International Coaching Psychology Review

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International Coaching Psychology Review

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…').

International
Coaching Psychology Review

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Special Group in Coaching Psychology

The British Psychological Society

1st International Congress of
Coaching Psychology 2010 – 2011

The UK event will be hosted by the
BPS Special Group in Coaching Psychology

14th and 15th December 2010, City University London, UK

This will be the first in a series of events, forming part of an international congress held around the world. The SGCP co-sponsored stage will debate and discuss coaching psychology, evidence the contribution this area of psychological enquiry and practice makes at an individual, group, organisational and societal level, and enhance the global integration of this rapidly developing discipline and profession. The events will bring together the coaching psychology community both at the individual and professional body levels.

Other stages of the congress will be held during 2011, hosted in a number of countries including Australia, sponsored by their regional coaching psychology groups. Pre-congress events may also be held.

Details of the UK event can be found at www.sgcp.org.uk

Details of all the events can be found at: www.coachingpsychologycongress.org

Drawing from a distinguished pool of national and international speakers, participants will be delighted with the breadth and depth of keynote presentations, masterclasses, symposia, mini skills workshops, research papers and poster presentations.

Delegates will have the opportunity to participate in debates and discussions, and continue to develop and consolidate relationships with peers across the community.

We invite you to consider presenting your work at this UK event. Participants in previous years' events describe their experience as one of warmth, openness and energy. For further information and submission details see the SGCP website:
www.sgcp.org.uk or e-mail sgcpcon@bps.org.uk

Call for Papers for SGCP hosted event: Deadline 28th May 2010

For members of the BPS, the 2010 membership fee to join SGCP is £8.50
(The cost to join the BPS as an affiliate member is £24)

SGCP membership benefits include membership rates at our events and conferences and free copies of the 'International Coaching Psychology Review' and 'The Coaching Psychologist'.

Contents

Editorial

Michael Cavanagh & Stephen Palmer

WELCOME, readers, to the first edition of the *ICPR* for 2010. As we begin the second decade of this century the world of coaching psychology and coaching is moving forward apace. Last December's Second European Coaching Psychology Conference sponsored by the SGCP was a great success. Some of the keynotes and papers presented will be published in this volume of *ICPR*.

Coaching psychology continues to make an important contribution to coaching globally. As this issue goes to press, work in Australia is about two-thirds of the way toward completion on a national standards framework for workplace and executive coaching under the auspices of Standards Australia. While several excellent competency and training standards already exist around the world, (such as the British ENTO National Occupational Standards for Coaching and Mentoring), the Australian project is a little different in that it will be the first produced by a national standards authority aligned with the International Standards Organisation. While many bodies produce standards in countries around the world, national standards authorities (such as the Standards Australia, the British Standards Institute and the American National Standards Institute) often contribute to the creation of international standards via the International Standards Organisation (ISO). The Standards Australia project is also noteworthy in that it covers a particularly wide range of areas. It includes standards and guidelines concerning provision of coaching services, coaches' knowledge, competence, training and ongoing development, as well as coach selection and the management of coaching processes by organisations - making it one of the most comprehensive yet produced.

Coaching psychology is well represented in this process. Peter Zarris (National Convenor of the APS IGCP, and Henry McNichol (National IGCP committee member), represent the IGCP on the working committee formed to help create and edit the standards. This working committee is made up of representatives of all stakeholder groups including coaches, coaching psychologists, training organisations, universities, coaching/ coaching psychology professional bodies and purchasers of coaching. The document itself is being drafted by the *ICPR*'s Michael Cavanagh. The project commenced at the beginning of 2009. It is due to be published as a guideline later this year, and is expected to become an official standard soon thereafter. The process is being followed with keen interest by coaching/coaching psychology bodies around the world, as is a similar national standards process underway in Mexico.

Publications like the *ICPR*, the conferences, symposia and congresses of SCGP and IGCP, and our contributions to conferences and research worldwide mean that we as coaching psychologists make a real contribution to setting the standard in evidence based practice. So keep those articles coming in and submit papers to our conferences too!

This edition has another diverse range of articles for your edification and reading pleasure. Alex Linley and colleagues begin this issue with a fine article exploring another contribution of positive psychology to coaching practice. They look at the use of signature strengths in the pursuit of goals among college students and find that the use of strengths is associated with improved goal progress, psychological need fulfilment and enhanced well-being. They discuss some interesting implications for coaching

practice. Following the positive psychology theme, Alison Maxwell and Tatiana Bachkirova review the concept of self-esteem in the literature to date and present a model of self-esteem illustrated by four case studies. Again, the implications for coaching practice are discussed. Emma Short, Gail Kinman and Sarah Baker report on an intriguing empirical study in which undergraduate psychology students were provided some basic training in coaching skills and conducted a peer coaching programme. They outline the positive impact of this intervention and consider how it might be extended further. Elouise Leonard-Cross reports on a mixed methods study that uses both quasi experimental methods and qualitative analysis to explore the potential business benefits of coaching in the workplace. We will leave the reader to discover what she found! Jonathan Passmore contributes another qualitative study on the coachee experience. Using grounded theory approach Jonathan explores the behaviours and attitudes coachees look for in coaches, and discusses the implications of this for coach training and practice. Our final article also uses a qualitative approach looking at the practices and attributes of a group of coaches identified by HR professionals as producing exception results. This is the first of a series of studies conducted by Gavin Dagley exploring the practice and impact of these exceptional coaches from the perspectives of the coachee, coach and organisation. They promise to be a very useful contribution to the literature. In addition to our full articles, we also have brief report by Tom Cerni that looks at the preliminary findings on a school based programme that uses Epstein's Cognitive Experiential Self Theory in coaching. This report is as tantalising as it is brief.

It is well worth reading the reports from the new SGCP Chair, Ho Law, and the IGCP Convenor, Peter Zarris. They both mention the exciting news that coaching psychology is going to hold its own International Congress during 2010 and 2011 in different locations around the world. The SGCP and IGCP are hoping that this on-going event will help to bring the global coaching psychology community even closer together, enhance the profession and break new ground in the theory, research and practice of coaching psychology. We will be inviting other professional coaching psychology bodies to become involved too. Watch this space.

We once again commend the articles in this issue for your consideration. Happy reading.

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Using signature strengths in pursuit of goals: Effects on goal progress, need satisfaction, and well-being, and implications for coaching psychologists

P. Alex Linley, Karina M. Nielsen, Raphael Gillett & Robert Biswas-Diener

Objective: In recent years there has been a growing interest in research related to the use of strengths. Although results from past research have consistently suggested that the use of strengths is associated with higher performance and greater well-being there is, as yet, no clear theory describing how using strengths might contribute to greater well-being or goal progress. The objective of the current research was to test a model of how strengths use may support performance and well-being through an extension of the self-concordance model of healthy goal attainment.

