seem that, as a methodology for behaviour change and for enhancing well-being, coaching continues to cement a place in psychology.

There has been some good news for the *ICPR*. It is now abstracted and indexed in psycINFO and google scholar. This means that our published articles will receive a greater international readership. *ICPR* will also be included in the ninth edition of *Cabell's Directory of Publishing Opportunities in Educational Psychology and Administration* and *Cabell's Directory of Publishing Opportunities in Educational Curriculum and Methods*.

We would like to welcome Professor Reinhard Stelter, PhD to the *ICPR* International Editorial Board. He is Director of the newly-established Coaching Psychology Unit at the University of Copenhagen. The unit intends to undertake research and run courses in the field of coaching psychology. This certainly is an exciting time for the field of coaching psychology as more research and training units are set up in universities around the world.

We commend this edition to you, and would like to register our thanks to Dr Anthony Grant who has done a excellent job as special editor for this issue. Happy reading!

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Special Editorial: Another look at executive and organisational coaching

Anthony M. Grant

THE USE OF coaching in organisations has grown phenomenally over the past 15 years. Fifteen years ago the term 'coaching' within organisational settings was frequently an euphemism for performance management with 'difficult' employees; a way that organisations could ensure the ongoing evaluation and counselling of underperforming employees (e.g. Hillman et al., 1990), often in order to meet the legal requirements for dismissing employees.

By 1996 the perception of coaching had developed and moved away from such negative connotations to the extent that the American Psychological Association journal *Consulting Psychology: Theory, Research and Practice* published the first special issue on executive coaching, an issue that highlighted the role of the psychologist as executive coach. The publication of papers related to executive coaching has also grown significantly in that time. A search of the database PsycINFO for publications between 1900 and 1996 using the keywords 'executive coaching' found only 19 citations, but a further 245 papers were published between 1996 and January, 2007.

Even a cursory overview of this literature indicates an increasing sophistication over time. Where early papers which sought to define and explain executive coaching to a naive audience, recent work spans integrated theoretical perspectives, comments on best practice and outcome studies. It is this context that makes it a pleasure, as the guest editor, to be able to further contribute to the growing literature on executive and organisational coaching with this special issue of the *International Coaching Psychology Review* on executive and organisational coaching.

The broad aim in putting this issue together was to assemble a diverse range of papers which would make a contribution to the growing knowledgebase, and which also addressed executive and organisational coaching from a range of novel perspectives.

Surprisingly, the expertise of sports and performance psychologists has received relativity little attention in the executive coaching literature. The lead article, by sports and performance psychologists Lydia Ievleva and Peter Terry, outlines synergies between sport and business, and draws upon Orlick's 2008 model of excellence. Well-known in the sport and performance field, Orlick's 'Wheel of Excellence' has rarely been applied in executive coaching settings, yet the model's core components of Commitment, Mental Readiness, Positive Images, Confidence, Distraction Control, and Ongoing Learning have clear relevance for executive populations.

Sandy Gordon is also well-known for his work as a sports and performance psychologist. In his paper he focuses on Appreciative Inquiry Coaching (AIC), a coaching approach derived from Appreciative Inquiry. Since its inception in the 1980s, Appreciative Inquiry has evolved into an important organisational change philosophy and methodology. Appreciative Inquiry as a strengths-based approach to organisational change is an ideal framework for coaching. This paper outlines the key tenants of the AIC approach and illustrates its application to common coaching issues.

The quality of the relationship between the professional coach and the client is intrinsically linked to the success of coaching engagements. Central to this is the coach's ability to manage the myriad of factors at

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play. Travis Kemp argues that the coaching literature has tended to overly-focused on theories and models of practice at the expense of developing understandings of what constitutes an effective coaching relationship. Kemp's paper makes some important points on self-management which are of significance to professional executive and organisational coaches, and which have relevance for both actual practice and the supervision of professional coaches. The paper provides a theoretical framework for operationalising this relationship and facilitating coaches' own process of introspection and continuous development.

The final two papers in this special edition present empirical studies into the nature of the Australian executive coaching industry. The first of these by Binstead and Grant extends the somewhat limited knowledge base about the executive coaching industry in Australia, investigating factors such as practitioner's fees, awareness of competition and qualifications.

The last paper in this special issue is from Grant and O'Hara who explore the key characteristics of the commercial Australian executive coach training industry. There is little in the literature that investigates the nature of the executive coach training industry. This is an important area for investigation, particularly given that coach training organisations are in a position to significantly influence both coaching practice and the future development of the coaching industry

In closing, I would like to thank the editorial board for supporting this special issue and I thank the authors for their contributions. I hope readers find that this issue does indeed approaches the topic of executive and organisational coaching from a range of original perspectives, and that this issue is a useful addition to the literature. I would welcome comments and feedback, so please do not hesitate to contact me by e-mail.

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Reference

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Applying sport psychology to business

Lydia Ievleva & Peter C. Terry

There has been a substantial increase in the application of sport psychology theory and practice in business settings in recent years. This paper outlines points of intersection and divergence between sport and business, and provides examples from sport that are of use in business settings. This paper also draws upon Orlick's 2008 evidence-based model of excellence, as a vehicle for illustrating key skills associated with peak performance across a variety of high-stress domains including sport, music, and medicine. We posit that this model can be applied to improving performance in the corporate world. The 'Wheel of Excellence' model incorporates seven key elements, with Focus as the hub, in addition to Commitment, Mental Readiness, Positive Images, Confidence, Distraction Control, and Ongoing Learning. Given the close parallels between business and sport psychology, it is anticipated that increasing attention will be devoted to their integration and application crossover in the future.

SPORT PSYCHOLOGISTS are increasingly turning their attention to the business world, investigating how the principles for promoting athletic excellence can be transferred effectively to those engaged in business endeavours. The past decade in particular has seen a significant increase in the transfer of sport psychology practice to business settings, as evidenced by a huge surge in publications on the subject (e.g. Bull, 2006; Foster, 2008; Gallwey, 2001; Gordon, 2007; Jones & Moorehouse, 2007; Loehr & Schwartz, 2001a, 2001b; Schalkwyk, 2004).

In the 1970s Timothy Gallwey produced a seminal, and now classic, book in the field of sport psychology when he wrote *The Inner Game of Tennis* (Gallwey, 1974). Gallwey then turned his attention to other sports such as golf and skiing (Gallwey, 1997, 1998), as well as to music performance (Green & Gallwey, 1986). Perhaps it was only fitting and inevitable that he eventually applied his expertise to business when he wrote *The Inner Game of Work*, published in 2001, which has since received wide acclaim among coaching psychologists.

Others of note who have made a transition from athletic coaching to business consultancy are highlighted in the latest edition of a leading introductory level textbook on sport psychology (Weinberg & Gould, 2007). Weinberg and Gould observed, however, that the typical request to legendary basketball coaches such as Pat Riley and Phil Jackson is to give motivational talks rather than to provide ongoing consulting support for businesses. Such activities feed the popular misconception that sport psychology is primarily about enhancing motivation. In fact motivational enhancement actually plays a relatively small role in applied sport psychology compared to the time spent developing, for example, effective coping strategies and performance routines.

By the same token, the corporate world often uses sport as an analogy for the competitive environment in which most businesses operate. Perhaps this is one reason why sport psychologists have shown a tendency to eventually depart the relatively poorly-paid world of sport consulting to 'cash in' their skills in the boardrooms of the nation where performance improvements can translate into millions of dollars. This metaphorical trading-in of the tracksuit for a pinstripe has become particularly vogue over the past decade (see Terry, 2008). One world-renowned sport psychologist has likened such a switch to a Robin Hood ethos, taking from the corporate rich to be able to afford to service the (relatively) poor athletes.

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Given the highly competitive, results-driven nature of the higher echelons of the sport and business worlds, the potential for crossover appears relatively obvious. There are, however, advantages in looking at specifics. In chronicling his very successful transition from sport psychologist to business consultant, Jones (2002) highlighted five characteristics that he found were common to both domains. According to Jones, athletes and business executives are equally concerned with the processes of stress management, leadership, high-performing teams, one-to-one coaching, and organisational issues.

In a recent review of sport psychology interventions in business, Gordon (2007) highlighted other key skills that have been shown to transfer effectively to the business world. These included goal setting, mental rehearsal and imagery, performance rituals and routines, mood and confidence-boosting self-talk strategies, optimism training, and rational-emotive and cognitive-behavioural therapies. Similarly, Lloyd and Foster (2006) reported on five mental training skills, mental imagery, performance routines, positive self-talk, activation control, and attention and focus control, that they have implemented successfully in business settings. Lloyd and Foster noted that these techniques were perceived to have high face validity, which promoted their acceptance by clients in the business sector.

The practice and evidence base of sport psychology has been very well documented elsewhere (e.g. Weinberg & Gould, 2007) and so it is not our intent to address that matter in detail here, other than to point out that those wishing to know more about the specifics of sport psychology have ample resources readily at their disposal.

Organisations such as the Association of Applied Sport Psychology (AASP), the Australian Psychological Society's (APS) College of Sport Psychologists, the British Psychological Society's (BPS) Division of Sport and Exercise, the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES), and Division 47 of the American Psychological Association (APA) can be readily accessed via the internet; and there are also a very wide range of specialist journals (e.g. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, and *The Sport Psychologist*) and academic texts on the subject (e.g. Andersen, 2000; Morris & Summers, 2004; Weinberg & Gould, 2007; Williams, 2006).

Instead, our purpose in this article is to highlight and elaborate upon points of intersection and divergence between the psychology of peak performance in the worlds of sport and business. In particular, we will draw upon the 'Wheel of Excellence', an evidence-based model frequently applied to sport and other performance settings. The model was developed by Terry Orlick, a world-renowned leader in the field of applied sport psychology, mental training, and excellence. Orlick has also served as president of the International Society for Mental Training and Excellence (ISMTE), an organisation that covers a wide variety of performance domains, including sport, music and the performing arts, medicine, business, aeronautics, the military, and other high stress occupations.

Points of intersection between sport and business

Sport examples used in the corporate world provide not only a potential source of inspiration, but also serve to normalise the conditions and challenges that a business client may face. If clients feel more like athletes who are required to perform in a harsh, competitive environment then they may be more open to exploring and developing their capacities to achieve their full potential. Hence, the phrase 'corporate athlete', a term coined by Loehr and Schwartz (2001b), becomes particularly apt in this context. It may help business executives to better understand that if champion athletes face self-doubt in the face of pressure situations – indeed at the highest levels of compe-

tition their anxiety is often very acute – then self-doubt must come with the territory of trying to achieve excellence. A key difference may be that champions in sport have worked hard for many years to develop significant reservoirs of psychological strengths and coping strategies from which to draw upon to help overcome doubts and to compensate for weaknesses. Promoting an appreciation that success does not usually come easy to champion athletes may help to encourage business clients to adopt similar longer-term developmental goals and to show the same patience and persistence in the face of adversity.

In general terms, the primary objective for clients in business and sport is to control what they can, to accept what they cannot change, and to know the difference between the two. Hence the mantra of *controlling the controllables* is almost universal among sport psychologists (e.g. Bull, 2006; Gordon, 2007). A common part of the consulting process in sport is to identify and strengthen what is controllable, such as activation levels, concentration, and emotions, and to develop strategies to reduce concerns about things outside of personal control, such as team-mates, opponents, officials, the weather or the crowd.

In both business and sport consulting, a primary purpose is to enhance performance, hence the colloquial term 'stretch' rather than 'shrink'. In other words, the aim is to stretch the capacities of clients rather than to shrink their problems. From a Seligman-esque perspective, as noted recently by Gordon, 'the role of a performance psychologist is helping to move a client from 0 to +5 on a performance scale rather than from –5 to 0' (Terry, 2008, p.9).

Another point of intersection between performance psychology in sport and in business is that both draw from the same well in terms of interviewing and consulting tools (e.g. motivational interviewing, appreciative inquiry, solution-focused approaches). For example, a standard initial interview with an athlete client would often include a review of previous performance patterns – identifying the pre-performance mindset, cognitions, behaviours and emotional responses associated with best compared to worst performances – and building routines for future performances on that basis (Orlick, 1986). This strategy can be applied to a business setting whereby a client might be asked to reflect back on previous occasions when they felt on top of their game, when they successfully handled major challenges, when they were particularly effective, to develop a personal profile of performance to be drawn upon and exploited for future occasions.

Points of divergence between sport and business

As well as commonalities, there are also major distinctions between sport and business pursuits. Firstly, there are usually immediately observable performance indicators in the sporting arena. Immediate feedback about being on track mentally and physically is both part of the beauty and the pressure of sport, whereas in business there can often be a substantial time lag before results are confirmed and disseminated. In many cases in the business world, the pressure to perform and the level of scrutiny is more diffused over time – quarterly or annual reviews compared to play-by-play or game-by-game reviews – even though the financial stakes in business may be substantially higher than in sport. Hence, relative to the typical sport situation, the typical business environment may be viewed as more of a marathon than a sprint (or, as Jim Loehr refers to the business world, a *series* of sprints). It also means that, unlike sport, it may be possible to fly below the radar in business environments for substantial periods of time before performance decrements or increments become apparent, thus presenting a need for somewhat different intervention strategies.

Secondly, compared to business environments, the process of goal-setting is more straightforward in the sports arena. In business, there may be a wider range of more

complex goals, some of which may even conflict (e.g. between the Marketing and the Research and Development departments). While it might seem apparent that the bottom line, profitability, is the overall criterion of performance in business, the goal posts may shift if stakeholders and board members establish other criteria for success. In business, therefore, there is a requirement for greater clarification of missions, goals, and objectives; along with the development of strategies designed to meet them.

Another distinction between sport and business involves understanding the rules of the game clearly. In sport, the rules are typically clear and well established, although perhaps not always consistently enforced. In business, the rules of engagement are often unclear and far from transparent, and may change frequently depending upon who is sitting on the board. This can create confusion when outlining and establishing priorities. Furthermore, the career span of an athlete is usually far shorter than most business careers, meaning that the pressure to perform consistently at a high level is intensified. An advantage in business is that there is always recourse for redemption, whereas in sport results are irrevocable. Finally, the training versus performance ratio is vastly different in the two domains. Typically, the time that athletes spend training is far greater than the time spent performing in competition, whereas in business the reverse is true. This brings with it a somewhat different dynamic that may necessitate varied approaches to performance enhancement.

A model for performance excellence in sport and business

The 'Wheel of Excellence' (Orlick, 2008; see Figure 1) is presented here as a vehicle for illustrating how a performance psychology model might be transferred from the sport world and applied to the business world. The model has undergone much evolution, commencing with the influential work of Orlick and Partington (1988), and subsequently being revised as relevant research evidence has mounted from a variety of performance domains (Orlick, 1992, 1996, 2008). The wheel encompasses those characteristics that are consistently reported to be associated with peak performance (Krane & Williams, 2006). Importantly, all of them are within the individual's personal control. The basic seven elements of the wheel have remained the same throughout its evolution, as has the analogy that if equal attention to all parts of the wheel is not achieved, then the result is a wobbly wheel that will tend to roll off course. In human terms, this suggests that uneven, or wobbly, personal development leads to getting off easily sidetracked or losing focus about central objectives.

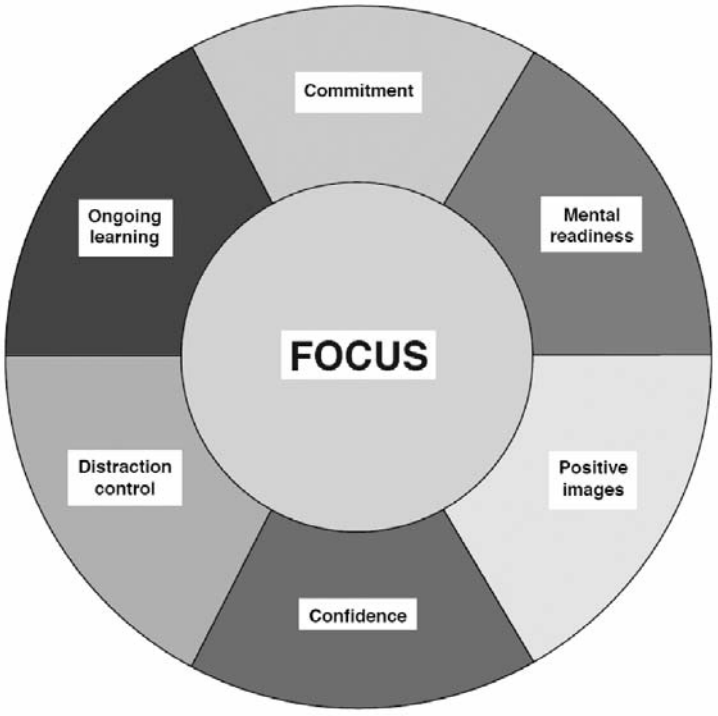
Focus

'A person who aims at nothing is sure to hit it.' (Anonymous)

Central to all performance is the capacity to focus. As the hub of the wheel, this is both the metaphorical bull's eye for which all those in pursuit of excellence should aim, and the central characteristic around which all the other components of the wheel revolve and are designed to enhance. Focus encompasses the skill of concentration, which can be seen as the ability to focus only on what is relevant and to stay focused for the duration of a task; plus the ability to shift focus as required by the task or changing conditions. Common sport expressions for this are 'keep your eye on the ball', 'stay in the moment', 'be in the here and now' and 'one point at a time' or, as applied by a leading heart surgeon, 'one stitch at a time'. Donald Trump has reportedly mentioned that one of the things he learned most about his repeated financial troubles was the need to keep his eye on the ball.

When focus drifts from the process to the outcome, or to what others think, or to what competitors are doing, or you allow yourself to become intimidated by how strong and confident others appear, that is when you start to make mistakes or exercise poor judgement that leads to bad decisions.

Figure 1: The 'Wheel of Excellence' (Orlick, 2008, reproduced with permission).



For example, a CEO may be preoccupied with status comparisons with rivals at other companies or with achieving financial results that exceed expectations, to the point of neglecting relationships with his/her own board or with other stakeholders. This can be seen as analogous to dropping the proverbial ball. Even worse, a CEO may be vulnerable to overlooking unethical business practices – deciding that the end justifies the means – as in the case of Oracle CEO Larry Ellison in the early 1990s.

In our overstimulated society, with various competing demands for our attention, many people engage in excessive multitasking. Indeed, many people are very proud of their ability to multi-task. However, it is well understood in the sporting arena that cluttering the mind with several plays at once creates a loss of focus and thereby disrupts performance (e.g. Bond & Sargent, 2004; Kremer & Moran, 2008). This is often less well appreciated in the day-to-day business environment, although leading performance consultants such as Jim Loehr consider (2003) multi-tasking to be the number one enemy of high performance.

Without wishing to downplay the role of big picture strategic thinking, it would seem to be just as important in business as in sport to focus on one agenda item at a time, one task at a time, and so on when actually performing important tasks. Thinking too much about an impending deadline or the eventual outcome often leads to mistakes or increases anxiety that impairs best focus. Completing a victory in any sporting event, such as closing out a tennis match at championship point, is probably the most challenging time to stay focused and is often when we are most mentally and physically fatigued. The most successful athletes have very well developed performance protocols or competition plans that are designed to identify not only what behaviours are required at each juncture, but also where to

focus their attention and what specific thoughts might be most productive (Bond & Sargent, 2004; Terry, 1989) .

Commitment

'Losers make promises they often break. Winners make commitments they always keep.'
(Denis Waitley)

Performance excellence begins with making a choice to succeed, something that is completely within personal control. The process of establishing personal goals sets in motion a chain of decisions that may either support or detract from the overall objective. One thing that sets apart high achievers from the rest is that they not only set more challenging goals, but they are also willing and determined to put in the required effort and make the necessary sacrifices until the goals are achieved (Jones, 2002).

The importance of committing to giving 100 per cent effort in order to achieve excellent results in sport is clear, but what may not be as apparent is the equal need for commitment to work-life balance and recovery as well. Overlooking this balance, as in the case of a sleep-deprived worker, leads to a much greater probability of illness or worse, not to mention decrements in productivity. This principle is emphasised in the corporate athlete training programmes led by Loehr and Schwartz. They present optimal management of energy as a key to optimal conditioning of mind, body and spirit, which they argue contributes to maximal performance in business. Their programmes cover a range of modalities for achieving such a balance that includes nutrition and physical fitness, as well as mental and spiritual development (Loehr & Schwartz, 2001a, 2001b). Planning for recovery and breaks is, therefore, an essential element of a high performance plan. In the words of Leonardo Da Vinci, one of history's foremost achievers of excellence, 'The greatest geniuses sometimes accomplish more when they work less.'