Design: We test a repeated measures cross-sectional model in which using signature strengths is associated with goal progress, which is in turn associated with the fulfilment of psychological needs, and in turn well-being.

Method: Participants were 240 college students who completed measures of psychological strengths, need satisfaction, well-being, goal progress and goal attainment at three time points over a three-month period.

Results: Our results demonstrate that strengths use is associated with better goal progress, which is in turn associated with psychological need fulfilment and enhanced well-being.

Conclusions: Strengths use provides a key support in the attainment of goals, and leads to greater need satisfaction and well-being, providing an extension of the self-concordance model of healthy goal attainment. Implications for practice and future research are discussed.

Keywords: strengths use, goal attainment, well-being.

THE SCIENCE OF positive psychology is the study of psychological strengths and positive emotions (Snyder & Lopez, 2007). This new discipline represents a paradigm shift in professional attention from 'what is wrong with people,' psychologically speaking, to 'what is right with people.' Previous work has demonstrated many of the links between coaching psychology and positive psychology (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007; Linley & Harrington, 2005; Linley & Kauffman, 2008). A major focus of positive psychology research is on strengths; patterns of thought, feeling and behaviour that are energising and which lead to maximal effectiveness (Linley, 2008a). Within the coaching psychology literature, strengths use has been shown to be associated with both subjective and psychological well-being, even when controlling for the effects of self-efficacy and self-esteem (Govindji & Linley, 2007), and strengths coaching has been suggested as one applied link between strengths and coaching psychology (Linley & Harrington, 2006).

Recent studies on strengths have examined a number of issues ranging from the emotional consequences of using strengths (Seligman et al., 2005) to regional differences in strengths (Park, Peterson & Seligman, 2006), including specific analysis of the VIA strengths in the UK population (Linley et al., 2007). Positive psychology is also an applied science, and increasing numbers of therapists, coaches and consultants are using strengths

based interventions with their clients (see Biswas-Diener, 2009; Seligman, Rashid & Parks, 2006). As a result, there is a special responsibility for researchers to examine strengths-related outcomes and better develop theoretical models by which strengths interventions work, especially given the growing appetite from coaching psychologists to understand both the pragmatic applications of strengths psychology and also its scientific underpinnings (Linley, 2008b).

Positive psychology and strengths

In the introduction to the landmark positive psychology issue of the *American Psychologist* Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) write 'Psychologists need now to call for massive research on human strengths and virtues. Practitioners need to recognise that much of the best work they already do in the consulting room is to amplify strengths rather than to repair the weaknesses of their clients' (p.8). Two years later Seligman (2002) had identified six culturally ubiquitous virtues that included wisdom, courage, love, justice, temperance and spirituality and – under these broad categories – he proposed 24 distinct strengths ranging from creativity to leadership to humour (see also Biswas-Diener, 2006). Peterson and Seligman (2003) used this list, now known as the 'VIA' (Values in Action), as the foundation of a taxonomy of strengths that they intended to be an intellectual counterpoint to the widely used *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM; APA, 1994). Within their classification system Peterson and Seligman identified 10 criteria by which strengths are included. Ultimately, Park and Peterson (2006) created an online measure of strengths using the VIA taxonomy. Although other measures of strengths exist, such as the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 (Rath, 2008) and the Realise2 (Linley, Willars & Biswas-Diener, 2010) the VIA Survey is the most widely used strengths assessment specifically associated with the positive psychology movement to date.

The VIA Survey has been used exten-sively in research on the correlates of strengths and preliminary evidence suggests that it can also be used effectively as an intervention to promote happiness and protect against depression (Seligman et al., 2005). In addition, studies have revealed an association between the VIA strengths and recovery from illness (Peterson, Park & Seligman, 2006), an association between societal events and the VIA Strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2003), and a link between the VIA strengths and occupation (Matthews et al., 2006; Peterson et al., 2009).

Asking 'How strengths work' rather than 'Do strengths work'

Traditionally, strengths researchers have been primarily concerned with establishing evidence that strengths use is a valuable endeavour, leading to such desirable outcomes as happiness (Govindji & Linley, 2007; Seligman et al., 2005) and better perform-ance at work (Clifton & Harter, 2003). This exploratory approach makes sense for a nascent science that must be established as legitimate and worthwhile. Further, this outcome-based approach is of interest to coaching psychologists, coaches, therapists, organisational consultants, and other practitioners who are interested in the positive results associated with strengths use (Lyons & Linley, 2008). Missing from this approach, however, is a crucial understanding of how, specifically, using strengths leads to well-being or other desirable outcomes.

Among the most important questions in positive psychology, and related to strengths specifically, is whether or not using our signature strengths helps us to achieve our goals and whether this, in turn, helps satisfy our psychological needs and leads to greater well-being. Little is known about the mechanisms by which strengths use might lead to psychological benefits such as enhanced well-being and goal progress. The primary goal of the current research is to examine possible ways in which strengths use produces higher well-being and how this may enhance goal progress.

One possible answers lies in understanding the relationship between strengths and motivation. Peterson and Seligman's (2004) criteria for strengths to be included in the VIA taxonomy suggest that strengths use is largely intrinsically motivated. Criterion One, for instance, defines signature strengths as those strengths that an individual considers to be very much their own. These strengths convey a sense of ownership and authenticity in their use, an intrinsic yearning to use them and a feeling of inevitability in doing so. Hence, using one's signature strengths is considered to be concordant with one's intrinsic interests and values. In addition, using one's signature strengths is considered to serve well-being and basic psychological needs, such as competence, autonomy, and relatedness. There is, as yet, no firm theory of the processes that may explain how signature strengths contribute to these outcomes. In fact, we are unaware of any published research specifically testing the mechanisms by which using strengths leads to positive changes in well-being.

One way that signature strengths may work to promote beneficial outcomes is through their use in the pursuit of personal goals. Previous research has linked goal pursuit and progress with a range of well-being outcomes (e.g. Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001). In this paper we specifically examine the link between strengths use and well-being, paying particular attention to the role of goal pursuit and attainment.