Mental Readiness

'The mind is like a parachute – it works best when open.' (Albert Einstein)

Mental readiness involves identifying the best mindset for a particular task and developing ways to instil that mindset when required. Top performers in sport usually have well developed rituals and routines that they implement pre-event, during competition, during breaks in the action, and also post-event. They might include self-regulation strategies such as relaxation and/or energising techniques to control activation levels, planned thought processes to manage critical moments, routines to better cope with performance errors, and mood management strategies where music often serves as a powerful mood trigger (see Terry, 2004).

Successful athletes also take care to build in recovery, both within an event and between bouts of exertion, to ensure optimal capacity. For instance, most professional tennis players include a brief recovery phase between each point, where for a few seconds they take their mind away from strategic analysis or self-talk and simply focus on slowing their breathing or towelling down. Loehr and Schwartz (2001b) suggested that executives can learn a lesson here from sport by taking take time out every hour or so to roll their shoulders or engage in a little gentle stretching.

Ironically, smokers may have an edge over their non-smoking colleagues in this area because, with the exception of the cigarette, everything else about smoke breaks contributes to health and well-being. The process of taking regular time-outs, stretching legs and eyes, going outdoors, breathing slowly and deeply, perhaps enjoying a conversation with friends, and then returning to work feeling revived and refreshed is a performance strategy that non-smokers might consider emulating (Ievleva & Murphy, 2006).

Lloyd and Foster (2006) have highlighted the potential benefits of mental readiness in the workplace. They proposed

that 'The ability to quickly replicate optimal performance states could mean decreased lag time between the intention to act and initiation of behaviour' (p.32). They go on to emphasise: (a) the benefits of relaxation for employees to help manage stressful events occurring during the workday; (b) the skill of activating mental and physical energy when fatigued in order to persist in their efforts, perhaps to meet an important deadline; and (c) the use of quieting strategies, such as controlled breathing, soothing imagery or the repetition of calming words, to promote recovery from escalating stress levels, which may help to prevent employee burnout. This is an area in which there appears to be limited uptake of sport psychology strategies in the business world.

Positive images

'Imagination is more important than knowledge.' (Albert Einstein)

There is no doubt that mental images can exert a powerful influence on physical performance, a notion supported by a substantial body of anecdotal and empirical evidence (see Feltz & Landers, 1983; Morris et al., 2005). Imagery is used for a variety of purposes in the world of sport, including the acquisition and performance of skills, to change emotional responses and cognitions, and the regulation of anxiety. Logically, all of these applications are equally relevant in the world of business.

A fundamental principle when using imagery in a systematic way is to try to create positive images of what you want in order to banish negative images of what you are *afraid of*. A classic example involves recreational golfers playing over water, who sometimes have to work very hard to generate a mental image of the ball clearing the water and landing on the green, in order to overcome the alternative image of the ball splashing into the water that often haunts the average golfer's psyche. This process can be summed up in a single word – WYSIWYG – What You See Is What You Get. This principle is based on the human tendency to create in reality what is seen in the mind's eye. There will almost always be mental images present; the trick is to ensure that the correct images are generated.

Top golf psychologist Bob Rotella asserts that the key to being a successful golfer is to be able to get into an exceptionally good frame of mind and to stay there for the duration of each round, for the week of a tournament (Rotella, 2004). Maintenance of positive imagery is promoted by regularly practising imagery skills, but also by engaging in positive self-talk, affirmations, and reframing exercises. A starting point in developing this skill is to mentally review a previous peak experience/performance, and then to project the key images to a future event (see *Peak Performance Recall* in Ievleva & Stillwell, 1996).

It is important to point out that such self-talk is better phrased in positive terms. For example, referring back to the golf shot over the water, it would be better to say 'hit the green' to yourself rather than 'do *not* hit it into the water', because the former invokes a positive image whereas the latter still invokes an image of the ball hitting the water, despite what is actually said.

So, in business, it is better to say 'stay calm and composed' when a suggestion put forward is rejected by colleagues rather than 'do not get defensive and argumentative.' It is also helpful if the inner dialogue, or self-instruction, evokes the appropriate mental image and feeling. Hence, when telling yourself to 'stay calm and composed', it is best to try to recreate the feel and image of those qualities for optimal effectiveness.

Confidence

'If you think you can, you're right; if you think you can't, you're still right.' (Henry Ford)

Unshakeable belief and high self-confidence are frequently reported to be one of the characteristics that sets high achievers apart from the rest whether in the sporting arena or in business (Jones, 2002; Krane & Williams, 2006). Indeed, self-confidence has been described as the guardian angel of

sports performers (Terry, 1989). Certainly the sport psychology literature is replete with evidence of the performance benefits of high self-confidence (Woodman & Hardy, 2003). It should be noted that the term *self-confidence* used in this context can be understood as 'the faith in one's ability to perform a specific task or achieve a specific goal' and this is equivalent to the concept of self-efficacy as outlined by Bandura (1997). The term confidence is preferred by Orlick because it is more immediately understood by people without a psychology background.

Unlike commitment, and for whatever reason, many might consider confidence to be somewhat less within personal control, but this not really true. For example, McNatt and colleagues have shown, via a meta-analysis of 43 studies in management settings, that interventions can boost the confidence of individuals by 25 to 40 per cent (see McNatt, 2001). To help promote self-confidence, Orlick suggests six developmental steps – starting with someone *else* believing in you, progressing to thinking *maybe* you can, then acting *as if* you can (the classic 'fake it 'til you make it' adage), *believing* you can, *knowing* you can, and finally *trusting you will*.

A simple text message sent by tennis legend Billie Jean King to 2008 Australian Open Champion Maria Sharapova on the eve of the championship final helped to boost the young player's confidence by putting the task of winning into perspective (Pearce, 2008). King's words, 'Champions take chances. Pressure is a privilege', summed up the need for Sharapova to accept the inevitable anxiety and to find the courage and trust in herself to cope with the occasion, which of course she did magnificently. The phrase 'Pressure is a privilege' served as a great reframe that helped shift focus from what might have been an uncomfortable or even painful experience, to something much more positive and uplifting. The idea is to focus on what will go right, instead of worrying about what can go wrong, and this reflects a more optimistic outlook.

Distraction control

'Any occurrence requiring undivided attention will be accompanied by an [equally] compelling distraction.' (Hutchison's Law)

What often separates the successful from the 'also-rans' is their ability to maintain focus in the face of challenges, setbacks and distractions, and to get back on track quickly if losing focus. Distractions can arise from internal sources, such as negative thoughts, worries or unrealistic expectations, or external sources, such as disruptive colleagues, delays or computer crashes. Top performers are usually well prepared to cope with distractions, perhaps because they have developed detailed refocus plans and contingencies for every eventuality via repeated 'what if?' exercises or, alternatively, because they have developed the habit of applying a few simple principles to all distracting events – Accept (what has happened), Plan (an alternative response), Implement (the response). This helps them to respond more effectively to distractions without over-reacting and wasting valuable time and energy. Also, the knowledge that you have an effective response whatever comes your way serves to increase confidence and frees you to focus on positive images of what needs to be done rather than what might go wrong.

Distraction control also involves being able to refocus, to get back on track quickly. In business, this might involve establishing contingency plans, but would also mean maintaining appropriate focus when something goes wrong. Often the temptation when an individual senses that things are going wrong or that they are losing control is to try harder, or to attempt to exercise greater control over something or someone that is not within control. This often leads to a downward spiral in performance. Just as in sport, when athletes try too hard, they tend to produce extra muscular tension in their efforts that yield progressively poorer results. Loehr cautions athletes to catch themselves when pressing too hard, and cue themselves to 'try softer' instead (Loehr, 1999).

In business, it would also be important to recognise when you are getting sidetracked or preoccupied with concerns unrelated to the task at hand (office gossip, family problems, etc.). This would involve putting aside such distractions while at work using refocusing techniques (see Orlick, 1986, 2003). This is not to diminish the importance of home life or the life balance equation, but to recognise the lack of control over such issues while at the office. Clearly, if the home life issue is of sufficient gravity to require immediate attention, then it is equally important not to allow work concerns to sidetrack you from resolving the home issue. The underlying premise is to learn refocus skills, to adhere to the principle of *Be here now.*

Ongoing learning

'An unexamined life is not worth living.' (Plato)
This component of excellence relies on a willingness on the part of individuals to learn from every experience, to develop a culture of self-monitoring and self-reflection in order to draw out the lessons learned and to act upon them in the future. Hence, the debrief process becomes a critical developmental step on the road to excellence, and this takes on greater significance following unsuccessful performances compared to successful ones. In sport, such debriefs typically focus on the behaviours, thoughts and emotional responses that proved productive as well as those that proved unproductive. The aim of the process is not to dwell on mistakes made per se but to crystallise the lessons learned from them for future reference. This is generally seen as an important step in regaining a sense of control following a failure in sport. Ongoing learning through self-reflection is often the weakest link to the wheel of excellence, as it is time consuming and can be unpleasant following a poor performance. Ultimately, however, it is a timesaver! If we do not learn from our mistakes, we are destined to repeat them.

In their review of coaching high achievers, Jones and Spooner (2006) noted that high achievers are often hungry for critical feedback. In our own consulting work with athletes, we have found that lack of feedback from the coach is a frequent concern, and this is often especially true for the more prominent athletes on any given team. Typically, success in competitive environments is underpinned by attention to detail. Structured debriefs to identify lessons learned for future performances may prove a particularly useful learning tool for business clients (see Orlick, 1986).

Conclusion

Orlick (2008) proposes an interdependent link between each component of the wheel of excellence in that, as each is strengthened, the others also become stronger; but if any component is neglected, the others may be rendered useless. This suggests a need to address all components of the wheel of excellence in a thorough and systematic manner.

Given the close parallels between business and sport psychology, it is surprising how, until recently, little attention has been devoted to greater integration of the two. We hope that this paper may stimulate new ideas amongst executive and business coaches and we look forward to the prospect of greater exchange and collaboration between the world of organisational coaching and the world of sports psychology in future. Such exchange can only strengthen the quality of the services we all offer to our respective coaching clients.

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Appreciative Inquiry Coaching

Sandy Gordon

In this paper the principles and processes of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and Appreciative Inquiry Coaching (AIC) are described to illustrate the theory and vision behind a recent paradigm shift in promoting change both in business and everyday life settings. Appreciative Inquiry evolved in the 1980s as a revolutionary and positive philosophy aimed at creating organisational change and is a process that focuses on leveraging an organisation's core strengths, rather than seeking to overcome or minimise its weaknesses. Appreciative Inquiry has been used to cultivate peak performance leadership in the workplace and appreciative organisational practices have been used to create strategic competitive advantages. The AI 4-D Model (Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny) is used to illustrate how AIC can be applied by coaching practitioners and additional applications of appreciative coaching that address frequently encountered coaching issues are provided.

THE PURPOSE of this paper is to describe a relatively new approach to coaching called Appreciative Inquiry Coaching (AIC), which has its roots in Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI evolved in the 1980s as a revolutionary and positive philosophy towards organisational change and is a process that focuses on leveraging an organisation's core strengths rather than seeking to overcome or minimise its weaknesses. Appreciative Inquiry Coaching, engages and focuses coachees on both the positive present and possible future, rather than on the problems of the past and present. In this paper, following a brief background to the DNA of AI and the AI 4-D cycle (Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny), a model of AIC (Orem et al., 2007) is presented and offered for consideration by all coaching practitioners either as a new approach to one-on-one coaching, or as an addition to established practices. Applications are provided to illustrate how coaches using AIC might apply appreciative approaches to some frequently encountered coaching issues.

Appreciative Inquiry

Ap-pre'ci-ate, v., 1. Valuing; the act of recognising the best in people or the world around us; affirming past and present strengths, successes and potentials; to perceive those things that give life (health, vitality, excellence) to living systems. 2. To increase in value – for example, the economy has appreciated in value. Synonyms: value, prize, esteem, and honour.

In-quire', v., 1. The act of exploration and discovery. 2. To ask questions; to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities. Synonyms: discover, search, systematically explore, and study. (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p.7)

According to Watkins and Mohr (2001), Appreciative Inquiry (AI) was first conceptualised at the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University in 1980 by doctoral student David Cooperrider and his thesis supervisor Suresh Srivastva, who had both been engaged in an organisation change project. They had discovered that the traditional organisation development (OD) approach of problem diagnosis and feedback was sucking the energy for change right out of the system. It seemed that as more problems were discovered the

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more discouraged people became, and the more discouraged people became the more they blamed each other for the problems. They also discovered that their own intervention work became more powerful when they actually let go of the very idea of intervening. So instead of *intervention* they chose to frame their task as *inquiry* and they effectively became students of organisational life – to learn, discover and appreciate everything that gave life to the organisation when it was most vibrant and successful. Cooperrider and Srivastva's subsequent methodology was effectively a radical reversal of the traditional problem-solving approach and instead of detailing root causes of organisational failure they focused on the root causes of organisational success. They called their approach 'appreciative inquiry' and their classic article, 'Appreciative Inquiry in organisational Life', which appeared a few years later (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987), articulated the theory and vision behind an exciting paradigm shift for the field of OD and change.

Appreciative Inquiry began as a theory-building process, however, it has also been called a philosophy, a revolutionary force, a transformational change process, a life-giving theory and practice, and even a new world-view (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2007). For present purposes AI is regarded as a positive, strengths-based operational approach to change, learning and development that seems most suitable for coaching practitioners working in all settings.

According to Watkins and Mohr (2001), the two essential components of AI are its five core principles and five core generic processes. As illustrated in Figure 1, these principles and processes are understood to have emerged from theoretical and research foundations grounded in social constructionism, the 'new' sciences (e.g. positive psychology strengths-based coaching, chaos theory, self-organising systems, biology, quantum mechanics), and research on the power of imagery. The five core principles and five emergent principles that serve as the basis for AI are summarised in Table 1.

Figure 1: Structure of Appreciative Inquiry (adapted from Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

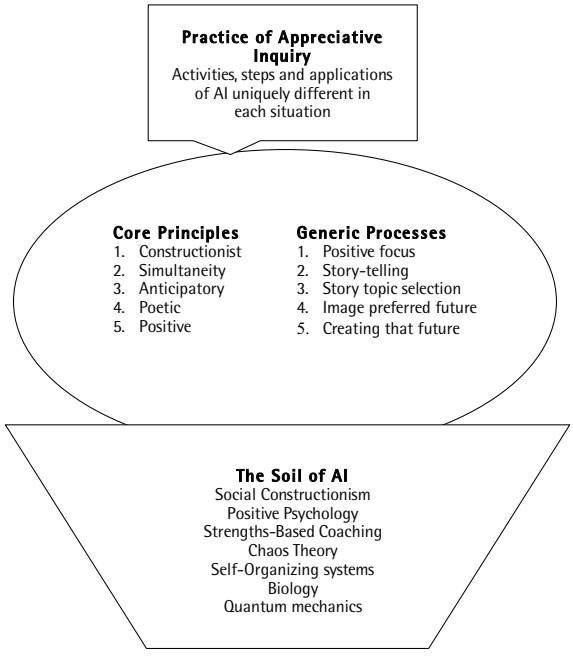


Table 1: Summary of Appreciative Inquiry Core and Emergent Principles (adapted from Kelm, 2005; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

Five Core Principles	**Definition**
The Constructionist Principle	Words create worlds ● *Reality is constructed through language* ● *It is a subjective vs. objective state*
The Poetic Principle	Whatever we focus on, grows ● *Focus on success we create more success* ● *Focus on problems we create more problems*
The Simultaneity Principle	Change begins the moment we ask questions ● *Inquiry is intervention* ● *All questions are leading questions*
The Anticipatory Principle	Image inspires action ● *Human systems move towards images of their future* ● *Positive images create positive futures*
The Positive Principle	The Positive Core ● *Consists of strengths, achievements, unexplored potentials, assets* ● *Building strengths is more effective than correcting weaknesses*
Five Emergent Principles	**Definition**
The Wholeness Principle	Wholeness brings out the best ● *We are part of a bigger 'whole' or interconnected web of relationships* ● Bringing stakeholders together stimulates creativity and builds collective capacity
The Enactment Principle	Just try it ● *We must 'be the change we want to see'* ● *Just try a new behaviour that aligns with what you want, and build from there*
The Free Choice Principle	Free choice liberates power ● *When free to choose people are more committed to perform* ● *Free choice stimulates excellence and positive change*
The Awareness Principle	Social and self-awareness ● *Understanding and integrating the AI principles* ● *Reflection on 'automatic thinking' is important*
The Narrative Principle	We construct stories about our lives ● *Stories are transformative* ● *We can change our stories to help bring us more of what we want*

The other half of AI, the five core generic processes, are listed in sequence for ease of comprehension as follows:

1. Choose the positive as the focus of inquiry;
2. Inquire into stories of life-giving forces;
3. Locate themes that appear in the stories and select topics for further inquiry;
4. Create shared images for a preferred future; and
5. Find innovative ways to create that future. (Watkins & Mohr, 2001, p. 39)

Underlying all five generic processes is *social constructionism*, which Cooperrider first wrote about with consulting partner Diana Whitney,

> *Simply stated – human knowledge and organisational destiny are interwoven… We must be adept in the art of understanding, reading, and analysing organisations as living, human constructions. Knowing stands at the centre of any and virtually every attempt at change. Thus, the way we know is fateful.* (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, pp.14–15)

Each of the above processes, as part of a larger whole, overlaps with the others. However, before the first question is asked, AI begins by obliging clients to choose 'the positive' as the focus of enquiry as the launching point for all that follows.

Various models and approaches for applying AI using the five core generic processes have emerged. For example, in addition to the original Cooperrider/Srivastva Model, Watkins and Mohr (2001) illustrate the Mohr/Jacobsgaard Four-I Model *(initiate, inquire, imagine, innovate)*. However, the most widely used model was developed by members of the Global Excellence in Management (GEM) Initiative in Harare, Zimbabwe (Mann, 1997). It is called the 4-D Cycle Model and contains all five of the core generic processes. The Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Cycle, illustrated in Figure 2, is used to engage participants in a narrative-based process of positive change and can be as rapid and informal as a conversation with a colleague or single client, or as formal as an organisation-wide process involving every stakeholder group, such as a 4-day AI Summit (Ludema et al., 2003). As described by Cooperrider and Whitney (2005, pp.16–17), the four key processes in the AI 4-D cycle are:

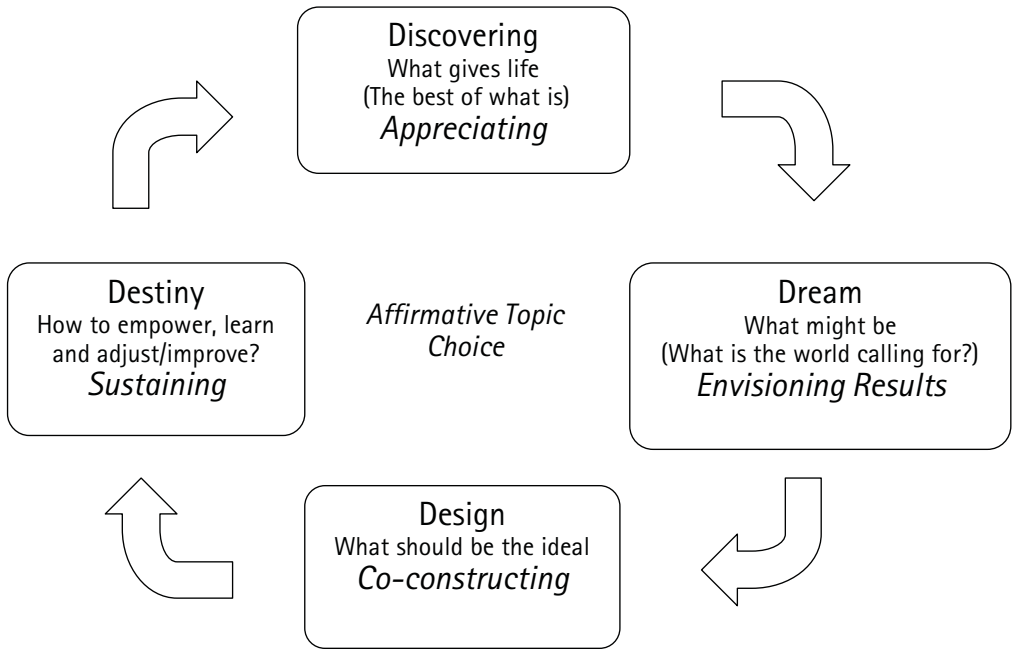
1. *Discovery:* Mobilising the whole system (individual, group/team) by engaging all stakeholders in the articulation of strengths and best practices. Identifying the 'best of what has been or what is.'
2. *Dream:* Creating a clear results-oriented vision in relation to discovered potential and in relation to questions of higher purpose, such as, 'what is the world calling us to become?'
3. *Design:* Creating possibility propositions of the ideal organisation, articulating an organisation design that people feel is capable of drawing upon and magnifying the positive core to realise the newly expressed dream.
4. *Destiny:* Strengthening the affirmative capability of the whole system, enabling it to build hope and sustain momentum for ongoing positive change and high performance.