Previous research suggests that it is not simply goal progress or attainment that leads to well-being but, rather, the types of goals pursued and the motivation for pursuit. The Self-Concordance Model (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999) elaborates the motivational sequence of goal inception, pursuit, and attainment. In essence, people who pursue self-concordant goals (those that are consistent with their developing interests and values) put more sustained effort into achieving those goals, and hence are more likely to attain them. Interestingly, achieving well-being, in this case, appears to be more than simply a function of goal progress. Instead, goal attainment effects on well-being are moderated by the self-concordance of goals. Sheldon and Kasser (1998), for example, found that attaining self-concordant goals leads to greater well-being than does attaining goals that are not self-concordant. Sheldon and Kasser suggest that concordant goal attainment leads to need satisfaction which, in turn, mediates changes in well-being. Sheldon and Elliot (1999) tested this hypothesis, and found that need satisfaction partially mediated concordant goal attainment effects on well-being: part, but not all, of the change in well-being could be accounted for by need-satisfying experiences.

Building on the Sheldon and Elliot (1999) and Sheldon and Kasser (1998) studies, together with work demonstrating the effect of coaching on self-concordance of goals (Burke & Linley, 2007), we hypothesised that using one's signature strengths (i.e. acting self-concordantly) will contribute to goal progress, leading to need-satisfying experiences and greater well-being.

The link between strengths and well-being is especially important because it is possible that well-being, as a cognitive and affective legacy of self-concordant motivation and goal pursuit, provides motivational reinforcement. Therefore, for managers, coaching psychologists, coaches, organisational consultants, educators and others interested in facilitating high performance a better understanding of the mechanisms by which strengths use leads to goal attainment and well-being may offer insight into learning, growth and motivation.

Method
Participants
The participants in the current research were 240 second-year college students at a major university in the Midlands of England. There were 49 males and 191 females with a mean age of 19.95 years (SD=2.54 years).

Participants were primarily white (78.8 per cent) or Indian (8.8 per cent), and predominately 'single/never married' (91.7 per cent).

Measures

VIA Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The VIA-IS measures 24 character strengths by means of a 240-item self-report questionnaire (10 items per strength). All subscales have been found to have acceptable internal consistency reliabilities (all >.70; Peterson, Park & Seligman, 2005). The measure is typically administered online, although for the present study we used a paper-and-pencil version. Responses were scored by the researchers and participants were notified with details of their top five 'signature strengths,' together with a description of these strengths. It was these top five signature strengths that were later used to rate strengths use in general and in relation to participants' top three goals.

Positive and Negative Affect Scales (PANAS; Watson, Tellegen & Clark, 1988). The PANAS is a widely used 20-item measure of positive affect (10 items, e.g. 'interested,' 'attentive') and negative affect (10 items, e.g. 'irritable,' 'jittery'). Participants were asked to respond in relation to the extent 'you generally feel this way.' The PANAS is one of the most widely used measures of positive and negative affect, and is scored using a 1 ('very slightly or not at all') through 5 ('extremely') fully anchored Likert scale, thus giving a potential range of 10 through 50 for each of positive affect and negative affect. Internal consistency reliability was α=.82 for the positive affect scale and α=.84 for the negative affect scale.

Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985). The SWLS is a five-item measure of life satisfaction, which is considered to be the cognitive evaluation dimension of happiness. It is the most widely used measure of life satisfaction, and has excellent internal consistency, a single factor structure, and temporal stability (r=.54 over four years), while still being highly respon-

sive to the effect of psychological therapies (Pavot & Diener, 1993). It is scored using a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) fully anchored Likert scale, giving a potential range of 5 to 35. Internal consistency reliability was α=.81.

Semester Goals. Participants were asked to think about, and then write down, the 'top three goals' they held for the semester (a three-month timeframe). Goals were explicitly defined as 'projects that we think about, plan for, carry out, and sometimes (though not always) complete or succeed at.' Participants were instructed to think carefully about their top three goals, and told that they should accurately represent their main aspirations for the semester. Examples of possible goals were given, including *'Attend most of my lectures,' 'Make the university football team,' 'Have fun and enjoy myself,'* and *'Stop drinking alcohol during the week,'* although participants were informed clearly that they should record the three goals that represented their own aspirations. They were instructed to write down the three goals on a sheet headed 'My TOP THREE GOALS,' and to retain a copy of the three goals with their course materials for future reference. A copy of their goals record was also submitted to the researchers.

Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction Scales (BPNSS; Deci & Ryan, 2000). The BPNSS is a 21-item measure of need satisfaction for the three basic psychological needs of autonomy (seven items, three reverse scored, e.g. *'I feel like I am free to decide for myself how to live my life'*), competence (six items, three reverse scored, e.g. *'Most days I feel a sense of accomplishment from what I do'*), and relatedness (eight items, three reverse scored, e.g. *'People in my life care about me'*). It is scored using a 1 (not at all true) through 7 (very true) Likert scale. Principal components analysis of the three need satisfaction scales showed them to load between .81 and .86 on a single component, eigenvalue=2.11, that accounted for 70.33 per cent of the variance. Hence, for the present study a composite need satisfaction variable was created

by aggregating the three need satisfaction scores. Internal consistency reliability for the composite scale was α=.86.

General Strengths Use. To assess the extent to which participants were using each of their five signature strengths in their life in general, they responded to the question *'How much have you used each of your signature strengths in your life in general so far this semester?'* Specifically, participants gave five responses, one for how much they were using each of their signature strengths in their life in general. These were scored using a 0 (not at all) to 4 (very much) five-point Likert format scale, such that a higher score indicates greater use of that signature strength in the participant's life in general. Principal components analyses of these items showed them all to load on a single factor (see Table 1). We then calculated composite scores for 'General Strengths Use' by summing the responses for each of the five signature strengths, thus giving an overall potential range of 0 through 20. These composite scores are used in the analyses reported below.

Goals-Strengths Use. To assess the extent to which participants were using each of their five signature strengths in the pursuit of each of the three goals they identified at baseline, they responded to the question *'How much have you used each of your signature strengths in working towards the first [second/third] goal you identified for this semester?'* for each goal. Specifically, they gave five responses, one for each signature strength, in relation to their first, second, and third goals. These were scored using a 0 (not at all) to 4 (very much) five-point Likert format scale, such that a higher score indicates greater use of that signature strength in working towards the specified goal. Principal components analyses of these items showed them all to load on a single factor (see Table 1). We then calculated aggregate scores for goals-strengths use for each of the three goals individually, by summing the responses for each of the five signature strengths for each goal, thus giving an overall potential range of 0 through 20 for each goal, that is, the extent to which participants used their five signature strengths in pursuit of their three goals.

Principal components analysis of these three goals-strengths use scores showed them all to load .76 to .84 on a single component, eigenvalue=1.95, explaining 65.05 pe cent of the variance at Time 1, and to load .80 to .86 on a single component, eigen-

Table 1: Principal components analyses of strengths use responses for general use and specific goal use.

Time 1	Factor loadings	Eigenvalue	Variance explained (%)
General	.48 – .66	1.77	35.38
Goal 1	.70 – .73	2.54	50.81
Goal 2	.70 – .77	2.65	52.91
Goal 3	.74 – .80	2.92	58.43
Time 2	Factor loadings	Eigenvalue	Variance explained (%)
General	.65 – .76	2.33	46.56
Goal 1	.71 – .79	2.73	54.67
Goal 2	.72 – .80	3.00	60.04
Goal 3	.75 – .84	3.10	61.95

Note: General = Strengths use in one's life in general; Goal 1 [2, 3] = Strengths use in pursuit of goal 1 [2, 3].
Time 1 was 6 weeks after baseline; Time 2 was 10 weeks after baseline. All items loaded on a single component.

value=2.08, explaining 69.37 per cent of the variance at Time 2. Given that the goal contents of the first, second, and third goals varied across participants, we created a composite goals-strengths use variable by aggregating the responses for strengths use for each of the first, second, and third goals. This composite goals-strengths use variable therefore provides the equivalent of the mean strengths use in relation to a generic set of goals, that is, it represents the extent to which participants used their strengths (any and all of their five signature strengths) in pursuit of their goals (any and all of their top three goals). It was this composite goals-strengths use variable (a composite of five strengths rated in relation to three goals, giving 15 individual data points) that was used in the analyses reported below.

General Progress. To assess the progress that participants were making in their lives in general, they were asked *'How well are you doing in your life in general this semester?'* This single item measure was scored on a 1 (not at all well) to 7 (very well) Likert format scale, and followed the section containing the general strengths use items.

Goal Progress. To assess the progress that participants were making in their pursuit of each of their three goals, they were asked *'How well are you doing in achieving the first [second/third] goal you identified?'* This single item measure was scored on a 1 (not at all well) to 7 (very well) Likert format scale in relation to each of the three goals, and was presented at the end of each section containing the goals strengths use items for each of the three goals.

Procedure
Participants were recruited as part of a compulsory practical module that comprised part of their undergraduate course. Alternative options were provided if participants did not wish to participate in the study. In the first class, at the beginning of the semester, participants completed the baseline measures by paper-and-pencil including the VIA Inventory of Strengths, the PANAS, and the Satis-

faction with Life Scale. Additionally, participants recorded their top three goals for the semester. After six weeks from baseline (Time 1), participants again completed the PANAS and the Satisfaction with Life Scale. In addition, they completed the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction Scales, and the measures of general strengths use and goal-strengths use, together with the items assessing general progress and goals progress. These measures were again completed after 10 weeks from baseline (Time 2).

Analyses and results
In order to simplify the number of variables for the analyses, we created a composite measure of goals-strengths use as described above, a composite measure of need satisfaction as described above, and a composite measure of subjective well-being. Principal components analysis of the positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction scores showed them to load from –.72 to .76 on a single component, eigenvalue=1.66, which explained 55.33 per cent of the variance. As such, we calculated a composite subjective well-being (SWB) variable by summing life satisfaction and positive affect, and subtracting negative affect.

We tested our hypothesised model using structural equation modelling (SEM; LISREL 8.7, Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1999). In this model (see Figure 1) we tested the stability of our measures (van Dierendonck et al., 2004) by including paths from strengths at time 1 to strengths at time 2, from progress at time 1 to progress at time 2, from need satisfaction at time 1 to need satisfaction at time 2, and finally, from well-being at time 1 to well-being at time 2. We included a path from strengths to progress, from progress to need satisfaction and from need satisfaction to well-being to test for our hypotheses. We included these paths at both time 1 and time 2, in order to test these pathways cross-sectionally at both time points. We also tested the hypothesised direct effect of progress on well-being found in previous research by including direct paths from progress at time 1 to well-being at time 1 and

Figure 1: Hypothesised model showing strengths use, goal progress, need satisfaction and well-being.
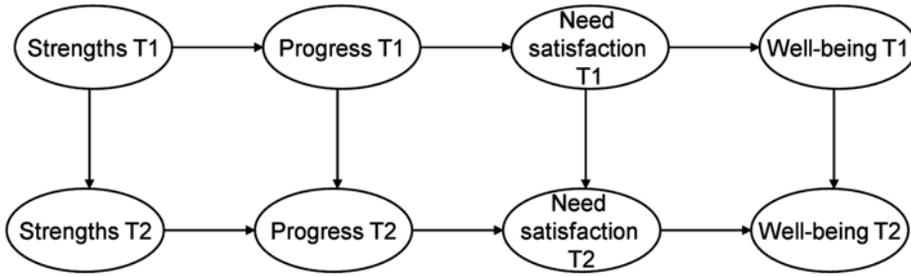
Figure 2: Final model showing strengths use, goal progress, need satisfaction and well-being.
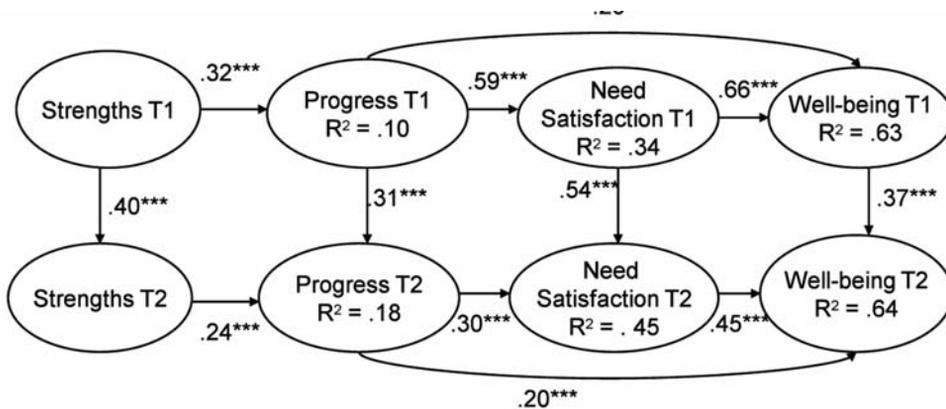
from progress at time 2 to well-being at time 2. The acceptable levels of fit used to assess the adequacy of each model were according to the recommendations made by Hu and Bentler (1999): the Standardised Root Mean Residual (SRMR) should be below .09 and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) above .95.