At the centre of the cycle is the *affirmative topic choice* which is the starting point and most strategic aspect of any AI process. Selection of topics itself provides opportunities for the system (individual, team/group, organisation) to set a new course for the future.

Appreciative Inquiry continues to be examined by researchers who investigate both its theoretical and conceptual underpinnings (e.g., Bushe, 2007a; 1995; Bushe & Kassam, 2005, Cowling, 2004; Jones, 1998; Reed et al., 2002; Yoder, 2005). However, Bushe (2007b) believes that the apparent lack of blind peer-reviewed published research, using an Appreciative Inquiry methodology, should not be surprising.

> *All academic research is aimed at fellow academics and only they can judge its contribution to their understanding. Appreciative Inquiry is mostly aimed at members of a social system and only they can judge its contribution to their shared understanding.*

Figure 2: Appreciative Inquiry 4-D cycle (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2003).



> *Because these different audiences require different forms of enquiry, I don't believe that outcomes of appreciative inquiries that are, first and foremost, organisational change efforts, will ever be treated as research findings by the academic community.* (Bushe, 2007b, p.9)

In contrast to AI as a research methodology, the applied utility of AI has elicited considerable interest and one of the most recent developments and AI adaptations is an appreciative approach to coaching.

Appreciative Inquiry Coaching

According to Sloan and Canine (2007), Appreciative Inquiry Coaching (AIC) is simply the practical application of the core AI principles (Table 1) to the process in which a trained coach is engaged by a person to function as a counsellor and advisor. In addition, Sloan and Canine believe AIC is highly effective for various coaching purposes, e.g. leadership, personal development, and working relationships, and the AI principles and AI 4-D cycle provide an excellent guiding framework for the coaching process. While Sloane and Canine recognise other comparable methods and training institutions that prepare people to act as coaches, they believe that:

> the AI philosophy and practice is in and of itself the ideal process for both enabling people in organisations to become more aware of their own strengths and abilities in ways that increase their effectiveness in all parts of their life and to create robust support for change in the client's social system. (Sloan & Canine, 2007, p.1)

Like AI, the essence of Appreciative Inquiry Coaching holds that human systems are *heliotropic*, meaning they will move toward the 'generative and creative images that reside in their most positive core – their values, visions, achievements, and best practices' (Watkins & Mohr, 2001, p.xxxi). Subsequently the following assumptions inherent in both AI and AIC about life, people and the change process itself, form the basis of Orem et al.'s (2007, p.26) model of Appreciative Coaching:

- In every society, organisation, group or individual something works;
- What people focus on becomes their reality;
- Reality is created in the moment, and there are multiple realities;
- The act of asking questions of an organisation, group, or individual influences the group or individual in some way;
- People are more confident and comfortable in their journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known);
- If people carry parts of the past forward, those parts should be what is best about the past;
- It is important to value differences;
- The language people use creates their reality.

Orem et al. (2007) explain how, with doctorates and extensive experience in the field of organisational development, they each were originally trained to view organisations as problems to be solved, to prompt executives, managers and teams to identify problems, and then to facilitate their finding of solutions. While they were often successful in bringing about change, by focusing on problems their clients sometimes had difficulty thinking of possibilities beyond them, and excitement and passion on the part of clients during the process was rare. Upon incorporating Appreciative Inquiry in their work, however, Orem et al. noticed the significant positive change in how they interacted with their clients since organisations and people were no longer perceived as 'problems to fix'. Subsequently, it soon occurred to the authors that this new approach to organisational development would be equally effective in one-on-one coaching.

While AIC is not the only coaching approach to incorporate the belief in the ability of coachees to recreate themselves (constructionist principle) and in the importance of language in making that happen (simultaneity principle), in AIC these beliefs permeate all aspects of its practice and tools. In particular, fundamental to AIC are the assumptions that *in every individual something works*, and *what people focus on becomes their reality*. Arguably, however, what may be considered most unique to AIC is the primary focus on appreciative language and, specifically, the use of appreciative questions. Table 2 illustrates the contrast between appreciative questions and problem-solving questions.

Application of Appreciative Inquiry Coaching and AI 4-D cycle: Stress at Work

In the following scenario, several elements of AIC are featured to illustrate how this approach can be used to create new thinking and imagined futures about a specific issue. In this case the affirmative topic that the coachee presents is an *inability to handle stress at work*. The first step in an appreciative approach to coaching would involve identifying 'stress' and an exploration of what the term means to the coachee. This is a necessary first step because coaches need to help coachees understand what stress at work is and is not, when it occurs and when it does not, and how, in general, coachees personally construe their realities. Coaches can use the appreciative questions that follow, which are embedded in the AI 4-D cycle, to guide them in their explorations of 'stress at work'. The coach's focus at each stage in the 4-D cycle is described by Orem et al., (2007).

Discovery

- Describe what you consider stress at work to be. Can you offer a definition, phrase or quote to describe it and provide an example?
- When recently have you displayed the ability to cope with stress at work? What was the situation which required coping behaviour?
- What attitude(s) did you adopt at that time? What were you thinking?
- Describe your emotions while you were coping with stress.
- How did you react? What did you do?

Table 2: Comparison of appreciative questions to problem solving questions (Orem et al., 2007, p.69).

Problem-Solving Questions	Appreciative Questions
Tell me what the problem is.	What gives you energy?
Tell me what's wrong.	What do you most value about yourself?
What are you worried about?	What do you want more of?
What do you need help with?	What worked well for you before?
What's bothering you?	What's working well now?
What's working? What isn't working?	What first attracted you to...?
What are you going to do about...?	What did you do to contribute?
How are you going to fix this?	What does it look like when you...?
What do you think caused this to happen?	How do you want to keep moving forward for yourself?

- What do you think your co-workers/peers would contend to be characteristics of your coping behaviour and the role of these characteristics?

Coach's focus in this stage:
- Establishing a positive connection between coach and client.
- Leading the client to a more empowering perspective.
- Affirming a sense of the possible.
- Cultivating and supporting the client's belief in a positive future (Orem et al., 2007, p.109).

Dream
- Imagine one night while you were asleep a miracle occurred, and when you woke up your coping behaviour was just as you've described, in all stressful situations. How would you know you were handling stress well?
- What would be different?
- What changed in your habits?
- Who would be the first to notice these changes?
- What will they say or do, and how will you respond?

Coach's focus in this stage:
- Encouraging the client to create images of possibilities.
- Inviting the client to give voice to his/her preferred future.
- Affirming the client's dream (Orem et al., 2007, p.135).

Design
- How will you act differently to make the above work?
- How best can you develop your ability to handle stress?
- Are there 'significant others' whom you feel play a crucial role in the development of your ability to handle stress?
- What do you think these individuals do to help? What do they not do?
- Are there any techniques or methods that you have experienced which you feel influences your ability to handle stress?
- Think of someone you know who you would characterise as being able to handle stress. How do you think they have developed their ability?

Coach's focus in this stage:

- Assisting the client in bringing the dream into focus.
- Affirming the reality of the dream.
- Supporting mindful choices and actions (Orem et al., 2007, p.151).

Destiny

- Reflecting on what you really want and where you are right now regarding coping with stress, what do you see as the most significant changes you could make that would help you get what you want?
- What one small change could you make right now, no matter how small, that would improve your ability to handle stress? The change does not have to be a physical action – it could be a shift in thinking or attitude.
- Just try it. Do this small change today that will move you in the direction of what you want and when it feels comfortable or becomes a habit, consider making another small change using the same small steps.

Coach's focus in this stage:

- Helping the client recognise his/her dreams in the present.
- Enabling the client to expand his/her capacity to create the dream.
- Supporting the client in holding faith when the going gets tough.
- Saying *namaste*[1] when coaching comes to a close (Orem et al., 2007. p.171)

The above process can be used to explore any attribute a coachee identifies as important in pursuit of his or her goals, and Orem et al. (2007) have identified a number of ways Appreciative Inquiry Coaching (AIC) can be used by coaches. For example, coaches could embrace it as their primary coaching model and approach, or employ it as an additional tool within an established coaching practice, or apply selective elements of AIC such as appreciative language, questions, and tools to enhance other coaching methods. They also suggested that the underlying theory, principles and stages of AIC could be used in training managers and supervisors in an educational or training context.

Orem et al. (2007) also discuss four key applications that they used to introduce AIC into their own practice:

1. *Addressing worldview*
   Worldview is understood by researchers (cf. Koltko-Rivera, 2004) to be an essential component of human nature and encompasses a person's beliefs and values. In the Discovery stage, Orem et al. (2007) use questions to help reveal how clients see themselves in the world such as: 'What are your three most important values?' 'Describe your beliefs about what motivates people?' 'What do you not believe?'

2. *Using appreciative language*
   Because language matters, especially in coaching, Orem et al. (2007) began reducing the usage of certain 'problem-solving' phrases from the business world such as goals, action plans, skill gaps and status quo, and introducing other words such as affirmations, images, dreams and potential – which led to a more generative orientation among their clients.

3. *Understanding what clients bring*
   Orem et al. (2007) realised that because each client presents with different levels of experience and facility in the areas of self-analysis and self-discovery, understanding what the client brings to coaching was very important.

[1] Namaste=polite Indian (Hindu) gesture (bow) of farewell or greeting made with hands held chest height and both palms pressed together.

4. *Becoming familiar with the stages and principles*
   Finally, Orem et al. (2007) found that the visual image of the four stages in the 4-D cycle (Figure 2) was easier for clients to understand than the list of the five core principles (Table 1 and Figure 1). However, they still took clients through the whole process because it was the best way of helping them become familiar with the stages and processes of appreciative coaching; they also found reflection and observation the most effective ways of helping clients link the theory of AIC to the practice.

Additional Appreciative Inquiry Coaching applications

Daily Living: Life coaching

In terms of enhancing daily living using AI, readers are directed to both Kelm (2005) and Stavros and Torres (2005) who appear to have made transferable applications of AI convincingly possible. Both texts provide life coaches with excellent examples of how individuals can apply AI principles to everyday life goals.

Preliminary client information gathering.

In addition to the usual demographical data Orem et al. (2007, pp.214–218) ask clients to respond to the following questions prior to the first coaching session. Noteworthy is the use of 'the positive' as the focus of enquiry.

Your History

Describe your three greatest accomplishments to date.
What made these accomplishments stand out for you?
What have you incorporated into your current actions from your past accomplishments?
How could you use what you've learned from these accomplishments to assist you in making future changes?
What major transitions have you had in the past two years? (For example, new assignment, new residence, new relationship, etc.)
If you worked with a coach before or a similar one-on-one adult relationship (for example, tennis coach, piano teacher, therapist) what worked well for you?
If you have worked with a coach, and you are not currently, how did that relationship end?

Your Life

Who are or have been your major role models?
What attributes of these role models do you admire and want to emulate?
What are the five most positive things in your life?
What are five things you would like to change in your life that would make it even more satisfying, effective, and joyful? (Examples include relationships, information, environment, job.)
Who are the key supportive people in your life, and what do they provide for you?
On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being least effective and 10 being most effective), rate the quality of your life.
By what criteria did you rate yourself?
What percentage of the life you are leading is actually YOUR life?

Your Self Today

List five adjectives that describe you at your best.
What prevents you from being at your best?
What energises you?
What saps your energy?
What are you learning and accepting about yourself at present?
In what ways do you currently spend time, that if you were to spend it differently, would yield greater happiness and achievement?
What do you consume now, that if you didn't, would allow you to be healthier? (for example, alcohol, caffeine, sugar.)
Could therapy effectively resolve some issue in your life now?

Your Potential

What is your personal and/or professional vision?

What would you like to contribute to the world?

What are you most wanting to achieve in the next three years?

What are you most wanting to achieve in the next six months?

How ready are you to go for it?

Use the boxes below as thought starters for the goals above.

Family/home	Relationship
Financial situation	Leisure time
Career or business	Self-care
Personal character	Learning

Make It Happen

Why have you sought out a coach?

What are three immediate changes you can make to get you off to a good start in our coaching?

How can I help you to be more effective in working toward your goals?

Here are ways coaching clients have worked with me. Which of these appeal to you? (Select as many as apply.)

- Brainstorming strategies together.
- Support, encouragement, and validation.
- Insight into who you are and your potential.
- Painting a vision of what you can become or accomplish.
- Exploring possibilities and building on past success.
- Accountability; checking up on goals.
- Suggesting or designing action steps that lead to greater effectiveness and joy.

What approaches to change have you found less effective for you?

What responsibility do you have for ensuring that our relationship works well?

How will you know that your coaching experience has been effective?

What approaches to change have you found less effective for you?

Thank you for filling out the form.

Coaching session reflective questioning

Orem et al. (2007) also use a coach reflection form, which the current author has adapted for his own use as follows:

1. What did my client say was most important to accomplish in this session?
2. What stage (Discover, Dream, Design, Destiny) were we in? What evidence demonstrated this?
3. What evidence did I see of an Appreciative Inquiry Coaching principle (e.g. Constructionist, Simultaneity, Poetic, Anticipatory, Positive)? Which one(s) did I see and how was it demonstrated?
4. In what ways did I use the client's existing successes and strengths in co-designing a desired future?
5. To what degree was the client's language positive? To what degree were my questions and responses couched in positive language?

Appreciative facilitation

As illustrated in Table 3 Mellish (2001) believes there are competencies, stages, issues and challenges for the appreciative facilitator to consider. Stages of AI implementation include engagement of clients, establishment of a collaborative process and use of the 4-D cycle framework.

Coaching career development

When discussing career aspirations and goals the current author has found the following appreciative questions useful (adapted from Ben-Shahar, 2007; Cremona, 2007;):

1. When you look over your work history, what role did you enjoy the most and why?
2. What are your *strengths* at work – what are you good at? What gives you *pleasure* at work – what do you enjoy doing? What gives you *meaning* at work – what gives you a sense of purpose?

Table 3: Competencies and challenges for the Appreciative Facilitator (Mellish, 2001, p.9).

Phases of process consulting, knowledge and skill required	Stages of Appreciative Inquiry Implementation	Critical Issues in applied AI	Challenges for the consultant
1. Entry and contracting. Marketing of services. Impressing from first contact.	**1. Client engagement.** Context/outcomes. Process design.	Trust	**Adopting an appreciative mindset.** Professional obligation: Process Leadership. Social Obligation: Partnering in change.
2. Understanding the client need. Data collection and diagnosis	**2. Collaborative process design** Scope and topics of inquiry. Designing the questions intervention – choice.	Commitment	**Managing diversity.** Lifestreaming. Democratising strategy.
3. Selecting a method of intervention. Feedback and decision to act	**3. Creating the conditions.** Establishing a conceptual frame: Starburst model. Applying Appreciative Inquiry principles. Establishing a process: 4-D model.	Creating the conditions for inquiry.	**Locating and maintaining the energy for change.** Getting the whole system in the room. Empowering the participants.
4. Solution development. Implementation	**Phase 1 – Discover** Paired interviews. Grouping affirmative topics. **Phase 2 – Dream** Creating provocative propositions. **Phase 3 – Design** Translating provocative propositions into practice. **Phase 4 – Deliver** Creating and sustaining learning and improvements.	Searching for shared meaning. Building a shared vision.	**Integrating micro and macro issues.** Integrating strategy, structure and culture. Facilitating shared vision. Creating social architecture for organising.
5. Maintaining the relationship. Recycling or terminating	**4. Integrating and Extension.**	Sustaining the process.	**Transferring ownership of the process.** Stimulating lots of little fires. Sharing responsibility for organisational direction and quality for everyone.

3. What do you consider to be your ideal job?
4. Where do you see yourself in a year/three to five years/10 years?
5. What is it about this career goal that you're interested in?
6. How ready do you think you are for the next step in your career?
7. What do you see as your next challenge?
8. What do you think you'll find the most challenging/rewarding aspect of your career goal?

Coaching team work.

The following application is borrowed from Whitney et al. (2005). Other appreciative team building exercises are available in Whitney et al. (2004).

What gives life to our team when it is at its best…?

1. What are the qualities of our colleagues that most foster enthusiasm, information sharing, and collaboration towards common goals?
2. Describe the best teamwork that you have seen or been part of recently. What was it about that teamwork that caused you to define it as 'the best'? What were the conditions that allowed that winning teamwork to emerge?
3. Think of other successful 'teams' that also have winning teamwork, teamwork that you admire. What makes that teamwork tick? What does that team do that we could try, or learn from, to do better?

Summary

Appreciative Inquiry Coaching focuses on supporting people and getting them to tell their own stories of positive development. The AIC point of difference from other coaching approaches is its set of fundamental core and emergent principles and, in particular, its use of appreciative language. Like other strengths-based coaching orientations, AIC has been accused of being naive and idealistic in the way that it focuses on positive experiences and ignores or suppresses accounts of negative experiences (e.g. Bushe, 2007; Bushe & Kassam, 2005; Reed, 2007). However, its social constructivist framework helps coachees in thinking about their world as they would like it to be and in exploring how 'the positive' can contribute to their development, in a different way from other coaching approaches.

Closing comments and further resources

Increasingly, there are accounts of how AI has effectively cultivated peak performance leadership in the workplace and how appreciative organisational practices have been used to create strategic competitive advantage (e.g. Anderson et al., 2001; Ludema et al., 2003) – readers are encouraged to look at www.aiconsulting.org for specific 'business success stories.' Coaches, and those charged with the responsibility of coordinating coaching and leadership development programs, are also encouraged to browse the resources on the AI Commons website www.appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/.

Other useful websites include:
www.aipractitioner.com
www.mellish.com.au
www.aileadership.com and
www.new-paradigm.co.uk.

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Self-management and the coaching relationship: Exploring coaching impact beyond models and methods

Travis Kemp

Whilst there is growing interest within the emerging coaching psychology literature in exploring specific coaching methods and their relative efficacies, little attention has been afforded the investigation of the relationship itself that is formed between coach and client. In addition, any exploration of the personality, psychodynamic and cognitive-behavioural constructs unique to the coach herself and the potential impact, both facilitative and detractive, of these factors, has remained largely unaddressed. This paper seeks to begin this process of exploration and highlights the importance for ethical and professional executive coaching practice in coaches establishing robust and accountable supervision relationships. The paper provides a theoretical framework for operationalising this supervisory relationship and facilitating coaches own process of introspection and continuous development.

THE APPLICATION OF evidence-based clinical and counselling methodologies to the context of coaching psychology continues to be a topic of interest within the emerging literature (cf Allcorn, 2006; Auerbach, 2006; Ducharme, 2004; Kilburn, 2004; Peterson, 2006; Sherin & Caiger, 2004). Despite both writers and practitioners from the therapeutic fields highlighting that the helping relationship is a fundamental determinant of intervention success (Corey, 2004), little effort has been directed towards exploring the complexities of this relationship and deepening our understanding of the psychological dynamic that is created within the coaching context. Indeed, in apparent contradiction to 'popular' coaching belief, these insights stress that the quality of the coach-coachee relationship, rather than any specific coaching *methodology* or model *per se*, may serve as the core catalyst for facilitating successful client change within the coaching engagement and the evidence-based literature supporting this contention is compelling (Bordin, 1979; Connor-Greene, 1993; Greenson, 1967; Rogers, 1957; Horvath, 2000, 2001, 2006; Horvath & Greensberg, 1989; Kivlighan, 2007; Lilliengren & Werbart, 2005). Further support is provided by meta-analytical studies such as the one reported by Horvath and Symonds (1991).

The coaching relationship can be described as a directionally influential helping dynamic that is established between two unique psychological entities; the coach and the client. Hence, like our therapy peers in the therapeutic clinical and counselling disciplines, professional coaching psychologists are ethically and professionally bound to closely monitor and manage their subjective impact within this relationship to ensure their coaching inputs maximise the potentially positive and minimise the potentially biased or negative impact of their unique psychological construct on clients' growth and performance within organisational settings.