Our hypothesised pathway was examined in model 1. The hypothesised model presented an acceptable fit to the data. SRMR was .077 below the recommended .09 and CFI=.97 was above the recommended .95. Inspection of the parameters estimates revealed that all paths were significant. The final model is presented in Figure 2. As can be seen in Figure 2, a large percentage of the variance in well-being (63 per cent and 64 per cent) could be explained by strengths use, goal progress and need satisfaction.

The model demonstrates that signature strengths use is associated with higher goal progress, which is in turn associated with greater need satisfaction, which in turn are both associated with higher levels of well-being and explain a large proportion of the variance in well-being.

Discussion

Although past research has linked goal progress and attainment, especially that which is self-concordant, to well-being, there has not been empirical research aimed at explaining the path from strengths use to well-being. In the current study we were able to use a

repeated-measures cross-sectional design to follow individuals as they used personal strengths to pursue meaningful personally relevant goals. Our analyses revealed that strengths use was associated with goal progress, which in turn was associated with both need satisfaction and well-being at both six weeks and 10 weeks post-baseline. When we modelled the data to examine the relative and absolute fit of the data we found that strengths use affects well-being both through goal progress and through the psychological need fulfilment associated with goal progress. That is, to the extent that individuals make progress toward personally relevant goals and to the extent that this goal progress feels concordant with self-growth and autonomy, people will predictably feel more positive affect, less negative affect, and greater life satisfaction.

Our findings support and extend earlier research by Sheldon and Elliot (1999) and Sheldon and Kasser (1998) showing that goals that are self-concordant – those that are personally valued and associated with growth, connectedness and autonomy – are specifically associated with greater well-being. Sheldon and Elliot suggest that factors such as *controlledness* (locus of control), personal ownership of a goal, perseverance and personal interest are all factors in both goal progress and well-being. Our findings indicate that strengths use offers an interesting and reliable avenue for pursuing self-concordant goals. Given that strengths are, by definition, associated with personal values and the expression of an integrated psychological core, they are likely to suggest a self-concordant approach to goals and, therefore, to maximise the chances for greater well-being and goal attainment.

Importantly, it appears as if the well-being that results from goal progress and psychological need fulfilment may act as a cognitive and affective reinforcer, leading to greater goal progress later on. To the extent that this is true, it suggests that strengths use might be an important part of an affective learning loop in which progress leads to well-being which, in turn, motivates sustained effort and leads to further goal progress. This point is especially important for coaching psychologists, coaches, therapists and others who work with clients on personal change or optimal performance. Understanding that employing strengths in the pursuit of goals is more likely to lead to an upward spiral of success and well-being establishes strengths as a particularly important area for intervention and support.

Future research could be improve on the current study in several ways. First, our sample included college students that were, in many ways (e.g. age and marital status) non-diverse. Therefore, caution must be taken in generalising these results to the wider population. This cautionary note is especially important in terms of generalising the current findings across cultures, as goals are differentially associated with well-being across cultural groups (Oishi, 2000). In addition, our use of composite scores for strengths use means that we cannot be certain that this model holds true for all strengths equally, or whether it is more appropriate to a blend of primary strengths. In all likelihood, individuals rotate through a number of primary strengths and/or use constellations of strengths in tandem. Unfortunately, our current methodology does not allow us to look specifically at how strength type affects goal progress or well-being. Finally, our repeated measures cross-sectional design does not allow for the test of pure longitudinal effects, and this is an important area for future research.

This study is the first of which we are aware to explore the relation between strengths use, goal progress, and well-being. Although we found direct evidence of links between these variables, both across measures and repeated across time, further study is needed to better understand this complex psychological relationship. We recommend that future researchers interested in this topic examine strengths use in specific, non-student contexts such as organisational (e.g. Linley, Woolston & Biswas-Diener, 2009) or therapeutic (e.g. Linley, 2008c) settings.

P. Alex Linley, Karina M. Nielsen, Alex M. Wood, Raphael Gillett & Robert Biswas-Diener

In particular, we recommend that future researchers include third-party performance ratings as well as other measures of well-being such as surveys of meaning in life or psychological well-being. It would also be beneficial for future researchers to examine the relation between strengths use and obligatory goals (i.e. non self-concordant goals) as well as strengths use during times of goal failure.

In the end, it is noteworthy that not all goal progress is associated with well-being. Self-concordant goals are a special case of enhanced well-being. The use of personal strengths appears to be inherently self-concordant and, as a result, leads to better goal progress and greater feelings of well-being, thereby providing a solid empirical base to support practitioners across many fields who are using strengths approaches in their work.

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Applying psychological theories of self–esteem in coaching practice

Alison Maxwell & Tatiana Bachkirova

The study of self-esteem has a long history, and it is not without cause that self-esteem is seen by many as central to human functioning and happiness, governing our sense of self-efficacy as well as ability to learn, grow and change. It is, therefore, not surprising that self-esteem issues frequently present themselves within coaching conversations and it behoves the competent coach to be aware of how self-esteem might mediate the coaching relationship. In this article we discuss how the concept of self-esteem has been defined and addressed in the psychological literature and how specific theories might apply in the coaching context. A model of self-esteem is used to illustrate four cases of coaching using 360° feedback within an organisational setting. We conclude with a summary of implications for coaching practice.

Keywords: self-esteem, coaching, psychological theories, 360 feedback, adult development.

'Self-esteem is the reputation we acquire with ourselves.' Nathaniel Branden

AT ITS SIMPLEST, self-esteem, as the quote implies, is the evaluation individuals place upon themselves, often representing a comparison between a perceived sense of self and a perceived ideal standard (James, 1860; Hamachek, 1987; Burns, 1978). This comparison is necessarily highly subjective, but has the power to produce a range of personally significant consequences. Studies consistently show (Baumeister, 1993, 1997; Coopersmith, 1967; Lent et al., 1986) that people with high and low levels of self-esteem adapt to events in markedly different ways, with high self-esteem (HSE) associated, for example, with greater confidence, less conformity, self-efficacy, optimism, risk taking and creativity. A coach, therefore, might well be interested in working with self-esteem issues directly or developing it as a happy by-product.

However, the issue of self-esteem is not prominent in the traditional coaching literature. It is largely assumed that clients are successful, high achieving and capable individuals who have every reason to feel confident and worthy of self-respect. However, according to Bandura (1998), many talented individuals often feel dissatisfied with their achievements. Research recently conducted by Hindmarch (2007), as well as anecdotal data from our own coaching and supervisory practice, suggests that in reality the theme of confidence and self-esteem in coaching is often present in one form or another.