This discussion seeks to explore at greater depth the coach's unique contribution to the coaching relationship and positions the coaching relationship as central to the achievement of successful change outcomes for coaching clients. Subsequently, it seeks to investigate the coaching psychologist herself as the central instrument in

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facilitating this relationship. Throughout this preliminary exploration, the importance of coach self-management and the criticality of robust and rigorous coaching supervision to ensure accountable and ethical executive coaching practice is highlighted. The discussion draws attention to the many similarities that are observable between effective helping relationships in the allied therapeutic professions and those observable within the practice of coaching psychology within executive and organisational contexts and draws upon previous comparisons of professional practice within these related fields (Corey, 2004; Egan, 2002). Emergent issues in coaching practice such as ethics (de Jong, 2006) and supervision (Hawkins, 2006) are also explored in the context of the coach's unique position and responsibility within the coaching relationship.

The importance of self-management within the executive coaching relationship

Authors such as Perrin and Newnes (2002) have articulated the many challenges faced by therapists and psychologists in managing the multiple identities that the helper and client bring to the therapeutic relationship. Likewise, the coaching relationship brings with it a myriad of similar and complex challenges. Self-management can be described as a professional developmental process in which the coach develops a deeper awareness of his unique cognitive, behavioural, perceptual and emotional system whilst developing the self-insight and adaptive capability required to effectively manage both the influence and impact of his unique psychological system on that of his client's. The importance of coaches actively participating in this process; a process that compels them to engage in the same introspective and reflective learning space that they expect of their clients, may appear self-evident, however, to date, it has been seldom addressed within the coaching psychology literature. As the practice of coaching psychology continues to seek recognition as a discipline within the broader profession of psychology, coaches must continuously seek to engage in appropriate reflective introspection and professional development to satisfy the core foundations of ethical practice.

Given the field of coaching psychology continues to build its theoretical premises and emerging practices on the bodies of knowledge previously created in related psychological fields, it appears appropriate to review these in developing our understanding of the coaching relationship. Of particular relevance to the coaching psychologist is the discipline of social psychology which reveals several explanations for why self management may be so important in the effective practice of coaching. Social psychology can be described as 'the scientific study of how people think about, influence and relate to one another' (Myers, 1996, p.6) and several social psychological principles highlight the importance of effective self management.

Attribution theory, trait inference and stereotypes

Attribution theory (Heider, 1958) contends that people demonstrate a tendency to explain others' behaviour by attributing it to either the internal dispositions of others, that is, their traits, motivations, values and attitudes, or to their external conditions such as their environment, circumstances, and social influences. Jones and Davis (1965) later argued that we have a tendency to assume that people's intentions and dispositions correspond to their actions and behaviour suggesting that the way in which people interact with their environment is largely consistent with cognitions relating to it. Their subsequent tendency is for people to generalise their attributions and assumptions to all similar people and situations. These two cognitive biases result in the emergence of stereotypes and an expectation that individuals within a specific professional background, for example, will have generalised and consistent characteristics,

beliefs and behaviour and this judgement is made in the absence of specific data relating to the individual client. The danger of these stereotypes when coaching specific groups would appear self-evident. Without a strong awareness of the one's predisposition for autonomous stereotyping, and in the absence of well developed self-awareness and effective management strategy for these tendencies, the positive coaching impact for clients demonstrating subjectively stereotypical characteristics is significantly reduced and at worst, coaching may become a negative or destructive experience.

Ross (1977) first described the *fundamental attribution error* as the tendency one has as an observer of a situation to underestimate the situational factors contributing to that situation and overestimate the dispositional factors of individuals' behaviour within that situation. This error is particularly pertinent to the practice of coaching within organisational or corporate settings given the complex nature of working within groups and teams. Simply stated, if an undesirable situation or outcome arises for a group or team of which the observer is not a member, the observer will tend to attribute these undesirable elements to the dispositions, competencies and capabilities of the individuals within that group. Conversely, if a problem arises within a group of which the observer is also a member, that observer will tend to attribute those negative elements or outcomes being experienced within that group to situational factors that are then seen as being out of the direct control of the group members themselves. These behaviours often manifest, for example, in the form of coachees attributing, their poor leadership performance and results within an organisational setting to external impacts such as the competency or capability of others within the organisation or emergent market dynamics.

Within the coaching relationship, many developmental opportunities emerge where the client is tempted to attribute causation of their behavioural choices to someone or something other than their own behaviour or performance. This is particularly the case when the client finds herself in a reactive and defensive cognitive framework rather than a proactive and accepting one (Kemp, 2005). The coach in these cases is at risk of being drawn into the client's fundamental attribution error complex if she is not acutely cogniscent of both her own personal attachment and commitment to achieving her client's performance goals and her client's investment in being seen to be making positive progress in the eyes of her coach. As a result, a coach's effectiveness as a catalyst and facilitator of the client's change process is arguably compromised if the coach's preferences, biases and predispositions are not well understood and actively managed within the coaching engagement.

Behavioural confirmation, halo effect and belief perseverance

Behavioural confirmation (Snyder, 1984) describes the tendency of people over time, to begin to behave as others expect them to behave, that is, the generalisations that are made by an observer of the behavioural patterns of another they observe tend to directly influence the observer's interactions with that person and hence, all subsequent interactions result in similar behavioural patterns being observed. This biasing effect gives rise to phenomena such as the halo effect (Thorndike, 1920) where one's judgement of a particular trait or set of traits observed within an individual is judged as either good or bad and then subsequently, this judgement is generalised to all aspects of that person. Once this judgement of 'good' or 'bad', is established it tends to persist, even in the face of evidence to the contrary. This cognitive bias is commonly known as *belief perseverance* (Myers, 1996).

Inadequate awareness of these cognitive biases places coaches in a compromising position, especially when faced with either excessively attractive or repulsive behaviours and values displayed by their clients. A coaches' inability to effectively manage

these biases and maintain his appropriate emotional, cognitive and behavioural boundaries within the coaching relationship is vital to the coach remaining effectual as a change agent for his clients' development. Hence, the coach must develop the ability to identify what these unique friction points are for him and then establish a process and mechanism for adjusting and managing these perceptions and responses to the client within a coaching conversation. These two steps are critical in maintaining a positive experience for clients and the appropriate ethical standards for coaches.

The coaches' Achilles Heel

Perhaps one of the most potentially debilitating cognitive biases for the coaching psychologist is his tendency to overestimate the accuracy of his beliefs and opinions and to be more confident in these opinions than accurate. This overconfidence bias (Gilovich et al., 2002), if left unchecked, compromises the coach's ability to create an accurate 'case conceptualisation', and subsequently, to effectively facilitate the client's developmental process in the coaching relationship. This case conceptualisation process involves the collection, ordering and interpretation of a complex set of data relating to the client which then enables the coach to design a development process that best suits the client's style, capability, needs and goals. Without this step, the coach's ability to provide an accurately designed intervention process is compromised and the positive client impact limited.

Once people establish these beliefs and judgements, and subsequently develop a strong level of confidence about them, they then begin to subtly filter data that enters their field of perception so that only data which supports their existing view of a person, situation or event enters their cognitive processes. This confirmation bias (Gilovich et al., 2002) establishes progressively stronger belief perseverance and severely limits the coach's ability to remain objective in the coaching relationship. By deepening their understanding of these generic human predispositions and their personal idiosyncrasies, coaches are more able to maintain their position as a neutral, yet conscious catalyst for their clients development. By adopting this perspective embarking on the coaching relationship, coaches can proactively manage the potentially adverse influence of their own fears, limitations, hopes and desires on their clients' process and, as a result, act in ways that keep their clients' needs and objectives at the forefront of the coaching relationship. This is particularly important in the formative stages of the coaching relationship so as to provide a stable foundation for future engagement.

Psychodynamic influences

The subconscious aspects of Freud's (1910) psychodynamic realm add a further level of self management complexity to the coaching relationship. Kilburg (2004) argues that this subconscious dynamic impacts significantly on the coaching relationship in a number of forms. For example, transference can be described as the tendency for the client to respond to the coach in a similar pattern as he displays with others in his life who have similar characteristics and attributes and in which similar relationship dynamics exist. Further, the client's projections of his unconscious or subjective perceptions, beliefs and attributes towards the coach add a further complexity to the coaching dynamic. This complexity, when left unmanaged, has the potential to cloud the coaching relationship and the subsequent goal striving activity of the client.

Likewise, the subconscious reciprocity of this transference – or *counter transference* – on the part of the coach towards the client creates deeper challenges in the coach's pursuit of a client-centred and client-driven coaching relationship. At worst, failing to surface and manage the psychodynamics inherent in all coaching relationships can be both potentially harmful to the client and professionally culpable and ethically ques-

tionable for the coach. However, at best, it can be seen as a natural consequence of all human relationships which, when used skilfully and intentionally in helping relationships, becomes a valuable tool for human insight and provides a context and framework for the coaching relationship. By actively engaging in the continuous process of self-reflection, introspection and professional growth, a coach is better able to identify his own psychodynamic patterns.

A simple illustration of the importance of these reflections is the impact of early familial relationships on adult behaviour patterns. A coach whose primary maternal relationship was emotionally attached, avoidance driven and submissive as a child may respond to a client with similar behaviours in the same way in which he responded to his mother during childhood. If these responses were positive and adaptive, this can support the client's deeper exploration of the impact that this behaviour has on others. However, if the coach failed to resolve an effective method of interaction with this parent, the same ineffectual or dysfunctional patterns of interaction may emerge again within the relationship with the client and, consequently, the coach's effectiveness in this relationship is compromised. The coach is, therefore, compelled, both professionally and ethically, to surface, explore and identify the potential impacts that their unique psychodynamic patterns may have on the client through the coaching relationship.

Thus, the coach is better able to maximise the positive impact of her skills and talents in a considered, ethical and responsible way by raising her awareness and subsequently managing her cognitive predispositions to biases and psychodynamic influences. As a result, she can bring richness to the client's experience in the coaching relationship that may otherwise be at risk of becoming 'formulaic' and rigid in its structure and delivery. By surfacing, managing and minimising the negative impact of cognitive biases in the coaching relationship, and concurrently maximising the opportunities for coaches' unique experiences and talents to surface within the relationship, clients' growth experiences can be positively enriched and are better able to achieve that which Wesson & Boniwell (2007) refer to as a 'flow-enhancing' coaching relationship (cf Moore et al., 2005 on *relational flow*).

Introducing the Human Factors Lens as a framework for coaching supervision

By developing and deepening an awareness of our unique internal system of thinking, behaving, perceiving and feeling we are better able to minimise the potentially negative impact of our 'blind spots'. These can be described as those human factor elements which surface within the coaching relationship but remain unknown to the coach himself but may or may not be observable to the client. If these emerge, unmanaged, within the coaching relationship and are observed by the client, these inadequacies may cause the client to question the capability and professional skills of the coach. This situation, while clearly undesirable, is even more deleterious to achieving a positive coaching outcome when the coach's inadequacies remain hidden to the client also. In the latter case, any negative impact of these blind spots remains undetected and, hence, unchallenged and uncontrolled putting the client at direct risk of psychological injury.

This situation is best addressed through the coach exercising her ability to continuously reflect upon, illuminate and subsequently manage her unique personality constructs and cognitive schemas in a way that serves to support her clients' growth and development pursuits. By engaging in a structured and continuous cycle of self-reflection, illumination and self-management, the coach develops a deeper level of self-understanding and, subsequently, a refined level of personal capability in maintaining appropriate relationship boundaries between herself and client. By actively eliciting feedback from peers, supervisors and past clients, coaches develop the capability to effectively calibrate their interactions with

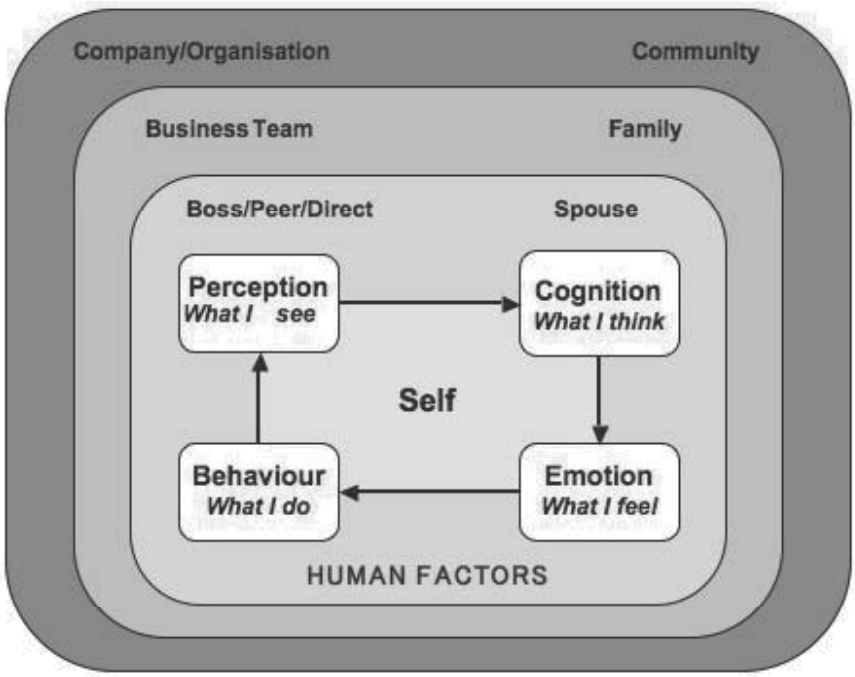
clients and gain a deeper awareness of the specific cognitive and behavioural traits and tendencies that they demonstrate in response to a diverse range of clients and their situations. As a result, coaches are more able to integrate these insights in the moment and, therefore, more able to moderate and mediate their reactions and behaviours within the coaching conversation as it proceeds.

In the following diagram, the central developmental levers are clustered to form a conceptual framework to enable coaches to explore their internal environment (see Figure 1 below) as a starting point for this self- development process.

The Human Factors Lens provides a means for coaches to reflect upon their current internal dynamics and explore the ways in which their organising framework shapes their view of and response to the world around them. As coaches, we can use this lens to systematically reflect upon the four key questions (and their respective levels) that underlie the four human factor lenses (see Figure 1 below) both introspectively and within a supervisory relationship.

Firstly, by reflecting on our *cognition*, or thinking, we surface and explore the myriad of cognitive biases common to all humans. As a core developmental platform, the active process of reflecting on and capturing our own unique thinking patterns in addition to these inherent tendencies is a valuable starting point for our self management challenge and provides a solid foundation for subsequent reflections. This process of 'thinking about our thinking', or meta-cognition, serves to surface and question the accuracy of our habitual cognitive patterns and our idiosyncratic variations on common cognitive biases.

Figure 1: The Human Factor Lens.



Secondly, by reflecting on our *feelings* we begin to develop a deeper insight and awareness of the powerful impact that emotions have on the other three human factors. If we can better understand how we respond and behave in the face of frustration, anger, elation and a myriad of other emotions that appear in coaching, we are more able to notice and manage the form and impact of these responses in the moment. This ability is particularly important in recognising and shifting our response when experiencing client issues, language and behaviours that have, in the past, triggered strong emotions for us.

Thirdly, these very responses and *behaviours* in the context of emotional stimuli within coaching relationships, and their impact on both our immediate relationships and our environment, are a rich source of data for discerning and assessing our internal predispositions. As our behaviour is the most overt influencer in the coaching relationship, and the most observable by the client, it is vitally important that coaches understand intimately their behavioural patterns and refine their repertoire in response to personally challenging situations and events in the coaching relationship. If a coach's tendency is to withdraw, for example, from strong interpersonal conflict, it is imperative that this issue be appropriately addressed outside of the coaching relationship to ensure that client outcomes are not adversely compromised by the coach's personal challenges. However, it is the awareness of this tendency achieved through her reflections on patterns in both client types and client interactions that provides the opening for a coach to explore these issues.

Finally, as the practice of coaching psychology compels us to examine our *perception* of other people, situations and environments around us. By identifying and testing these perceptions through data gathering and feedback, any discrepancies in the coach's perceptual acuity can be identified and appropriate adjustments made. For example, if a coach perceives his client's withdrawn and non-conversant behaviour as aloofness and arrogance rather than contemplation and introspection, his response may be one of direct challenge and confrontation rather than one of support and empathy. Each of these two potential responses from the coach will have a markedly different impact on the client's coaching experience. If a coach has developed the tendency towards certain biases in viewing, interpreting and responding to types of situations, people, philosophies or events, his inherent tendency will be to reinforce these views. As previously outlined, these beliefs and perceptions tend to persist, regardless of conflicting data being surfaced, and it is, therefore, imperative that the coach actively and frequently identify and challenge the generalisations, stereotypes or schemas that begin to manifest. The coach who stereotypes all lawyers or accountants, for example, as 'emotionally absent' undermines not only his own effectiveness when working with these clients but ultimately casts doubt on the discipline of executive coaching psychology.

The four key human factors elements can be drawn upon to understand how we as individuals interact across a broad range of relationships including those we establish with our manager, peers and direct subordinates within our organisation. More broadly though, these elements may surface awareness of the patterns we create within our family, community, and broader societal relationships. The continuous surfacing, reflection and management of these intrapersonal and interpersonal complexities can be overwhelming for coaches if they conduct this introspection in isolation from effective professional support. One of the hallmark methods used by the majority of long-established helping professions to maintain these practices and standards is a relationship that is established between fellow professionals for the purpose of providing ongoing supervision. The establishment of a relationship with a credible and competent coaching supervisor is a critical step in ensuring ethical and responsible practice, and it

provides a sound platform for the coach to continue her progressive self-development process outside of her professional coaching engagements.

This relationship is not the popular coach-the-coach style relationship that is increasingly espoused as being critical to professional practice within the coaching industry. Rather, this supervisory relationship is designed for the purpose of surfacing, illuminating and monitoring the 'unknown' self (Luft & Ingham, 1955) and to further deepen the coach's own understanding of how his unique human factors are manifesting in his coaching relationships. Within supervision, coaches bring specific coaching challenges or problems to their sessions and, rather than being a forum for facilitated problem solving, the supervision process is one of analysis of the interpersonal relationship dynamics that are manifesting between the coach and his clients. In addition, this external and impartial accountability that the supervision relationship creates provides an opportunity to open the coach's professional practice to expert scrutiny.

The value of this supervision process is largely two-fold; Firstly, by sharing his normally private coaching practices, with the appropriate confidences in place, the coach's potential weaknesses and challenges can be identified, surfaced and discussed with am impartial and confidential third party. This provides a high level of professional accountability and security to his clients. Secondly, this supervision relationship offers a place for the coach to identify those methods and practices that yield largely positive client outcomes and to determine how best to generalise these practices to similar situations and clients in the future, hence maximising the benefit to a wider range of clients. An additional benefit of supervision within an executive coaching setting is the ability for the executive coaching psychologist to explore the complex organisational and political dynamics that often permeate organisations and their governance processes.

For a supervision relationship to be most effective, the first and most critical step for the coach is to commence the process of introspection and reflection on her self-concept, the construction of her unique 'self', and the subsequent impact of these insights on the way in which she attends to and relates to both her client within the coaching relationship and her supervisor in the supervision relationship. When a coach engages fully and openly in this human factors analysis in supervision, the foundations for effective self-management are firmly established and the subsequent benefits to the client are maximised.

Once the coach has developed a sufficient level of insight and self-understanding through these analyses and supervision, she can then use these as the basis for what becomes her personal 'Self-Management Plan' (SMP). Simply, the coach sets about mapping her potential biases, blind spots and conditioned beliefs within the coaching relationship and actively puts in place mechanisms for working through these elements to minimise their impact on the client relationship. Broadly, this may include setting up cues, creating disrupting thoughts, or scripting positive self statements that will support the coach in her self-management within the relationship, particularly in situations that may be especially challenging for her. For example, a coach who has surfaced a persistent pattern of 'disengaging' with her senior executive clients when addressing emotional disturbances or difficult performance feedback may devise a SMP that disrupts this pattern in future coaching conversations with those clients and proactively modifies this pattern for future executive engagements.

One way of designing such a plan is to firstly identify the cognitive-behavioural trigger that instigates the coach's habitual pattern of disengagement. This trigger may be, for example, a client's agitation within a coaching conversation and procrastination when moving into the action phase of change. As this trigger manifests, the coach

may choose to take three deep breaths, communicate an affirmation to the client that, with the support of the coach, he has the inner capability to work through this challenge successfully, and then re-engage with the client by demonstrating a deeply empathetic understanding of the client's emergent issue followed by a restatement of the coaches commitment to support him through this process. The plan may continue with the coach asking a solution-focused question that provides the client with a pathway towards finding a resolution to the issue that he is grappling with. This is important for the client's growth and development as it is often within this place of cognitive dissonance and tension that significant adaptation and learning can occur for the coach as well as the client.

Conclusion

Contrary to several beliefs evident in the popular coaching literature to date, there is little evidence to support the contention that specific coaching models are a causal determinant of successful client change outcomes. On the contrary, there exists compelling support from the evidence-based literature of the importance of the relationship created between the helper and the client in achieving successful development outcomes. To this end, it would appear advisable for all coaches to explore fully the unique dynamics created between the four elements of their own unique human factors lens as a way to understand their predispositions in executive coaching relationships and their opportunities for development.

By effectively surfacing, understanding and self-managing the inherent complexities of their inner world, coaches are able to create and sustain a client-centric and client-driven focus from which an effective coaching relationship can emerge. Within this relationship, the confounding impact of the coaches' biases and habits are made explicit and managed appropriately. To elevate coaching psychology to the status of its professional peers will require coaches to maintain a prescribed level of rigorous and accountable professional supervision and introspective and self analytical frameworks such as the human factors lens may be of value in structuring this process.

As the discipline of coaching psychology matures and our practice as coaching psychologists is refined, we are beholden to both the profession of psychology and our clients to apply the same professional standards of supervision and continuous personal and professional development as our peers in the established psychology disciplines.

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An exploratory study of Australian executive coaches

Toni Binstead & Anthony M. Grant

Objectives: *This exploratory study sought to extend the limited knowledge base about the executive coaching industry in Australia.*
Design: *A qualitative process of emergent thematic coding using information from participants.*
Methods: *28 Australian executive coaches were interviewed using a qualitative conversational interviewing methodology. Participants were recruited using a snowball survey method in which each participant recommended other potential participants.*
Results: *The findings were that the executive coaching practitioners in this research use a variety of alternative titles apart from 'executive coach' and supply other services in conjunction with executive coaching. Additionally it was found that, contrary to previous Australian research, the majority of executive coaching practitioners in this research could identify their direct competitors by name. Also in contrast to past research, most of the participants in this study were trained to recognise mental health problems. The most commonly seen mental health issues in this sample's clients were stress, depression and anxiety, with personality disorders rarely observed. No coaches in this study charged under A$200 per hour and the majority of participants charged between A$400 and A$799 per hour.*
Conclusions: *The findings in the present study differ in many respects from past research into the Australian coaching industry, particularly in relation to the levels of competitive awareness found in past research into Australian business coaching firms. There may be important differences between Australian executive coaching practitioners and those coaches who specialise in business coaching. Limitations to the study are discussed and suggestions made for future research.*

Keywords: Executive coaching, coaching industry Australian coaching, business coaching, life coaching.

MUCH OF THE research into the characteristics and composition of the professional coaching industry has primarily focused on American coaches and their clients (e.g. Bluckert, 2004; Garman et al., 2000; Grant & Zackon, 2004; Stevens, 2005) Very little is known regarding the characteristics and composition of the professional coaching industry in Australia. We sought to extend the limited knowledge base about the executive coaching industry in Australia by conducting an exploratory study by interviewing 28 Australian executive coaches.

A key purpose of this research was to explore issues such as client groups, fee structure, provision of other services, titles used, executive coach training and the professional background or past work experience of executive coaching practitioners. Using both qualitative and quantitative approaches we also aimed to discover the level of understanding that executive coaching practitioners possess about their industry. Specifically, we surveyed these coaches' awareness of their competitors. In addition, we looked at the training undertaken by executive coaching practitioners in recognising mental health problems and the types of mental health problems encountered in executive coaching practice.

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The focus of this study: Professional executive coaches

The focus of the present study was on individual professional executive coaches rather than business coaches. Executive coaching can be understood as being:

> 'a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organisation and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to help the client 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 organisation within a formally defined coaching agreement' (Kilburg, 2000, p.142).

Business coaching differs from executive coaching. Clegg et al. (2005) argue that where executive coaching tends to focus on the executive's inter and intra-personal abilities and skills, business coaching typically combines business planning with facilitation techniques to assist clients in defining and achieving their business goals: business coaching focuses on intervening directly with business structures and processes.

Past research into the Australian coaching industry

Four studies have explored the Australian professional coaching industry to date. Clegg et al. (2005) studied the characteristics of business coaching firms, some of which were reported to also supply executive coaching. Through web searches and telephone interviews Clegg et al. (2005) identified 96 Australian coaching firms. These included firms that offered executive and life coaching as well as business coaching. Fifty-five of these were directly involved in business coaching (of which 42 agreed to participate in the Cleg et al. study), 26 were business coaching firms and 15 were training firms that offered programs in coaching.

Clegg et al. (2005) found that the majority of the 42 business coaching firms were young and small, having been in operation for less than four years with only one or two employees, and many operating out of home offices. Only five of the 42 business coaching firms focused exclusively on business coaching, with the others also offering additional services such as executive coaching, life coaching, consulting, training and development, and the training of coaches.

The participants in the Clegg et al. (2005) study tended to have a limited understanding of the business coaching environment. When asked about their competitors the most common response was that they had no competition 'we are so unique that we have no competitors' (p.220), and more than 50 per cent could not name a single competitor by name.

Exploring the Australian executive coaching industry from the perspective of human resources professionals, Dagley (2006) conducted a study in association with the Australian Human Resources Institute in Australia. Using structured interviews he surveyed 17 human resource professionals regarding their perceptions of the effectiveness of executive coaching. These participants were responsible for more than 1000 individual executive coaching programmes and A$15.4 million of expenditure on executive coaching in the preceding two years. Results indicated strong support for the use of coaching, and all rated their programmes as at least moderately successful. A large number of benefits for the individual executive were identified including 'a clearer understanding of own automatic responses, and the issues arising from these' (p.39), talent retention, team cohesion and conflict resolution. These human resource professionals identified a number of difficulties in using executive coaches including the cost, poor translation of learning to behaviour change and the difficulty in locating or identifying good executive coaches.

Spence et al.'s (2006) study investigated the characteristics of Australian coaching practitioners and surveyed 148 individuals

who attended an Australian International Coach Federation conference. The study included life coaches, business coaches and executive coaches. Of the 87 respondents who said that coaching was their main occupation, 41 per cent had been coaching for less than one year, and only 12 per cent for more than five years. A minority (less than 20 per cent) of respondents reported a background in psychology or counselling, yet more than 10 per cent of respondents indicated that they regularly coached clients in relation to issues commonly associated with serious psychological distress (e.g. fears about personal loss, life crises, social isolation and self esteem).

Grant and O'Hara (2006) explored the Australian coaching industry from the perspective of commercial coach training schools, seeking to identify the types of qualifications, certifications and accreditations offered by Australian life-coaching schools and to provide an overview of the advertised content and cost of life-coach training courses. They also examined how life-coaching schools differentiate between life coaching and mental health treatment. Nine of the 14 schools in the study made no explicit distinction between life coaching and treatment for mental health issue, and one school stated that life coaching could be used to deal with anxiety-related problems.

From this brief review it is clear that little is known about the Australian executive coaching industry, its participants or its practices. The present research aims to begin the process of discovering such information by conducting an exploratory study into the practice of executive coaching in Australia from the coach's perspective. In addition we sought to discover the level of understanding that executive coaching practitioners possess about their industry and the training undertaken by executive coaching practitioners in recognising mental health problems.

Method

Participants

Participants were 28 Australian executive coaching practitioners between 18 and 70 years of age (17 females and 11 males). Only active coaches were included in the survey. Active was defined as having at least three current executive coaching clients.

Recruitment and the snowball sampling method

Although the coaching industry uses the internet extensively as a means of advertising, and much past research into the Australian coaching industry has relied on web-recruited participants or web-based information (e.g. Cleg et al.; Grant & O'Hara, 2006), it is not clear how many individuals who advertise executive coaching services on-line are in fact active in coaching executives. Thus in recruiting participants for the present study we used: (a) personal knowledge of the Australian coaching industry; (b) an internet search using the key words 'executive coaching' and 'Australia'; and (c) our primary method, snowball sampling.

Snowball sampling (Heckathorn, 1997) is a technique for accessing hard-to-reach populations. From an initial sample, interviewed participants suggest future participants from the people that they know (Goodman, 1961). Thus the sample group appears to grow like a rolling snowball. This technique is useful for hidden or difficult-to-access populations and networks and is appropriate for studies that are primarily exploratory and qualitative. The sampling procedure is designed to yield a rich set of data on a smaller sample. This sampling strategy is thus not random but purposive.

Initial e-mail contact

Initial contact with participants took the form of an e-mail and an extensive information/consent sheet detailing the research and asking them to reply by e-mail if they would like to take part. Of the 37 executive coaching practitioners contacted initially, eight declined to participate, as they were

not currently practising as an executive coach. A further eight did not reply to the initial e-mail or two subsequent reminders. The snowball recruiting method garnered a further nine participants which resulted in a total of 30 participants.

From the initial pool of 30 participants, two participants were excluded because they had less than three executive coaching clients leaving a total of 28 participants. In this way, the research sought to examine only those within the executive coaching industry who were practising executive coaches rather than those merely claiming to be executive coaches.

Those who agreed to participate in the research were sent a second e-mail to arrange a convenient time for a telephone interview. The e-mail also contained three attachments; a list of the interview questions, a participant information sheet and the consent form, which each participant signed and returned prior to the interview. A small number of participants (six) preferred to complete the survey form on their own and e-mailed it back.

Telephone interviews

A conversational interviewing approach was used. In conversational interviewing, the researcher does not rigidly stick to a pre-designated question script, rather the questions act as a guide and the interviewer says what is needed in order to help participants correctly interpret the questions. Therefore, it is not the wording, but rather the meaning that is standardised in a conversational interview (Suchman & Jordan, 1990). In conversational interviews, it is essential that the researcher and participant talk about the meaning of the questions because the questions might otherwise mean one thing to the researchers and something else to the participant.

Telephone interviews varied between 15 and 30 minutes in length, during which participants were asked a series of 15 questions regarding the broad parameters of the executive coaching industry such as client groups, fee structure, executive coach training and past background. Questions also sought to uncover participants understanding of the industry, including existing networks, competitors and their definition of executive coaching. A list of the survey questions is contained in the Appendix.

Shortly after the telephone interview, all participants were sent another e-mail thanking them for their participation. This e-mail also asked them to forward on an invitation to participate in the research to other Australian executive coaching practitioners they know. E-mail exchanges were also used for validation purposes when further information was needed to analyse the data.

Data analysis

Although the research was primarily qualitative in nature, it was found that responses were sufficiently similar enough to allow them to be grouped into categories, thereby obtaining quantitative results. While basic descriptive statistics could be applied to these quantitative categories, it was not appropriate to conduct inferential statistical analysis.

Content analysis and theme categorisation were based on the data itself in line with a grounded theory approach which entails the discovery of themes and organising principles from the data itself (Glaser & Strauss, 1968). Thus the categories of analysis were extracted from the data and based on patterns of recurring responses. Once the categories for each question were identified the frequency or number of times that each category occurred was recorded in a spreadsheet. A non-mutually exclusive coding scheme was used for many questions where participants' answers fell into more than one category (multiple response variables or multiple dichotomies). An independent co-researcher was used to ensure reliability and accuracy of data coding. The first step in the data analysis was to compute a frequency table for categorical variables.

Results

Professional background and past work experience

Participants reported a variety of past work experiences. Previous to undertaking executive coaching work, many participants were engaged in other careers and had prior experience in roles such as senior managers or executives (25 per cent), consultants (19 per cent), teachers or lecturers (16 per cent), psychologists (13 per cent), accountants (six per cent), business development managers (six per cent), business owners (six per cent), speech pathologists (three per cent), sports coaches (three per cent), and board members (three per cent). Note that participants were allowed multiple answers.

Multiple titles used by executive coaching practitioners

Only six out of the 28 participants used the title 'executive coach' by itself. Nine out of 28 participants who said they supplied executive coaching services did not actually call themselves an executive coach. These individuals used alternative titles including career coach, coaching psychologist, consultant, facilitator, human resources manager, leadership coach, learning advisor, organisational coach, sales capability leader and skills coach.

Participants explained the use of multiple titles by saying that they 'change it for different markets' and that they 'use different titles depending on the audience'. Note that participants were allowed multiple answers.

Provision of other services

In addition to their executive coaching services, most participants also supplied other related services. The most common additional service provided was consulting (25 per cent), followed by training (21 per cent), facilitation (20 per cent), workshops (10 per cent), business coaching (seven per cent), keynotes and presentations (five per cent), career coaching and outplacement (three per cent), Human Resource Services (three per cent), recruitment (three per cent), corporate psychology (two per cent) and financial planning (two per cent). The majority of coaches interviewed (79 per cent) do not provide other forms of coaching, as they specialise in executive coaching. Participants were allowed multiple answers.

Number and type of clients

The mean number of current clients was 9.7 (*SD*=5.5). Only two participants reported that they do not currently have three executive coaching clients and were excluded from the research on that basis.

The majority of this sample's clients held executive, senior or middle management roles. Clients were C-level executives or Managing Directors (36 per cent), senior managers (18 per cent), regional or middle managers (11 per cent), small business owners or managing partners (10 per cent), middle executives (eight per cent), entry level employees or junior staff (seven per cent), line managers, supervisors (four per cent), product or business unit managers (three per cent), and office managers or secretaries (three per cent). Note that participants were allowed multiple answers.

Coach education

The participants in this research are overwhelmingly university educated (93 per cent). A small number of the sample held a Doctorate (7.1 per cent), more than half the sample held a Master's degree (53.6 per cent), less held only Bachelor degrees (17.9 per cent) or Graduate certificates or diplomas (15 per cent). A small number of participants in this research had only completed secondary education (seven per cent).

The majority of participants in this research had completed specific executive coach training (86 per cent). Participants in this sample had completed executive coach training at organisations including Coach U, Coachville, Human Synergistics, the Institute

of Executive Coaching and the University of Sydney. A small number of participants in the research had not received any specific executive coach training (14 per cent).

How executive coaching practitioners supply their services

Participants primarily offered their executive coaching services as a fixed number of sessions (33 per cent). The average number of sessions supplied was nine, with a maximum of 12 and a minimum of three. The most common number of sessions supplied was 10. Many participants package executive coaching along with other services (31 per cent). Fewer participants (19 per cent) supplied coaching services on a fixed time basis (e.g. for a fixed number of months) or on a session-by-session basis (17 per cent). The average duration of a coaching engagement is eight months, with a maximum of 12 months and a minimum of four months. The most common duration was six months.

Prices charged by executive coaching practitioners

Five out of the 28 participants (18 per cent) said they did not charge separately for executive coaching, as they work as an internal coach. For the 23 participants who do charge for their services most charge on a hourly basis (39 per cent), but some charge for a fixed number of sessions (30 per cent), or per program (13 per cent), per session (nine per cent), or per month (four per cent). A minority charged as a percentage of the salary of the executive being coached (four per cent).

No coaches in this study charged under A$200 per hour. All participants said that they were comfortable divulging their prices. Thirty per cent charged between A$200 and A$299 per hour, 20 per cent charged between A$300 and A$399, 20 per cent charged between A$400 and A$499, 10 per cent charged between A$500 and A$599, 10 per cent charged between A$600 and A$699, and 10 per cent charged between A$700 and A$799 per hour (Figure 1).

Of the seven executive coaches who said that they charged for a fixed number of executive coaching sessions, 57 per cent charged between A$5000 and A$6999 per 10 sessions, 14 per cent between A$7000 and A$8999, 14 per cent charged between A$9000 and A$10999, and 14 per cent charged between A$11,000 and A$12,999 per 10 sessions.

The average price for a six-month packaged programme was A$11,000, the average price for a 12-month packaged programme was A$17,000. Participants who said they charged by the day supplied group coaching and other services in addition to executive coaching, with the average price being A$3000 per day.

Mental health training

Most participants reported having received specialised training in recognising mental health issues (79 per cent). Twenty-two participants had received specific training in recognising mental health problems, 48 per cent undertook mental health training as part of their executive coach training, 33 per cent had previous training from their professional education, and 19 per cent undertook extra training in recognising mental health problems. Note that participants were allowed multiple answers.

Mental health problems in executive coaching

There were 27 out of 28 participants (96 per cent) who said they had encountered mental health problems in clients whilst practising as an executive coach. Note that as multiple answers were allowed, there were a total of 72 responses from the people interviewed. Participants in this research have encountered the following mental health problems in clients whilst practising executive coaching; stress (28 per cent), depression (22 per cent), anxiety (21 per cent), problems associated with personality disorders (10 per cent), alcohol abuse (eight per cent), other mental health problems (eight per cent) and drug abuse (three per cent) (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Bar graph showing the amount charged for executive coaching per hour.

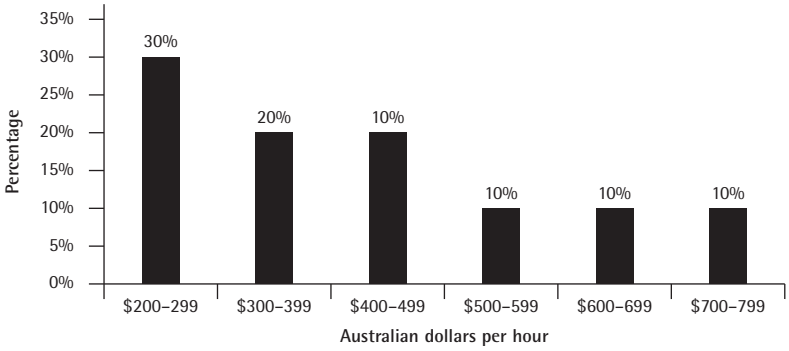
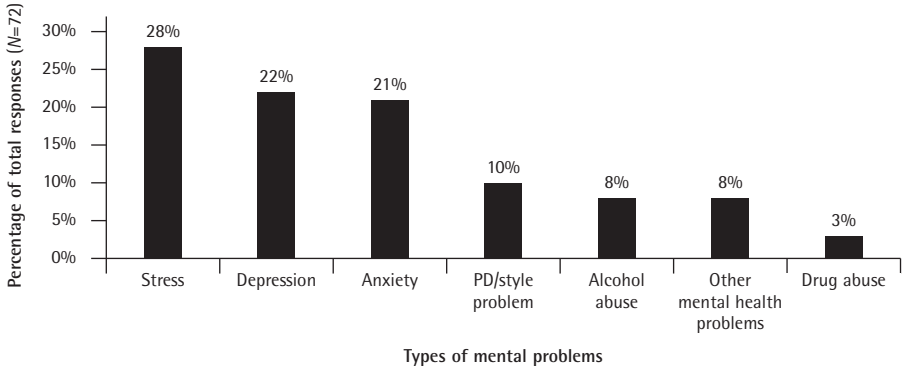


Figure 2: Types of mental health problems encountered by participants in their clients.



Participants were asked to classify the frequency of encounters. Some answered in words, for example, rarely, sometimes, often, while others quoted a percentage of clients. To enable comparison, 'rarely' was categorised as meaning less than five per cent of their past clients, 'sometimes' was more than five per cent but less than 40 per cent, and 'often' was more than 40 per cent of their past clients.

Of the 27 participants who did encounter mental health problems in clients, the majority encounter stress often (55 per cent), and anxiety often (46 per cent), whereas the majority see depression sometimes (50 per cent) (see Figures 3–5). All of the 27 participants encountered alcohol abuse rarely, drug abuse rarely, and other mental health problems rarely.

Figure 3: Bar graph of percentage of participants encountering stress in clients.

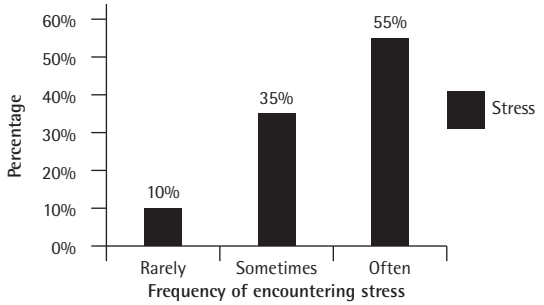


Figure 4: Bar graph of percentage of participants encountering anxiety in clients.

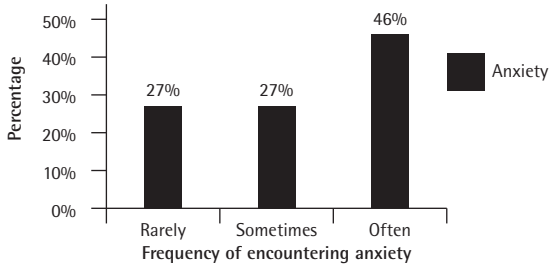


Figure 5: Bar graph of percentage of participants encountering depression in clients.