Although no agreement is reached in the current psychological literature on the causes of self-esteem, Hartner (1999) argues that self-esteem is a product of the developmental path, strongly correlated to the quality of parenting received. Some studies suggest (Coopersmith, 1967; Lent et al., 1986) that while self-esteem may fluctuate day to day, a base level tends to endure (Pelham & Swann, 1989). It is, therefore, not surprising that issues of self-esteem are often figural in counselling or psychotherapy processes. Deep seated self-esteem issues may, therefore, be beyond the scope of coaching. However, more transient or less severe issues may be more amenable to a coaching approach, assuming coaches are suitably aware of the issues involved.

The psychological literature offers a range of conceptualisations of self-esteem and it could be said that there are as many perspectives on self-esteem as there are

branches of psychology and psychotherapy. Some theories emphasise the origins of self-esteem, while others describe manifestation in behaviour, dynamics of change over time and ways of influencing it. In this article we have chosen to comment only on those theories that present an applied value for adults who wish to make changes in their working lives with the help of a coach. We therefore offer both a description of relevant theories as well as potential implications for practice. As a way of synthesising and making sense of the diversity of perspectives an adult developmental framework is introduced and discussed.

The article continues by examining one model of self-esteem in more depth, using it to illuminate four coaching encounters. This is offered to practicing coaches as a pragmatic tool to both help make sense of different types of self-esteem issues and inform potential avenues for intervention. The paper concludes with a summary of implications for coaching practice.

Theories of self-esteem
Early conceptions: James and the Social Constructionists

James (1890) is credited with the initial writing on self-esteem, defining it as contingent on the ratio of our successes to our failures, in areas of our life that we deem important to us. Self-esteem, therefore, could be seen as a motivator in life, constantly driving individuals towards success and away from potential failure, and to maintain a level of competence in key domains. In the context of coaching, this force can be tapped to focus clients on desired outcomes and goals. However, it may also be an unhelpful factor if the client is overly attached to unrealistic or unattainable goals, or domains that are no longer relevant to them.

An alternate early view (Cooley,1909; Mead, 1913) emphasises the social nature of self-esteem, being regarded as the extent to which we perceive ourselves as matching up to a set of 'central self-values … [that] individuals have learned to be worthy of emu-

lating or attaining through the process of socialisation' (Mruk, 2006, pp.120–121). Self-esteem is, therefore, a comparison with an internalised set of standards or values, introjected from familial, social and cultural interactions. Seen as such, self-esteem is contingent on others, in that individuals make comparisons with a (real or illusory) standard set by others, motivating them to maintain their acceptance and approval with others. This may also be unhelpful to the client if those standards are unattainable, unreasonable or outdated. The work of the coach, according to this conceptualisation, may, therefore, involve the re-examination of such standards, either downgrading them, or shifting them to more relevant areas (Bachkirova, 2000, 2004).

Humanistic psychology and person-centred therapy

Humanistic psychologists build on these early notions of self-esteem seeing it as a basic need central to human functioning. For example, Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs places self-esteem near the top of his pyramid, making self-actualisation contingent on the achievement of self-esteem. Self-esteem is seen to develop if a person receives sufficient 'unconditional positive regard' (Rogers, 1951), and, therefore, becomes contingent when self-regard is conditional on achieving the standard or approval of others. However, self-esteem can be reclaimed by developing congruence with one's own organismic needs and desires.

This perspective on self-esteem impacts the presence and values exhibited by a coach, who must be able to offer unconditional positive regard to the client, irrespective of their actions, achievements or values. It is, therefore, more important to help the client to explore and reclaim a deeper sense of their self and their own needs, rather than necessarily deliver on an externally-derived (e.g. organisational) agenda. This perspective, therefore, potentially conflicts with the overt goal achievement orientation dominating in the traditional coaching literature.

Recent research

More recent writers (Epstein, 1973; Brown et aI, 1988; Baumeister, 1993, 1999; Mruk, 2006) concur with the view of self-esteem as a core human need, seeing it as driving behaviour to defend or maintain a perceived sense of self. Two motives are identified; the self-consistency motive and the self-enhancement motive. The self-consistency motive drives people to seek out information that confirms what they already believe about themselves – whether good or bad. Once established, therefore, such a self-opinion may be difficult to discard or refine, and a coach may meet considerable defences if they attempt to disrupt the established 'self-view'.

The self-enhancement motive differs in that it drives people to acquire information that tends to show them in a positive light, discarding information which may cast an unfavourable shade upon themselves. According to Baumeister (1999), the self-enhancement motive dominates; however he argues that people with low self-esteem (LSE) favour the self-consistency motive, preferring to believe a consistent, albeit negative, message about themselves, and will selectively discard positive information. In comparison, HSE is associated with preference for the self-enhancement motive, selectively discarding negative information. Objective feedback from an external party such as a coach will, therefore, be filtered, according to the dominant motivation.

Self-esteem is, therefore, fraught with the possibility for distortion (Dunning, 2006; Claxton, 1994) and various theoretical traditions and studies (Fingarette, 2000; Goleman, 1997; Hamachek, 1987) document the many ways we may defend ourselves against threats to our self-evaluations. Some of these studies challenge the traditional view that HSE is only associated with positive and desirable characteristics, Baumeister et al. (1999), for example, pointing out that HSE may be associated with narcissistic and antisocial tendencies. The pursuit of HSE may, therefore, not be the desirable goal that has been assumed

(Crocker et al., 2002, 2006). Baumeister (1993, 1999) has also challenged the conception of LSE in his research with others (Campbell & Lavallee, 1993), suggesting that absolute LSE is relatively rare. He postulates that LSE is actually a lack of clarity about the self, whilst HSE is associated with greater degrees of certainty. Other authors (Kernis, 1993, 2003; Jones & Meridith, 1996; Wink & Helson, 1993) suggest that stability of self-esteem is as important as level. A coach, using this frame, may, therefore, need to help a client reach an optimal stable level of esteem, working with the client to clarify their own sense of self, through exploration of their values, goals and needs, within a realistic assessment of their competencies and resources.

It must be noted that some authors challenge the very notion of self-esteem as a core human need (Ryan & Warren Brown, 2003), seeing any contingent evaluation as fundamentally objectifying the self in an unhelpful way:

> *'Non-contingent self-esteem in contrast characterises persons for whom the issue of self-esteem is not salient, largely because they experience themselves on a fundamental level as worthy of esteem and love. Successes and failures do not implicate their self-worth, even when they lead to a re-evaluation of actions and efforts'* (Ryan & Warren Brown, 2003, p.72).