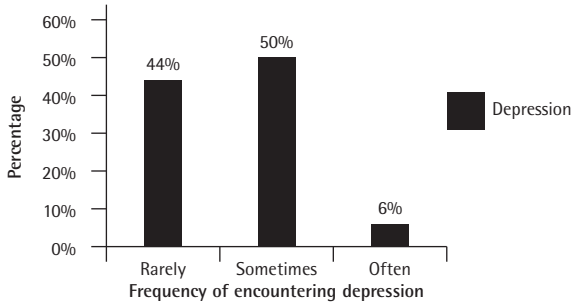
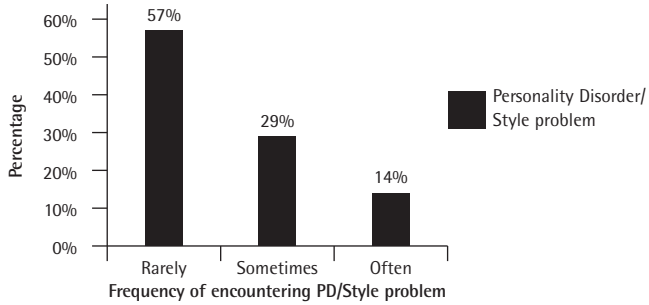


Figure 6: Bar graph of percentage of participants encountering PD/style problems in clients.



The majority of these executive coaching practitioners (57 per cent) see problems related to personality disorder or personality styles rarely (Figure 6). It is important to note that these are not prevalence rates but rather the percentage of times they are observed in client groups by the participants in this study.

Coaching community

The majority of participants in this research belong to professional associations (86 per cent). These associations varied greatly and included the Australian Association of Career Counsellors, the Australian Human Resources Institute, the Australian Institute of Management, the Australian Marketing Institute, the Australian Psychological Society, the International Coach Federation, the Institute of Executive Coaching and the University of Sydney Coaching and Mentoring Association.

The majority of participants also have a work-related network of other executive coaching practitioners (96 per cent). Participants met their network through professional coaching associations (30 per cent), through their work and consulting (22 per cent), during coach training (20 per cent), by general networking (10 per cent), by attending conferences and seminars (eight per cent), through supervision groups (seven per cent) and through general social activities (three per cent).

Awareness of the coaching industry

Most participants could identity their direct competitors (61 per cent). Some could only name individuals, others were able to name specific organisations. Nine participants could not name their competitors at all.

Three declined to name their competitors explaining that '…I don't see them as competitors, I have an abundance mentality and don't see them as competitors.' Another responded that '…there are many claiming to operate in the field. I have not yet lost to a 'competitor' as most of my work is referral based.' One participant commented, 'I have no competitors as I provide something special, I'm different to others.'

As regards the participants' knowledge of the size of the businesses operating in the Australian executive coaching industry, one respondent said '…there are thousands of one-man-bands out there.' However, although the Australian executive coaching industry was seen by some participants to consist of ' mostly one person operators', 12 participants (43 per cent) were able to name organisations whose business was the provision of coaching services, and who employed more than five people. These organisations included; the Australian Graduate School of Management, Australian Institute of Management, Coachbroker, Deakin Prime, The Executive Connection, Hay Group, Hewitt Associates, Hewsons, The Human Enterprise, the Institute of Execu-

tive Coaching, Maximus, Melbourne Business School, Oisin, Red Pill, Results Coaching, Stephenson Mansell Group, Stolmack Group, the Teleran Group, Whyte and Coaches and Yellow Edge. The two most frequently cited 'competitors' were the Stevenson Mansell Group (cited by 43 per cent of participants) and the Institute of Executive Coaching (cited by 39 per cent of participants).

Discussion

This study sought to explore the Australian executive coaching industry from the perspective of individual Australian professional executive coaches. Past research has examined the Australian coaching industry from the perspectives of business coaching firms (Cleg at al., 2005), human resource professionals (Dagley, 2006), generalist coaches (Spence et al., 2006) and commercial coach training schools (Grant & O'Hara, 2006).

The present study has found these executive coaches had a range of prior work experiences before becoming professional coaches. The most common prior occupations were executive or consultant and only 13 per cent of this sample were psychologists and these proportions are in line with past findings (Grant & Zackon, 2004; Spence et al., 2006). It would appear that, despite the fact that psychologists receive specific training in the behavioural science of human change, they continue to be in a minority in the coaching industry.

An executive coach?

Our findings suggest that executive coaching practitioners in this research use many alternative titles, not just 'executive coach'. The executive coaching practitioners in the present study used a variety of '…different titles depending on the audience.' One comment was 'I don't call myself an executive coach as that specifies a level within the company, I prefer to use the term leadership coach as that signifies the outcome.' This finding is similar to responses given by the business coaches interviewed by Clegg et al. (2005, p.221) who commented that their 'main challenge is actually using the word 'coach".

This has implications for future research into the Australian executive coaching industry as it means that future researchers looking for executive coaching practitioners to study may not find them by looking for those who use the title 'executive coach', so gathering a representative sample of executive coaching practitioners may prove difficult. Rather than relying on the term 'executive coach' as an inclusion criterion, it may be better to use a snowball sampling method, similar to that used in this research.

Services, clients and fees

Few individuals in this study only supply executive coaching services. Rather, and in line with past research, they supply a mixture of human and organisational change services including consulting, facilitation, and workshops/seminars. The average number of current clients in this study was 9.7 and this figure accords with recent research by the International Coach Federation (2007) who found the average number of current clients in their sample was 11.

The majority of the present study's respondents (54 per cent) worked mainly with senior management. Perhaps not surprisingly, given their client group, the majority of coaches in this study charged over A$400 per hour with the top reported rates being A$799. Even taking into account the differences in exchange rates and the variation in currency values over time, this is far higher than the coaches surveyed by Grant and Zackon (2004) who found that the majority of respondents charged less than US$199 per hour. It should be borne in mind that the coaches in the present study were highly experienced coaches who had, on average, over five years of executive coaching experience. Further, these coaches had invested in tertiary education; the participants in this research are overwhelmingly university educated (93 per cent) with seven

per cent holding a doctorate and more than half the sample holding a master's degree.

Mental health issues

The present study found that 79 per cent of participants had specialised training in recognising mental health issues, and 48 per cent had received this training as part of their executive coaching training. In contrast, Grant and Zackon (2004) found that specific training in mental health issues was primarily acquired via further professional development, not via executive coach training, and that only 40 per cent of their sample had undertaken training in mental health at all. Similarly, Spence et al. (2006) found that only 20 per cent of coaches had a background in helping professions such as psychology, social work or counselling, and surmised that there appears to be a significant lack of mental health knowledge in the coaching industry.

This is an important point because there have been concerns raised about the level of psychopathology in executive coaching populations (Berglas, 2002). Further, Australian research has found that between 25 per cent and 50 per cent of Australian clients presenting for life coaching had clinically significant levels of psychopathology (see Green et al., 2006; Spence & Grant, 2007). However, it should be noted that there have been no published studies to date on psychopathology levels in executive coaching populations, and this is an important area for further research.

Nearly all participants (96 per cent) in the present study said they had encountered mental health problems in clients whilst practising as an executive coach, with 28 per cent encountering stress, 22 per cent depression, 21 per cent anxiety, 10 per cent problems associated with personality disorders and eight per cent alcohol abuse. It must be noted that these are not prevalence rates, and only represent these coaches' experience of such problems.

Similar to the findings reported by Spence et al. (2006), the coaches in the present study were aware of the differences between coaching and therapy. The executive coaching practitioners in this research are also aware of the dimensional approach to personality, which is evident in participant comments such as 'rather than a personality disorder, it's more a personality style problem…' Regarding anxiety, one commented, '(of course) there is anxiety because they're in high pressure jobs, but it's not clinical, it doesn't cross the line.' Others commented on stress and anxiety saying, 'almost every client has some symptoms' and another 'there is stress to do with politics and managing people, but not needing professional help.' This suggests that, counter to past findings (Spence, 2006), executive coaching practitioners in this research could recognise mental health issues and refer when necessary. The difference in observed rates of psychopathology between the present study and past research may be in part related to the education and training of the coaches in the present study who where all experienced and trained, and that coaches who are untrained in recognising mental health problems simply do not notice the subtle signs or symptoms (Cavanagh, 2005).

These findings indicate the importance of researching coaching in high stress occupations. Stress in the workplace has become a pivotal issue and coaching has been suggested as a viable method for occupational health problems such as stress (Berriman, 2007; Gyllensten et al., 2005; Wales, 2003). Although interest is growing, research is still lacking (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005).

Awareness of the Australian coaching industry

In contrast to Clegg et al.'s (2005) findings, which were that there was a very low level of awareness of competitors in the business coaching industry, many participants (61 per cent) in the present study could indeed identify their direct competitors in executive coaching. However, nine participants in the present study could not name their competi-

tors at all. Whilst some could only name individuals, 43 per cent of participants were also able to name specific organisations. Further, many of the 20 organisations that were named were organisations with more than five employees and who had been offering executive coaching services for over five years.

These variances with Clegg et al.'s (2005) findings suggest that there are some important differences between the Australian executive coaching industry and the Australian business coaching industry. Not only did the executive coaching practitioners in this study seem to have more knowledge of their industry than business coaches, there are also differences in the types of competitors named. In Clegg et al.'s (2005) study the competitors named were business coaches, management consulting firms, training firms, and internal human resource departments. Whereas in this research, competitors named were predominantly individuals or firms that specialise in executive coaching, or coach training organisations which also supply executive coaching services.

This may suggest that there are differences between the niches of business coaching and executive coaching. This was somewhat apparent in the research as some participants wanted to explain the difference between executive coaching and business coaching even though this question was not part of the survey. For example, one participant volunteered that 'business coaching is broader and shallower than executive coaching.' Furthermore, some participants named different competitors for their business coaching services in comparison to those named in relation to their executive coaching services.

Limitations

The present research has several limitations that need to be considered. The present study used a relatively small sample of 28 active Australian executive coaches who were recruited by a snowballing methodology. Time limitations precluded extended sampling and this may well have resulted in the sample being skewed towards a specific executive coaching network. Thus this sample may not be representative of the total population of Australian executive coaches, and the results and discussion should be interpreted with this limitation in mind. Future studies will need to be conducted over a longer time period, thereby allowing the viral nature of the snowballing method to be fully achieved (Killworth & Bernard, 1978).

Summary

The aim of this research was to discover the broad parameters of the executive coaching industry within Australia. There are a myriad of titles used by executive coaching practitioners in this study. Many services are supplied in conjunction with executive coaching. The majority of executive coaching practitioners in this research could identify their direct competitors easily by name. Differences between the types of competitors named by business coaching firms in Clegg et al.'s (2005) work and the executive coaching practitioners in this research may suggest that there are differences between the niches of business coaching and executive coaching.

While this research elicited and synthesised the thoughts and views of 28 executive coaching practitioners within Australia regarding their lived experience as providers of executive coaching, the results cannot be extrapolated to the larger population of Australian executive coaching practitioners. Rather, it should be viewed as an exploratory study of executive coaching in Australia which may guide future research.

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Appendix: Survey Questions

Do you call yourself an 'Executive Coach'? What age group are you in?

Do you currently have three or more executive coaching clients? If so, how many?

What is your professional background or experience?

Have you undertaken executive coach training? If yes, through which organisation?

Have you had any specialised training in recognising mental health problems?
If yes, what training?

How do you define executive coaching? In other words, how do you explain the services you provide to potential clients?

What sort of clients do you work with?

On what basis do you charge for your coaching services? (per session, monthly, fixed number of coaching sessions, bundled/packaged with other services). What is your average fee?

In addition to your executive coaching, do you provide any other services, for example business coaching, business consulting, or training? If yes, which services?

In your executive coaching practice, do you come across mental health problems, for example, clients with stress, anxiety or depression problems, alcohol or other drug problems? If yes, which problems, and how frequently?

Do you belong to any professional associations? If so which ones?

Can you name your main competitors for executive coaching work? If yes, who are they?

Do you have a work-related network of other executive coaches? If yes, how did you meet them?

Finally, I would like to ask your permission to re-contact you via e-mail regarding the results of the study and future research and also ask a quick demographic question. Can I contact you via e-mail?

Key characteristics of the commercial Australian executive coach training industry

Anthony M. Grant & Blythe O'Hara

Objectives: *To identify organisations who offer executive coach training and business coach training in Australia; assessment processes, cost and duration of courses; the delineation between coaching and counselling; marketing claims made; and the qualifications of the owners and trainers.*
Design: *A qualitative process of emergent thematic coding using information from the internet.*
Methods: *Broad categories and themes related to the aims of the study were documented, leading to the identification of a group of core categories and a process of comparison between organisations.*
Results: *More than half the 16 Australian executive coach-training organisations identified offered more than one type of coach training. Four offered a coach franchise. The most common accrediting bodies were the International Coach Federation or the Australian Government Vocational Training Framework. Costs of courses ranged from AUS$3245 to AUS$14,795. Marketing claims included having longevity, being the best school, setting the standard, or having global recognition. Some trainers had no qualifications at all, but the majority of trainers' qualifications were directly relevant to the field of coaching. The majority of coaching organisations did not make a clear distinction between these two issues. Average longevity of these organisations was 6.75 years.*
Conclusion: *The Australian executive coach and business coach training industry continues to develop. We recommend that, in order to further professionalise executive coach training, all coach trainers should be properly qualified, issues related to identification of mental illness be incorporated into executive coach training, and organisations offering coach franchising provide clear and unambiguous information to prospective clients.*

Keywords: executive coaching, business coaching, coaching franchise, coach training.

COACHING IS AN industry that has widespread appeal, is rapidly growing (Grant, 2003), and has a number of speciality areas (Stern, 2004). Three of the best known areas are executive coaching, life (or personal) coaching and business coaching. Executive coaching tends to focus on enhancing an executive's abilities and potential, particularly in regard to leadership and organisational outcomes (Kilburg, 1996; Stern, 2004). Executive coaching has been shown to be effective at increasing leadership effectiveness, achieving organisational goals (Thach, 2002), and reducing stress (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005). Life coaching is a more holistic approach which tends to focus on helping people set and reach goals in their personal lives (Williams & Thomas, 2004). Business coaching typically combines business planning with facilitation techniques that facilitate clients define and then achieving their business goals: business coaching and the focus of coaching is directly on business structures and processes rather than primarily on intra or interpersonal issues (Clegg et al., 2005).

Although there is a growing body of world-wide research into executive coaching (Passmore & Gibbes, 2007), life coaching (Grant & Cavanagh 2007) and business coaching (Clegg et al., 2005) there is still not much known about the Australian coaching

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industry. Clegg et al. (2005) surveyed 42 Australian business coaching firms, finding most firms were less than fours years old with only one or two employees, but did not focus specifically on the characteristics of the executive coaching industry. Spence et al. (2006) explored the characteristics of Australian coaches, finding that that only 12 per cent of respondents had more than five years coaching experience and only a minority of coaches had a background in psychology or counselling. Dagley (2006) used structured interviews with 17 human resource professionals to explore their perceptions of the effectiveness of executive coaching, finding strong support for the use of executive coaching in organisations.

However, the only published study to date that explicitly focuses on the characteristics of the Australian coach training industry is Grant and O'Hara (2006) who explored the characteristics of the Australian life coach training industry. Grant and O'Hara (2006) recommended that Australian life coaching schools become Registered Training Organisations, that students check the claimed accreditations, academic affiliations of schools, and validity of qualifications and credentialing. They also recommended that schools make explicit the distinctions and boundaries between mental health treatment and life coaching. The present paper extends such past research and presents the results of a study providing examining the Australian executive coach training industry.

Coach training: An unregulated educational industry

All Australian coach training organisations operate within an almost completely unregulated commercial market. Any organisation can offer coach education and training in any area they like, be it executive coaching, life coaching, business coaching, relationship coaching, financial coaching, Attention Deficit Disorder coaching or even sex coaching. Beyond the most basic Australian common law consumer protection rights, the coach training industry is only regulated by the market forces that drive the process of attracting students. The same can be said for those organisations offering coach franchises, there are no restrictions on the parameters or process for offering coach franchise opportunities. Further, no qualifications are required to teach others how to act as human and organisational change agents. Anyone can teach coaching!

Distinguishing between qualifications, certifications, and accreditations

As Grant and O'Hara (2006) note, coach training organisations offer a wide variety of titles and qualifications. Although holding different meanings, terms such as 'qualification', 'certification', and 'accreditation' are interchangeably used in the marketing of coach training. This lack of clarity does not help potential students evaluate the importance of such awards and make well-informed decisions when choosing a coach training organisation.

A *qualification* is a formal award 'issued by a relevant approved body in recognition that a person has achieved learning outcomes relevant to identified individual, professional, industry or community needs' (Australian Qualifications Framework, 2002 p.v). In Australia, each State or Territory has the legal responsibility for authorising a qualification. Registered Training Organisations (RTO) bodies such as a public or private universities are authorised under statute (Australian Qualifications Framework, 2002) to deliver training and conduct assessments, and to then issue nationally recognised qualifications to students in strict accordance with the Australian Qualifications Framework (Australian Government Department of Education Science and Training, 2006).

Equivalent to trade certificates, Certificates I to IV, the Diploma and the Advanced Diploma are non-university vocational qualifications below bachelor degree level and are formally recognised within the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). A Certifi-

cate IV is generally held to be the equivalent of six to nine months of a bachelor degree, with an Advanced Diploma being approximately equivalent to one to two years of a bachelor degree (Australian Qualifications Framework, 2002). In Australia training for these non-university awards is conducted by Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges, adult and community education centres, and private RTOs. Private RTOs vary in size from home-based one-person business to large corporations.

Where there is thoroughness associated with the standardised assessment necessary for the award of a qualification, a *certification* is merely a formal acknowledgement of successful achievement of a defined set of outcomes (Australian Government Department of Education Science and Training, 2006). There have been concerns that the large number of 'coaching certifications' on offer has significantly undermined the currency of the term 'certification', and that rather than assuring training standards or protecting the public from charlatans, commercial coaching certifications are chiefly a selling tool and income generator for commercial coaching schools (for an informed discussion of these issues see Carr, 2005).

The term *accreditation* refers to the official recognition of a course by a requisite body or organisation. Thus, the worth of any accreditation is dependant on the real authority of the accrediting body. In general accreditation involves meeting a set of standards. These standards normally include minimum teacher or trainer qualifications, and specific levels of rigour in the teaching and assessment process itself. Formal qualifications within Australia are accredited by State or Territory bodies in accordance with the laws governing state and territory Registering Course Accrediting Bodies (Australian Government Department of Education Science and Training, 2006). However, many coach training organisations have established their own accreditation bodies, and are thus fundamentally self-accredited (Carr, 2005).

Mental illness and duty of care

Coaching is aimed at individuals who do not have significant levels of psychological distress. However, some individuals may seek coaching as a socially-acceptable form of therapy. Coaching is not a substitute for clinical intervention, even though it may be perceived as a more socially acceptable intervention than therapy (Cavanagh, 2005). Research in the life coaching arena has found that between one in five (Spence & Grant, 2004) and one in two (Green et al., 2006) individuals that seek life coaching have clinically significant levels of mental distress.

In relation to executive coaching, Berglas (2002) has argued that a distinction must be made between those clients who are 'problem executives' that can be coached to be more effective and 'executives with a problem' that are more appropriately served by a therapeutic relationship (Berglas, 2002, p.88). Coaching an executive who requires therapeutic support can not only be hazardous for the individual but also the organisation if the coach does not have the depth of psychological or medical training to deal with such issues (Cavanagh, 2005; Jarvis, 2003).

In light of these issues an important part of any coach training programme should be the clear distinction between coaching and therapy or counselling. To be truly ethical and professional, coach training programmes should teach students how to identify and make appropriate treatment referrals for mental health problems. Coach training organisations have a clear duty of care to offer meaningful qualifications, certifications and accreditations and to explicitly address issues of mental health in their marketing materials (Auerbach, 2001; Berglas, 2002; Grant, & O'Hara, 2006).

Summary of aims of the study

The focus of this study was on Australian executive coach training organisations. In particular the objectives of this study were:

- To identify how many Australian organisations offer executive coach training and business coach training and

to identify the types of qualifications, certifications and accreditations offered.
- To provide an overview of the advertised content, assessment processes, cost and duration of courses by which people can be trained as executive and business coaches.
- To identify how the promotional material of coach training organisations deals with the relationship between coaching, mental health and therapy.
- To explore the marketing claims and associated strategies used by these coach training schools in relation to the course, the organisation and the owners and teachers.
- To explore the qualifications of the owners and teachers of the coach training organisations.