Described thus, 'authentic' self-esteem transcends the need for self-evaluation, and is realistic, secure and enduring. In the light of this very different view, the role of the coach would be to help the client avoid actions driven by esteem-related contingencies, and to reach for goals that contribute to something larger than self (Crocker et al., 2006; Bachkirova, 2000, 2004).

Self-esteem within an adult development framework

It may seem that the views of self-esteem discussed above are describing wholly different phenomena, such is the diversity of description and explanation. However, recent

thinking on adult development (Beck & Cowan, 1996; Kegan, 1982, 1994; Loevinger, 1976, 1987; Cook-Greuter, 1999, 2004; Torbert, 1991, 2002; Wilber, 2006) may both explain this diversity and offer a new paradigm for understanding self-esteem. These theories suggest that the concept and experience of self-esteem is itself a product of the individual's stage of development. Adult development is seen as progressing through a logical sequence of stages, the relative complexity of meaning-making expanding with each stage. Kegan (1982), for example, suggests that self-esteem has different meanings for people at different developmental stages. The following is the description of the three main adult development stages as presented by Kegan and Lahey (2009), showing how the meaning of self-esteem changes with stage. We suggest that this may explain the divergent perspectives of theories described above.

- 'Socialised Mind'. At this stage, individuals are seen as lacking in self-esteem, driven by the need to be approved by others and to be liked by them. They appear indecisive and may be perceived as a 'push over': 'I am the prime candidate for the assertiveness trainer, who may tell me that I need to learn how to stand up for myself' (Kegan, 1982, p.96). Kegan suggests that strictly speaking 'self-esteem 'is not an applicable term for individuals at this stage, as 'esteem' does not come from their sense of 'self', but rather from the received and unexamined opinions of others. It could be speculated that this conception resonates with the 'social constructionist' view of self-esteem, where the sense of self is contingent on the views of others.

- 'Self-authoring Mind'. During this stage, self-esteem shifts to become a product of a self-evaluation where a sense of 'me' is earned by sorting out the agendas of others that dominated in the Socialised Mind stage. Individuals enjoy the freedom to form their own judgements about themselves using their own criteria for comparing ambitions with reality. However, they can still be caught in traps of their own making when forming such judgement (Berger, 2006; Berger & Fitzgerald, 2002; Bachkirova & Cox, 2007), with resultant potential distortions in self-perception. The view of self-esteem at this stage may correspond to the views of Baumeister and others (1993, 1999), and his competing self-enhancement and self-consistency motivations.

- 'Self-Transforming Mind'. The meaning of self-esteem at this stage changes again, and may look much like that described above by Ryan and Warren Brown. There is very little attachment in this stage to any specific self-image, which is seen as fluid in changing situations and in relation to others. For this reason, self-esteem is not seen as an 'issue' but approached with curiosity and reflexivity.

According to this conceptualisation of self-esteem a unified coaching approach that prescribes a particular balance of support and challenge for each individual client would certainly need to be questioned. We suggest that understanding developmental trajectories may help coaches to be better equipped to address the diverse needs of their clients.

Table 1 (overleaf) presents a summary of the theories with their potential implications for coaching together with an attempt to map these theories onto the adult development framework.

A pragmatic model for coaching self-esteem issues.

In our literature search for theoretical models on self-esteem that may have a pragmatic value for the practicing coach we came across Mruk's two dimensional model (2006). As the result of our experimentation with this model in coaching we believe that this can offer coaches a practical approach to working with client issues in organisational settings. An adapted version of Mruk's

Table 1: Summary of self-esteem theories mapped against three stages of adult development.

Theories of self-esteem	Conception of self-esteem	Potential Motivator	Potential implications for coaching	Correspondence to Adult Development stages (Kegan & Lahey, 2009)
James (1860)	Ratio of successes to failures in domains deemed important	Goal achievement and competence enhancement in important domains	● Clarification of realistic goals ● Clarification of domain relevance	Self-authoring Mind
Social constructionists (Cooley,1909; Mead, 1913)	Extent to which the individual matches up to internalised/ socialised values and standards	Maintenance of acceptance of self in the eyes of others	● Establishing realistic standards and expectations of self ● Negating outdated or unfounded standards	Socialised Mind
Humanists (Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1951)	Extent to which we are congruent with our own needs/values/ standards	Reclaim deeper sense of self and own needs, not contingent on others	● Clarification of sense of self and own needs/values ● Unconditional positive regard from the coach ● Avoidance of unexamined internalised goals	Self-authoring Mind
Baumeister (1993, 1999)	Defence or maintenance of a perceived sense of self	Self-enhancement or self-consistency	● Minimise self distortions through feedback ● Creating a climate to minimise defensiveness	Self-authoring Mind
Ryan & Warren Brown (2003)	Authentic self-esteem as non-contingent on internalised sources	Goals and causes greater than self .	● Transcend contingent self-esteem ● Contribution to goals larger than self	Self-transforming Mind

model is presented in Figure 1. This model reflects some of the features of recent research, particularly the self-consistency and self-enhancement motivators, described by Baumeister (1999).

In this model, self-esteem is seen as the product of two factors, 'worthiness' and 'competence; 'worthiness' defined as the need for approval from self/others, and 'competence' as the need for achievement and success. The interaction of these factors produces four different forms of self-esteem:
1. Competence-based self-esteem (CSE); based on the need for constant achievement and successes, masking a sense of worthlessness. At its worst this zone represents the chronic over-achiever, perfectionist and workaholic, never satisfied with their accomplishments.
2. Worthiness-based self-esteem (WSE); based on the need for constant approval from others and self, as a way of compensating for perceived or actual lack of competence in important areas. At its worst this zone represents narcissistic and egotistic behaviours.

Both worthiness and competence-based self-esteem are inherently unstable and fragile, and may be threatened, for example by failures or negative feedback from others. Such individuals may be heavily defended against perceived threats to their self-esteem for fear of the anxiety this would induce.
3. Low stable self-esteem; a consistently poor and inherently stable self-appraisal. This form may also resist change, a person choosing to believe a negative self-concept rather than risk loosing a sense of self-consistency.
4. High self-esteem; a consistently good appraisal of one's competencies and self-worth. This is inherently stable, but capable of taking on board negative appraisals or failures and responding functionally.