Method

Over a period of four months, from December, 2006, until March, 2007, information about Australian executive coach training organisations was downloaded from the internet. There is a very high level of internet use in the coaching industry (Williams & Thomas, 2004) so the internet is a useful and accessible research platform from which to conduct research into Australian executive coach training organisations.

In keeping with previous work on Australian life coaching schools and in recognition of its reputation as a comprehensive search engine and its effectiveness in ranking websites in order of relevance (Infopeople, 2006; Search Thingy, 2006; UC Berkeley Library, 2006), the search engine Google was used. The key search words were 'executive coaching', 'business coaching' and 'training' and the search was restricted to Australian organisations only.

The search yielded in excess of 390,000 possible matches, the first 20,000 matches of website references were analysed and the sample was restricted to those sites who offered training to become an executive or business coach, and those organisations who offered coaching business franchises. To ensure that this information was as inclusive as possible this information was cross-referenced with a search of the International Coach Federation (www.coachfederation.org) and National (Australian) Training Information Service (www.ntis.gov.au) websites. This process resulted in the identification of a total of 18 Australian executive and business coaching training organisations and coach franchise. On further investigation two of these organisations were excluded from the study as the type of training that they offered was in house or private coach training leaving a total of 16 organisations.

To analyse the information, a process of emergent thematic coding was undertaken. The information from each school's website was categorised and coded. The emergence of broad categories and themes related to the aims of the study were documented, leading to the identification of a group of core categories and a final process of detailed categorisation and comparison between schools.

Results

This section provides the analysis of the information obtained from the internet search. Firstly, it details the longevity of the coach training organisation and the type of coach training being offered by the executive coach training organisation identified through the search. Secondly, it provides information on the qualifications and accreditations being offered by Australian executive coach training organisations and presents further information in relation to course cost, duration and assessment procedures. We report information about the marketing claims of the organisations and the qualifications of training organisations' owners and teaching staff. Information is also provided in relation to how the coaching schools deal with mental health issues. Finally, results are detailed and then the information obtained in this study is compared with the information obtained in the previous Australian life coaching schools study.

Organisation longevity

Of the 16 organisations identified in this study, 12 cited the year the organisation had been founded. The average length of time these organisations claimed to have been in existence was 6.75 years, with the earliest claiming to have been founded in 1997.

The different types of coach training on offer

More than half the schools (69 per cent) that were analysed for this study offered more than one type of coach training. Of the 16 organisations identified, five training organisations (31 per cent) offered three different types of coach training offered training in executive coaching, business coaching and life coaching. Six of the training organisations (38 per cent) offered two types of coach training, executive coaching and life coaching, and a further five training organisations (31 per cent) offered executive, business or general (non-specified) coach training.

In our search we also found three further training organisations (19 per cent) who offered coach franchises but did not offer public executive coach training courses. In addition one coach training organisation from the above 16 offered executive, business, and life coach training in addition to offering a coach franchise.

The legitimacy of qualifications, certifications and accreditations

The coach training organisations included in this study used three ways to establish the credibility and legitimacy of their courses: (a) accreditation through the Australian Government Vocational Training Framework (Australian Qualifications Framework, 2002); (b) accreditation by the International Coach Federation (ICF); and (c) self-accreditation or accreditations through a range of miscellaneous organisations. Of the 16 executive, business and coaching franchises included in this study, nine stated in their promotional materials that their courses were accredited by an external accrediting body.

The most common accrediting body was either the ICF or a relevant Government body. Four training organisation stated that they offered an ICF Accredited Coaching Training Programme, and a further four training organisations stated that they offered a course that was within the framework provided by the Australian Qualifications Framework and National Training Information Service, which allows for RTOs to provide recognised qualifications that are accredited by Australian jurisdictional Government training organisations. One training organisation had obtained accreditation from both the ICF and the relevant Government agency, a further training organisation stated that it was in the process of becoming an ICF accredited coach-training organisation.

Of the remaining coaching organisations, three offered coach franchises and did not include any details about their training or support services, and a further four coaching organisations did not detail any affiliations with accrediting bodies.

Course cost, duration and assessment

In relation to the cost of the coach training courses offered, five organisations did not detail the costs involved in undertaking their courses on their web sites. Of those who did give this information, the cost of courses varied considerably ranging from AUS$3245 for a certificate IV of Life Coaching that provided for speciality executive and business coaching streams to AUS$9990 for an executive coaching course that provided for three levels of self accredited training with an organisation who had not yet obtained accredited from a recognised body and AUS$14,795 for a Diploma in Life Coaching with an executive coaching stream available through a coaching organisation that was a registered training organisation.

Financial information about the coaching organisations that offered coach franchises was very limited. One organisation that did provide some information on the financial cost of becoming involved in

the coach franchise, detailed that it would involve a 'Fixed monthly royalty fee plus five per cent of your gross revenue'.

The quality of information publicly available about the length of courses varied considerably, with the 10 of the 16 organisations (53 per cent) providing no clear information on how long it could be expected that their courses would take to complete. The other six organisations provided information in relation to their length of their courses in hours, total number of days, weeks or months. The time frame for completion of these courses ranged from 16 days to 12 months.

In relation to assessment processes, six organisations did not provide any information on the assessment procedures for students completing the course. Of the remaining seven organisations offering coach training, a variety of assessment processes were detailed including practical components, evidence of coaching skills, written assignments, exams, workshop attendance and supervision.

Marketing claims

In relation to marketing claims; the information obtained from the school's website was found to fall into four main categories: (a) marketing claims about the school; (b) marketing claims about the course; (c) marketing claims about the teachers or owners; and (d) general marketing claims.

Marketing claims about the training organisation. Marketing claims about the training organisation fell into four key themes: (a) longevity; (b) being the best trainers; (c) reputation particularly in relation to global standing; and (d) setting the standard. Table 1 provides a number of quotes taken from the websites in relation to these claims.

Marketing claims about the course. In relation to marketing claims about the course offered by the school four key themes emerged: (a) comprehensiveness; (b) internationally/nationally recognised credentials; (c) price effective; and (d) flexible. Table 2 provides an overview of the types of claims made in relation to the course.

Marketing claims about the teachers or owners. A number of claims were made regarding the teachers or owners of the coaching schools included in this study. Table 3 provides an overview of the types of claims that were made in relation to the key personal involved in the coach training organisation. These can be incorporated into three key themes; claims about: (a) academic affiliations; (b) personal charisma; (c) relevant experience; and (d) relevant philosophies.

General marketing claims. A number of categories of general marketing claims were delineated. These can be characterised into four themes: (a) work success and earning potential; (b) building a better lifestyle; (c) profession of coaching and qualifications; and (d) claims in relation to franchise opportunities. Tables 4 and 5 provide examples of quotes that characterise these themes.

Trainers' qualifications

The information detailed on the websites in relation to the actual academic qualifications of the trainers or owners of the coaching organisations was collected and analysed. Of the 16 coaching organisations included in the study, four provided no information in relation to the academic qualifications of the trainers or owners, seven of the coaching organisations provided comprehensive details of the academic qualifications of the trainers or owners and a further five organisations provided some limited information in relation to some of the academic qualifications of some of the staff. It appears that some of the above coach trainers had no academic qualifications whatsoever.

In relation to the relevance of the academic qualifications that were detailed, the information that was available from the coaching organisations' websites was analysed in regard to three categories, those

Table 1: Marketing claims about the coach training organisations.

Type of claim about the organisation	Example of claim about the training organisation
Longevity	● 'Established in 1999 as a centre of excellence for executive coaching. Since that time we have trained over 1100 coaches and have become known as one of Australia's most respected coaching and coach training organisations.' ● 'XXX emerged as an overnight success in 1993 when XXX began conducting seminars and workshops…' ● 'We're happy to answer any questions you have about the industry we pioneered and continue to develop'. ● 'XXX offers one of the world's leading coach training curriculum's, with thousands of coaches having gone through our programmes across Australia and New Zealand.'
Best school	● 'Our school is the first Australian based school to gain ICF accreditation and we are very proud of our achievement.' ● 'We intend to be the leader provider of coach training in the world.' ● 'XXX is a school of the future, where adults learn in a global community with a high degree of flexibility, while sharing with and supporting each other.' ● 'XXX is Australia's leading workplace and business coaching organisation.'
Reputation/ Global recognition	● 'With over 3500 students from over a dozen countries going through our programmes since 1998, XXX is a truly global coaching organisation.' ● 'We have trained more coaches in Australia in the last four years than any other coach training company and are now expanding into other regions.' ● 'Since 1998 we have trained thousands of personal, business and executive coaches across Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, the USA and Europe. These coaches help thousands of executives, managers, professionals and business owners every year to be more effective in their career and their lives.' ● 'The XXX clients' include some of the region's best known organisations.' ● 'XXX is Australia's leading provider of accredited life coach training and coaching services, is award-winning, and is dedicated to the provision of thorough and comprehensive life and executive coaching training courses.' ● 'Run by experts in the fields of life coaching, psychology and human behaviour, our nationally accredited courses are renowned for their advanced and valuable content.' ● 'Dedicated to the provision of excellence in service, advanced training and outstanding student support, XXX is considered the market leader throughout Australia in coach training.' ● 'Since then thousands of coaches across Australia, New Zealand and South-East Asia have become some of the over 30,000 coaches to be trained in the XXX and Corporate XXX programmes.'
Setting the standard	● 'Why the XXX sets the standard that others aspire to' ● 'Welcome to the XXX…setting the standard for coaching worldwide' ● 'Coaching is here to stay. The XXX has established the benchmarks. It will continue to be the nation's premier life coaching body at the forefront of personal development.' ● 'At XXX Coaching we offer you the answers and an opportunity to experience an accredited, structured and profoundly effective programme for human development.'

Table 2: Marketing claims about the course.

Type of claim about the course	Example of claim about the course
Comprehensiveness	● 'Our suite of individual coaching training programmes provides everything yo need to become a professional coach, whether you are interested in personal, business or executive coaching.' ● 'This programme covers nine units and is the most complete and comprehensive coaching programme in Australia.' ● 'XXX courses are designed to be extremely thorough without being difficult or complex. XXX courses have more than double the educational content of courses offered by other coaching educators' ● 'The XXX coach accreditation programme is based on experiential learning and is rigorous and highly practical.' ● 'Developed in Australia by XXX the courses have been specifically designed to meet the needs and demands of professionals and business leaders in the workplace.' ● 'The most complete workplace and business coaching qualifications.' ● 'XXX is committed to not just providing coaching skills but also to provide some of the most complete programmes that will allow coaches to become successful in their chosen field.'
Internationally/ Nationally recognised credentials	● 'XXX courses are developed by highly qualified and experienced professionals to world recognised standards' ● 'The training programmes are rigorous and qualifications internationally recognised.' ● 'Your meta-coach qualification is recognised worldwide. You'll hold the most highly regarded and sought after accreditation in your field.' ● 'News Flash... you now have the opportunity to become a leading coach in your workplace and business with Australia's first government accredited, Certificate IV and Diploma of Workplace and Business coaching.'
Price effective	● 'Simply put our qualification is the most competitively priced coaching qualification available in Australia.' ● 'Achieve your aspirations in coaching for only 20 per cent to 50 per cent of the investment of other providers.' ● 'The XXX training is one of the most valuable courses you can take for a better future...the choice is yours and the course fees are modest compared with other professional training courses.'
Flexible	● 'Our life coach training programmes are designed to fit your lifestyle. We have a range of international class times to choose from – all supported by an online learning environment that enables you to complete your education from anywhere you have access to a phone and a computer.'

Table 3: Marketing claims about the trainers and owners.

Type of claim about teachers or owners	Example of claim about the teachers or owners
Claim to academic credibility	● 'XXX educators maintain the highest academic and experiential standard of any coaching educator in Australia – safeguarding you from professional misadventure and maximising your understanding.' ● 'As an adjunct lecturer at XXX University I co-created a coaching certificate programme.'
Personal charisma of teachers	● 'XXX is a developer, researcher, coach, trainer and prolific author…XXX brings playfulness and humour to training and is renowned for his passion and integrity.' ● 'XXX is an inspiring international master coach, speaker, author, trainer and founding CEO of XXX, one of the fastest growing coaching organisations in the world. XXX passion for growth and development, her insightful communication and her persistent belief in her clients potential, make her an inspiring coach and ambassador for learning.' ● 'Driving the growth and development of the XXX system is its charismatic founder and best selling author…' ● 'Knowledgeable, motivated, interesting, funny, entertaining presenters who only preach what they have practiced. The presenters are all successful business people and more importantly, happy, well-balanced people who really want to share their strategies of success with YOU.'
Relevant experience	● 'XXX has authored and published more than 30 books to date.' ● 'Best selling author and designer of a number of multi-award-winning business tools that are now being used by more than 60,000 companies around the world.' ● 'An international consultant and trainer, XX has worked or consulted for large public companies in three continents. XX has lectured in tertiary institutions, conducted training programmes for small and large businesses and held a variety of senior management positions.' ● 'Faculty members are full-time coaches, so you will be learning from professionals who coach every day. Our faculty members are experts in understanding what motivates, inspires, influences and develops them.' ● 'It is designed and presented by experienced educators with a strong background in curriculum design and delivery as well as experience in coaching hundreds of individuals and teams across the country.'
Relevant philosophies	● 'Our coaches and trainers are at the forefront of human development. They are committed to their own growth and development and impassioned about your self-development and self actualisation.' ● 'XXX is a team of committed, positive and successful people who are always striving to be balanced, integral and honest.'

Table 4: General marketing claims.

Type of claim	Example of general marketing claim
Work success/ Earning potential	● 'As an accredited life or executive coach trained with XXX your life or executive coaching success is assured.' ● 'Being an executive coach is a perfect way to transition from the workplace into your own business.' ● 'We urgently need new network members who wish to establish their own coaching business. We will train you and provide you with the software and templates so that you can easily provide business coaching and business planning services to the market. We will train you, give you proven systems and even send you leads.' ● 'Our business coaches are well trained and add real value to their clients' businesses, but they also enjoy a great lifestyle, whilst building their own business into an asset.' ● 'Business coaches on average charge $150 to $500, although the buoyant market is driving prices up and some coaches are earning more. One well-known business coach earns $5,000 per hour.' ● 'Why wait? This opportunity is on the tipping point of massive return so get in now whilst the returns are at their peak.' ● 'We find an average of 90 per cent of our students are doing formal structured coaching within three months of beginning their training.'
Building a lifestyle	● 'Learn more about how to become successful, wealthy, healthy and happy.' ● 'Imagine being a business coach with a proven programme and working the hours that you choose, working from your own home office and delivering coaching by telephone or in person. As a XXX coach you can do this – this lifestyle can be yours.' ● 'Many young coaches are living the lives of retired doctors who move to Queensland and see clients on a referral basis whilst working limited hours.' ● 'At last there is an opportunity for you to utilise your skills, expertise, talents and enthusiasm to create a lifestyle you have always wanted.'
Profession of coaching and qualifications	● 'Become a coach and train as a professional coach anywhere in the world.' 'Coaching is not another how to course. It is a powerful alliance between two people that produces exceptional results.'

Table 5: Example of claims made about coaching franchise opportunities.

Type of claim	Example of franchise marketing claim
Franchise opportunities	● 'Our business is booming and we're seriously looking for people ready to find out more about how becoming a member of XXX business coaching team is going to be the best decision you've ever made.' ● 'Smart people choose to go with the winners. Even smarter people choose franchises that not only give them every chance of surviving the first few years in business but ones that maximise their chances of succeeding through having proven systems to support them every step along the way.' ● 'If you are looking for a white collar business opportunity to build yourself a lifestyle, an income, a way to take control of your life and to always get great personal satisfaction…then you've just found the world's best team… now its about finding out if you've got what it takes to really enjoy and thrive in this amazing business opportunity.' ● 'This is a secure, proven, result driven new business category (that's guaranteed)… Save yourself now from an exhausting career climbing the corporate ladder. Be happier, healthier and make more money helping others. There is only now.' ● 'XXX has been internationally franchised since 1997 and currently has hundreds of franchisees operating in 19 countries.'

qualifications that were directly relevant to executive and business coach training, such as psychology, education, applied science, arts, those classified as somewhat relevant included business, law, management, human resources, economic and commerce and marketing qualifications, and those qualifications not considered to be relevant included qualifications veterinary science, homeopathies, dentistry and botanical medicine. Figure 1 provides a diagrammatic representation of this analysis. Table 6 provides information in relation to the qualifications provided by the organisations on the internet.

Mental health issues

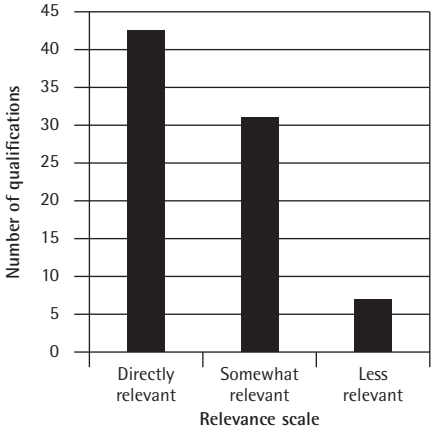
In relation to how the organisations in this study dealt with mental health issues, three questions were of interest; (a) does the coach training organisation make a distinction between coaching and therapy or counselling; (b) does the coach training organisation detail the manner in which their course will equip students to recognise and appropriately deal with mental health issues, and (c) does the coach training organisation claim that coaching can deal with issues more appropriately dealt with by therapy or counselling? Information about organisations that only offered a coach franchise was not included in the analysis.

Four categories were used in analysing this information. The first category applied to those schools who made a very clear distinction between mental health issues and coaching (that is, who explicitly detailed the differences between coaching and therapy or counselling). The second category applied to those schools who provided a somewhat clear distinction (that is who mentioned that coaching was different from therapy or counselling). The third applied to those schools who did not address or mention mental health issues at all, and the fourth applied to those schools who claimed that coaching could be used to treat mental health issues, and thus blurred the boundaries between mental health treatment and coaching practice.

Table 6: Details of academic qualifications.

Area of qualification	Number
Directly relevant	
Adult education	2
Education	13
Arts	11
Science (including psychology)	7
PhD	4
Cert IV in workplace training	5
Somewhat relevant	
Communication/Marketing/Management	5
Human Resources	3
Business	13
Law	2
Public Health	1
Philosophy	1
Economics/Commerce	6
Less relevant	
Certificate IV in fitness	3
Vet Science	1
Botanical medicine	1
Homeopathy	1
Dentistry	1

Figure 1: Relevance of academic qualifications of owners/teachers.



Eleven of the organisations did not articulate a distinction between mental health issues and coaching at all, and two organisations provided a somewhat clear distinction.

Examples of those coach-training organisations that provided a somewhat clear distinction between mental health issues and coaching are given below:

- 'Counsellors are in the business of recovery, whereas coaches are in the business of development.'
- 'Just some of the things you will learn… how to know the difference between coaching, therapy and counselling.'

Comparison with information obtained in previous life coaching study

The information obtained in this study was compared to the information obtained in the previous Grant and O'Hara (2006) study which examined the characteristics of Australian life coach training organisations. This information was compared in relation to: (a) accreditation; (b) course cost and duration; (c) marketing claims; and (d) mental health issues.

Accreditation: The results indicate that, in relation to course accreditation, life coach training organisation are more likely to have obtained accreditation from either the ICF or a relevant Government agency under the Australian Qualifications Framework than executive coach training organisations (21.4 per cent of life coaching schools compared with 43.8 per cent of executive coach training organisations had obtained accreditation for the courses offered by their organisation). It is also worth noting that the three of the coach training organisations having obtained accreditation from a Government agency as a Registered Training Organisation in the category of life coaching, also used this training category to offer executive coach training and/or business coach training and it was not clear from the information presented by these organisation if they had in fact been granted approval to offer Government accredited executive coach training programme.

Course cost and duration: The information collected in relation to the course cost and duration was highly similar for those coaching organisations offering life coach training those who also offered executive coach training.

Marketing claims: Information was analysed for both the present study and the previous Grant and O'Hara (2006) study in relation to marketing claims regarding the organisation, the course, the teachers/owners and general marketing claims. Varying themes arose from the information obtained from the coaching schools websites. The nature of these themes was compared and analysed and it would appear that the marketing of executive coach training organisations and coach franchise organisations have some similar themes and as well as some different emphasis. In relation to marketing claims regarding the organisation, the themes were very similar, themes of 'longevity', 'best school' and 'reputation' (particularly in relation to global recognition) were apparent for all coach training organisations.

There appeared to be a greater emphasis on executive coach training organisations 'setting the standard' for other schools to aspire to, whereas life coaching schools studies by Grant and O'Hara (2006) appeared to promote 'best practice' as an important mark of difference. In relation to marketing claims about the course both the present study and the Grant and O'Hara (2006) study revealed themes in regard to the 'comprehensiveness of the course' offered and the gaining of 'recognised credentials'. Executive and business coaching organisations appeared to place a greater emphasis on promoting the 'price effectiveness' of the course being offered compared to others in the market place and this did not seem to be as apparent in information pertaining to life coaching schools.

In relation to marketing claims about the owners, teachers and trainers, both life and executive coach training organisations examined in the present study made claims

about the academic qualifications of the teachers/owners, their personal charisma and their relevant experience. Executive, business and coaching franchise organisations seemed to place a greater promotional emphasis on the personal philosophies of the owner. There appeared to be a greater emphasis on marketing claims in relation to 'earning potential' made by life coaching schools compared to executive coaching and coaching franchise organisations, who appeared to place more emphasis on the 'success' of the profession more generally. Executive coaching and coaching franchise organisations also seemed to place a greater emphasis on the 'lifestyle' associated with their type of coaching rather than the more general benefits associated with a growing 'profession'.

Mental health issues: The information collected in relation to mental health issues show a similar trend: the majority of both executive coach training organisations (84.6 per cent) and life coach training organisations (64.3 per cent) do not provide information on the delineation of therapy and counselling and coaching. A small number of both executive coach training organisations and life coach training organisations provide a somewhat clear distinction, 15.4 per cent and 28.6 per cent respectively in relation to mental health issues. It appears that, in compared to the life coach training organisations studied in the Grant and O'Hara (2006) research, the executive coach training organisations in the present study fare slightly better than their life coaching counterparts with little evidence of a blurring of the distinction between therapy and coaching being found on the information collected.

Discussion

The present study into Australian executive coach training organisations, builds on and extends past work which examined the characteristics of Australian life coach training organisations (Grant & O'Hara, 2006). In the present study, 16 Australian executive coach-training organisations were identified. More than half the schools examined offered more than one type of coach training, and we identified four organisations who offered a coaching franchise. Overall, a comparative analysis of the information obtained in this study and the Grant and O'Hara (2006) Australian life coach training organisations study shows similar trends in relation to accreditation issues, course cost and duration, marketing claims.

The most common accrediting bodies that coaching organisations utilised to add legitimacy to their qualifications was either the ICF or the Australian Government Vocational Training Framework. The information made available by these organisations about course cost, course duration and assessment processes varied considerably. The cost of courses ranged from AUS$3245 to AUS$14,795 thus the actual costs of these courses varied greatly, and it is not clear what students actually get for their money. Neither is it clear which course offers greater value, or which 'qualification', 'certification' or 'accreditation' carries the most cache. For example, does a Government accredited Certificate IV in Life Coaching (which is ostensibly equivalent to a one-semester unit of study in an undergraduate degree) taught by a novice coach trainer or unqualified person, have more real value than a self-accredited Master Coach 'certification' taught by a highly experienced and respected coach who has relevant postgraduate business or psychological qualifications?

Of some concern was the great variation in the information about the owners' and trainers' qualifications. Of some additional concern was the finding that some coach trainers had no qualifications at all. The question that then arises is, how can someone with no qualifications at all provide coach education and training and meaningfully 'certify' others?

However, it must be emphasised that from the information that was provided, the majority of trainers held some qualification,

and the majority of qualifications that were held by coach trainers were directly relevant to the field of coaching. The high percentage of coach trainers who held relevant degrees is reassuring. This finding, coupled with the fact that the average age of these organisations was over six years and eight months, and at the time of writing eight of these had been in existence for over five years, may indicate that the executive coach training industry is maturing and becoming increasingly professionalised.

As regards mental health issues: Over the past five years there has been an increasingly sophisticated level of debate in the coaching literature about the nuanced differences and similarities between counselling and coaching (Bluckert, 2005; Claps et al., 2005; McKelley & Rochlen, 2007). So it was rather disappointing to find over-simplistic statements such as 'counsellors are in the business of recovery, whereas coaches are in the business of development'. Such crass caricatures of the differences between counselling and coaching are somewhat out of date with contemporary research and theory recognising that the boundaries between counselling and coaching (Berglas, 2002) and clinical and non-clinical issues are somewhat blurred (see, for example, Berglas, 2002; Grant, 2007; Keyes, 2003; Sheldon, 2004).

However, it appears that Australian executive coach training organisations do make somewhat better distinctions between counselling and coaching than Australian life coach training organisations (see Grant & O'Hara, 2006, for a discussion of this issue). This difference may be reflective of different student populations in that executive coach training may be more likely to attract professionals such as human resource management and organisational development professionals, and these individuals may have an existing awareness of health and safety issues (including mental health issues) that may be of relevance in the workplace.

Final observations and recommendations

To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first formal study into the characteristics of the Australian executive coach training industry, and as such provides a useful benchmark from which to conduct future research. In light of these findings it may be useful to make a number of observations and recommendations.

Firstly, it appears that the executive coach and business coach training industry in Australia is small but becoming mature. Secondly, the longevity of many of these organisation suggests that executive coaching has moved well beyond being a fad. Thirdly, organisational longevity may not necessarily be associated with organisational maturity. Despite the longevity of some of these organisations some of the promotional claims are more suited to late night television infomercials than claims representative of a genuine profession.

We recommend that, in order to further professionalise and develop the Australian executive coach and business coach training industry, all coach trainers should be properly qualified, issues related to identification of mental illness be incorporated into executive coach training, and organisations offering coach franchising provide clear and unambiguous information to prospective clients. Finally, we suggest that coach training organisations temper their use of hyperbolic claims. Given that one hallmark of a profession is professional behaviour, the coaching industry would do well to advance its claims to professional status by communicating the advantages of specific approaches to coach training in a moderate and genuinely professional fashion.

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Book Reviews

Happier: Learn the secrets to daily joy and lasting fulfilment
T. Ben-Shahar
New York: McGraw Hill, 2007.
Paperback (192 pp). ISBN: 978-0-07149-239-3

Reviewed by Suzy Green

Happiness is a hot topic in the scientific field of psychology, and is one of the core constructs of the positive psychology movement. Parallelling this is a high level of interest from the general population in the notion of happiness. Each trip to the bookstore leads to the identification of two, three, four or more books that are aimed at teaching us how to be happy in life or at work. Unfortunately, much of this material currently falls within the realm of 'pop psychology'.

While there are an abundance of happiness books on the self-help shelves there are few stand-outs based on current scientific knowledge. In my opinion, these include Gilbert's *Stumbling on Happiness*, Haidt's *Happiness Hypothesis* and as a general introductory text on positive psychology, one can't go past Peterson's *Primer in Positive Psychology*. All of these authors share strong academic standing and the ability to write for the everyday reader. The latest offering in this line is *Happier* by Tal Ben-Shahar. Ben-Shahar has gained recognition with significant media coverage of the most popular course at Harvard which Ben-Shahar developed and taught.

In *Happier*, Ben-Shahar has drawn upon the research used in his course to create a user-friendly book that is accessible to both students of positive psychology, and to a wider audience within the general population. This has been executed without any serious dumbing down of the empirical evidence base. The book provides both a general introduction to positive psychology and access to current research, at least up to the date of publication. Ben-Shahar has also taken a very personal approach to this book. The preface provides the reader with an introduction to how the author's own personal journey has provided him with a foundation to understanding happiness and has led him to be well-known within the Positive Psychology movement. He provides many examples of how his own life experiences have helped him to understand what makes him happy.

Ben Shahar's *Happier* is very well-written and gives a thorough overview of the key aspects of what research has uncovered on this slippery topic. For a psychologist or coach this text provides a very useful introduction and a broad overview on a topic that many clients pursue through therapy or coaching, that is wanting 'to be happier'.

Whilst there has been much debate and controversy over exactly what happiness is, Ben-Shahar has intelligently and succinctly outlined the nature of happiness from a scientific perspective utilising personal references to portray his messages. The author's outlined objectives are clearly identified as wanting to 'raise awareness of the general principles underlying a happy and fulfiling life'. Ben-Shahar also encourages the reader early on in the text to take 'time-in' to reflect personally on the material at a deeper level. He suggests the book be utilised as a workbook for it 'to have a real impact on your life.'

The book is divided into three sections. The first section provides a discussion of what happiness is and the essential components of a happy life. The second section focuses on practical applications aimed at increasing happiness and provides a lens to view happiness in education, in the work-

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place and in relationships. The third and final section provides 'Meditations' with further exercises and more of Ben-Shahar's personal reflections on the nature of happiness and its place in our lives.

Ben-Shahar's description of happiness from a scientific perspective is thorough and creates a basis for understanding the role of meaning and purpose to happiness. He clearly explains how the pursuit of pleasure or purpose alone will not bring enduring happiness, rather it is the integration of both into our lives that is essential.

Ben-Shahar initially differentiates three archetypal figures when it comes to pursuing happiness: (1) the hedonist; (2) the rat racer; and (3) the nihilist. The hedonist's primary aim is to seek pleasure and avoid pain, to live for the moment with little regard for the future. The rat racer suffers now for the purpose of an anticipated gain in the future. The nihilist is one who has lost the lust for life and neither enjoys the present moment nor has any hope for happiness in the future. Ben-Shahar posits that there is also the happiness archetype. This is someone who engages in activities that bring enjoyment in the present as well as the future. He emphasises that these archetypes are not mutually exclusive.

From the perspective of the coach, the chapter on goal setting is one that is rewarding reading. It provides a thorough outline of the research on goals, success and happiness. Ben-Shahar highlights how goals are essential to a happy life. Sheldon and Elliot's (1999) work on self-concordant goals is covered in detail and provides the reader with a clear understanding of the 'want to' versus the 'have to' of goal setting and goal pursuit, and suggests the reader have a larger ratio of the former rather than the latter for a happy life.

The second and third sections of the book provide plenty of practical examples of positive psychology in action with the aim of increasing happiness. Ben-Shahar provides snapshots of research findings and suggestions for bringing this research to life for the reader. There is something for everyone! The suggestions range from meditation and benevolence to savouring and slowing down the pace of life.

The chapter on happiness in the workplace is a very useful section for those coaches working in the corporate sector. For example, Ben-Shahar highlights a fascinating piece of research by Wrzesniewski and her colleagues (1997) on viewing work as: (1) a job, with a focus on financial rewards; (2) a career, with a focus on professional advancement; or (3) a calling, with a focus on enjoyment of fulfiling, socially useful work. The research details the consequences of holding each perspective for our well-being. A simple coaching technique that stems from this research is the idea that people may want to rewrite their 'job description' as a 'calling description' to increase meaning and purpose at work. The coverage of this and other research provides some simple coaching strategies to help people craft their work to create greater meaning, pleasure and overall happiness.

This book covers an enormous amount of ground on the theory and research of happiness and positive psychology. My only criticism is that while Ben-Shahar's approach to this book provides a breadth of information to the reader, I was aware that there was a depth of accompanying knowledge that was omitted. However, the detailed references allow the reader to explore further if they so desire. I would assume the decision to go for breadth over depth was due to a need to make this body of work accessible to a wide readership.

As a researcher and teacher of positive psychology, I was suitably impressed with the content of this text and would strongly encourage students of my own class to read it as a support to my own personal syllabus. I would similarly encourage this text to be utilised as a personal workbook as suggested. Whether we work as a psychologist or coach, it is through our own personal experiences and understandings of theory and intervention that we can convey a sense of confi-

dence in offering interpretations and suggestions for strategies for our clients.

My own personal suggestion is that one read this book once from cover to cover and then review the book a second time to identify the sections that contain the most relevant information to the reader. My hope is that this book and others like it will help readers to become sophisticated consumers of scientific research.

There is currently also a strong push for further development in applied positive psychology to combat the criticism that much of the positive psychology literature is written for an academic audience, and does not consider adequately the practical applications of findings. *Happier* does much to rectify this situation with simple strategies that can be applied in daily life. For example, the keeping of a gratitude journal on a weekly basis over the period of a month has been shown to significantly increase levels of happiness (Emmons & McCullough, 2004).

An important benefit of positive psychology is that it lacks the stigma that currently surrounds traditional psychology and psychiatry. Paradoxically, despite increases in material wealth in the Western world, there is much discontent. Current rates of depression in the US are 10 times higher today than they were in the 1960s. Overall, Ben-Shahar's book exemplifies how the psychological scientific study of happiness has a significant contribution to make in helping the general population to flourish. This book provides a kick-start to flourishing and to help us all to be *Happier* in the long run. Happy reading!

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Average to A+: Realising strengths in yourself and others
Alex Linley
CAPP Press, 2008.
Paperback. ISBN: 978-1-90636-603-2

Reviewed by Martin Stairs

The field of Positive Psychology has attracted increasing attention over the past eight years since Martin Seligman's presidential address to the Annual Convention of the APA in Boston, Massachusetts, in August, 1999. Strengths, the focus of this new book and but one part of the positive psychology movement, have until now remained largely buried and often misunderstood. This book aims to change that.

The essence of the strengths approach is very simple. It is about what is right, what is working, and what is strong. Strengths are part of our basic human nature, therefore every person has strengths and deserves respect for their strengths. Our strengths are also, according to the author, our areas of greatest potential. Ultimately strengths are about helping people to create a life where they can spend much more time living in the A+, rather than average, zone.

A clear focus of the book is about moving beyond just academic research and understanding to application. It achieves this balance very well, with sufficient reference to both applied and practitioner research to comfort the academic reader, coupled with a strong focus on tools and approaches for the practitioners amongst us. The first three chapters of the book draw the reader into the world of strengths, focusing on an exploration of what a strength is, where strengths come from, and some of the pitfalls both of underplaying and overplaying strengths. For those unconvinced or sceptical about strengths, comfort is offered through an early section on typical responses to the strengths approach. Through Chapter 2, the reader is introduced to the colourful vocabulary of strengths with labels such as lift, bounceback, and contact which, at first read, I personally found hard to relate to. But this, I now understand, is to be expected given that the language of strengths is new and consequently unfamiliar. I was supported through this challenging section by being taken on a journey of exploration, by way of examples, of how strengths truly come to life when they are differentiated, combined, and maximised. A key aim of this book is explicitly to help build the vocabulary of strengths, to bring strengths out from under the bushel and into the spotlight. This is an aim that, in my view, is clearly met – and not before time.

The middle chapters of the book – Chapters 4 and 5 – are more practical in focus. They are squarely aimed at equipping the reader with some very practical skills to help them bring strengths into their own life, and into the lives of others. These chapters are of most immediate relevance to coaches, in particular chapter four which looks at approaches to identifying strengths in others (i.e. coachees), and in particular CAPP's 'Individual Strengths Assessment', a unique interview-based approach which, in my view, has significant benefits over and above psychometric instruments particularly when one considers the innate complexities of human nature. Beyond the very practical guidance that is offered, these chapters are interspersed with examples of strengths in action – stories about real people, organisational case studies, anecdotes – that bring the concepts and ideas to life very effectively.

Chapters 6 and 7 are devoted to looking at strengths in the contexts of the world of work and the world of parenting/education respectively. Given these two facets, in combination, take up the majority of my waking hours – much like many of us I'm sure – I found this juxtaposition in a single text to be genuinely refreshing. I would add that as an organisational consultant, this is also the first book I have read that truly offers practical solutions to the question

'How, in an organisational context, do you really harness strengths?'. For this reason alone I will be carrying a copy with me for some time to come. In Chapter 8, the reader is encouraged to take a step back to take a wider perspective on why it matters that we all try to live lives that are A+ rather than just average. The author introduces a very interesting idea that leading an A+ life is not just about ourselves, but is about our wider contribution to others, and to society more broadly. As the author notes, none of this is straightforward, and requires effort. Thankfully this book helps the reader on that journey with very useful chapter summaries of 'lessons learned' and 'areas for action'. The final chapter, Chapter 9, is a surprise. Enough said.

At a personal level I found reading the book was a powerful developmental experience. In part I put this down to the way that I, as the reader, was invited to interact with strengths as a concept through reflecting on personal preferences or circumstances, or by undertaking short, simple exercises to put ideas into practice. At the very least this book will serve to deepen our collective understanding of strengths, and will enable the development of a much richer, fuller strengths vocabulary. But I suspect that the author has much more ambitious hopes for this book. This book is not just about building collective understanding. It is a call to action for humanity, in particular to counteract what is termed 'negativity bias', the propensity each of us has to see the worst rather than the best in situations and others. It is, as the book states, 'a clarion call for us to reawaken the best of what each of us has to offer', for the benefit of ourselves, of others, and of humanity in general. It is through this thread that the book holds its greatest strength – as well as its greatest challenge for the reader.

One of the hardest things to judge about any book is its appeal. Some texts are clearly important but bland, inaccessible, or too academic. Others are very readable, but lack substance. In his authorship of this text, Alex Linley has got the balance near perfect and I will be recommending it in many spheres, starting with the most important people in my life. The book is both important and accessible. It has substance, having evolved out of strong academic foundations, yet is very readable. More than that it is inspiring, clearly written by the hand of someone who is passionate – genuinely passionate – about the strengths movement and what it can offer. The focus of the text, in common with the work of CAPP, is broad, touching on subjects as wide ranging as evolutionary biology, philosophy and psychology. It is as relevant to employers and employees as it is to educators and students. It is also a book for parents. In fact, it is a book for anyone who wants to cultivate more positive relationships with the people they know, or have yet to meet. In this sense it has relevance for us all to a greater or lesser extent. In my experience it is rare to find such richness in a single text. It is a book about history and the past. It is a book about hope and the future. Most of all it is a book about humanity and human nature, and that should interest is all. Average or A+? I give it A++.

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The Special Group in Coaching Psychology

We are pleased to present further details of our 2008 Event Programme. These events will offer opportunities for further training and development in topics which have been carefully selected to complement coaching psychology. We really look forward to seeing you at one or more events.

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- **It is What you Say and How you Say it**
- **Boundaries and Professional Practice**
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THE SPECIAL GROUP IN COACHING PSYCHOLOGY

It's what you say and how you say it – Understanding the role of feedback in coaching

Facilitators: Dr. Almuth McDowall and Dr. Lynn Millward Purvis

A one-day Masterclass to be held at the
BPS London Office, Tabernacle Street, London.
Thursday, 15th May 2008, 10.00am to 4.30pm
(Registration from 9.30am)

This interactive Masterclass will encourage practitioners to take a reflective approach to their own feedback practice. This will be achieved by considering prevalent models in the light of up-to-date research evidence from diverse disciplines, such as performance appraisal, education, multi-source feedback, as well as, coaching practice itself. Building on this foundation, delegates will be encouraged to recognise, and where necessary adapt, their own feedback style, by working through a series of case studies and practical exercises.

In the last part, the 'feed forward first, feedback later' model will be used, proposed by Kluger and Nir, as a basis for discussion and developing our own models for future practice. By the end of the session, delegates should gain a fuller understanding of the complexities of using feedback effectively.

Facilitators of the Masterclass:

Dr. Almuth McDowall is a Lecturer at the University of Surrey and a consultant to public and private sector organisations in her independent practice. She holds certificates in life coaching and systemic therapy and continues to write on coaching with collaborators Professor Stephen Palmer and Dr Rainer Kurz. Her main practice and research areas are work/life balance and the use of psychometrics in the workplace with particular focus on effective feedback.

Dr. Lynn Millward Purvis is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Surrey. Lynne combines years of hands-on teaching and course leadership experience with a vivid publishing career, including two seminal textbooks for budding occupational psychologists. She has recently taken charge of the professional development year in her department, where the university's mandate favours a coaching approach. Lynne is a science-practitioner whose extensive professional portfolio includes bespoke training and development design, culture analysis and change and team development.

For booking information and to download a booking form please see the 'News Page' of the SGCP website www.sgcp.org.uk or please contact Tracy White, Email: tracy@virtuallyorganised.com

A Conference fee of £90 for SGCP, BPS DOP and Association for Coaching Members/£120 for Non-Members needs to be paid, in advance, to secure a place at the event (all prices inc. VAT). All cheques are to be made payable to 'The British Psychological Society.' Space is limited to 50 delegates only.

Each attendee will receive a Workshop attendance certificate as evidence for CPD Logbooks or Practitioner-in-Training Logbooks.

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Stephen Palmer (UK): dr.palmer@btinternet.com
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(2) The submission must include the following as separate files:

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  Palmer, S. & Whybrow, A. (2006). The coaching psychology movement and its development within the British Psychological Society. *International Coaching Psychology Review 1*(1), 5–11.
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