Figure 1: Self–esteem model (adapted from Mruk, 2006).
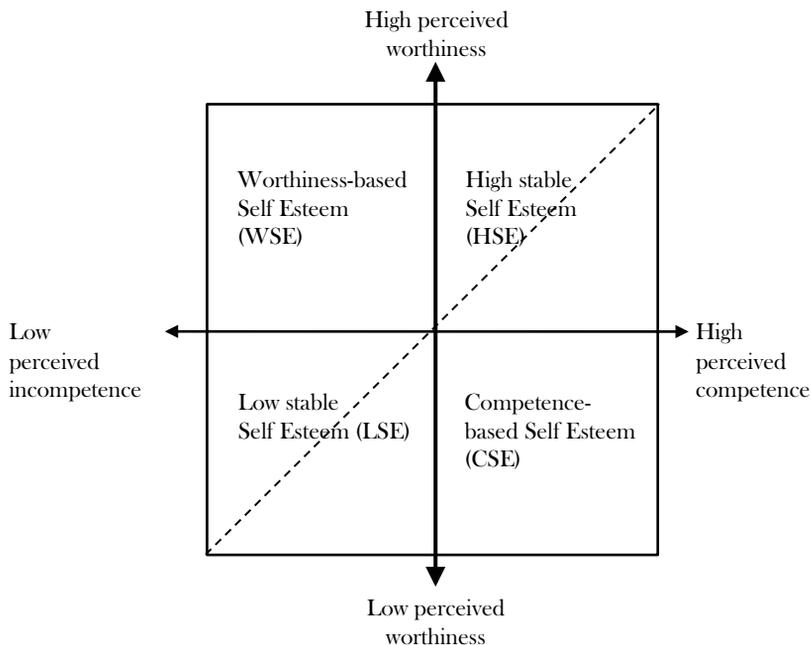
To use this model an effective coach would need both diagnostic skills and an awareness of how these forms of self-esteem might influence the coaching relationship. The remainder of this article suggests strategies for working with these potentially very different types of client, using the lens of this model. A recent coaching assignment that involved delivering 360 feedback to a range of clients is used to illustrate some of the issues involved. Feedback of this sort forces individuals to confront the actual perceptions of others, rather than continue to hold imagined perceptions. This can often be a highly anxiety provoking experience (Smalley & Stake, 1996; Ashford et al., 2003), especially when the sense of self is insecure, potentially resulting in a range of defensive reactions and responses (Shrauger & Rosenberg, 1970). Four client cases are used to illustrate different aspects of self-esteem issues.

Coaching the CSE client
The model predicts that the CSE client will have a lurking sense of their own worthlessness which they compensate for by hard-work and striving for achievement. Such a client may have work-life balance issues, may fail to prioritise effectively, and take little satisfaction for their many achievements, ascribing success to circumstance rather than personal action and influence. Workaholic tendencies may, therefore, be exhibited, with ever greater levels of achievement required to maintain an adequate sense of self.

Such a description could be ascribed to many in corporate life, and was a reasonable description of client R, who was working long hours despite increasing tensions with the demands of his home life. His response to 360 feedback was initial wariness, expecting it to confirm a low self-opinion, and he was considerably surprised at the high estimation he was universally held in. However, he rapidly justified why these positive opinions were irrelevant and focused disproportionately on the few less than positive items.

The coach's work with him initially, therefore, was to help him absorb more of the positive news rather than minimise or deflect it. As a newly-appointed Director, he had been selected over the head of a colleague who he regarded as more competent, and, in his eyes, more suited to the role. In the process of further coaching involved him clarifying his areas of expertise (using the Strengthsfinder diagnostic), reconnecting with his values as a source of worth and creating a personal vision for his new role. However, he still remained attached to his workaholic tendencies, albeit now with greater awareness.

Coaching the WSE client
In contrast to the CSE client, a WSE client would be expected to have a high opinion of self whilst devaluing others, possibly developing workplace relationship issues. This proved to be an accurate description of client A, an apparently very confident man but who continuously disparaged his colleagues and team, displaying some narcissistic tendencies. He was highly defended against feedback, criticising the 360 appraisal process in some detail, despite having scored well on many dimensions. The feedback meeting with this client was extremely difficult, with him challenging all less than positive perceptions as irrelevant or erroneous, picking out the positive messages disproportionately. The coach's work was, therefore, to discuss why others might have a less positive view of him on some dimensions and the possible value of developing skills in areas of inter-relating and team leadership. Interestingly, he saw no need for self-development and had no desire to continue a coaching relationship.

As with CSE clients, such clients are not uncommon in corporate life, and can be challenging to work with for a coach. The model predicts that their unstable sense of self will be heavily and possibly aggressively defended. Coaching is unlikely to be welcomed especially if perceived as remedial, however, may be more acceptable if it is per-

ceived as adding to their status or kudos. Cavanagh (2005) counsels against a direct 'attack' upon the potential narcissist, and advocates an appeal to their personal goals, and how they might need to work through others to achieve these. This poses an ethical dilemma to coaches in that it continues to pander to WSE, rather than address the perceptions of lack of competence.

Coaching the LSE client

The LSE client may seem the most in need of help from a coach. However, the model predicts that they may wish to avoid coaching for fear that it will make aggravate their poor self-opinion (Audia & Locke, 2003). They expect feedback that confirms their poor self-image, but may be more accepting of it as it confirms their self-story. Client T, initially avoidant of the coach's feedback meeting, resignedly recognised its negative messages, and deftly denied more positive themes. He recited stories of former work difficulties and how these were an unavoidable consequence of his life circumstances. He had little or no interest in self-development, as he viewed himself as fixed and unchangeable, and declined further coaching on that basis.

According to Mruk (2006), LSE issues spring from two sources, so a coaching strategy might have to tackle both worthiness and competence issues simultaneously. Deeper seated issues might involve examining the introjects that have been assimilated over the years, perhaps requiring deeper and longer levels of intervention than is typically possible in a coaching. Baumeister (1993, 1999), however, argues that true LSE is relatively rare, and that it is issues of lack of clarity that must be tackled, as well as challenging areas where an inaccurate view of the self has been formed.

Coaching the HSE client

It is questionable whether a HSE client needs coaching, given that they have a high, stable and accurate sense of their own worth and competence. They are able to accept failures and negative attributions from others with good grace and discrimination, adapting their actions as required.

Client D demonstrated many of these qualities, accepting 360 feedback with curiosity and a desire to improve. She received positive and negative messages with almost equal interest, and was quick to see how development in some dimensions would aid her overall effectiveness. She was able to discuss openly her feedback with her colleagues and peers, taking on board their suggestions. She was keen to pursue a coaching relationship, seeing it as a vital source of support to develop in areas where she knew her competence was weaker. The coaching work started by defining the areas she wished to develop, how these would contribute to her overall goals, and then moved into devising strategies for developing these competencies. Interestingly her goals were not related to her own aggrandisement so much as promoting and developing the division she headed and was passionate to see succeed. Such clients are probably close to the Ryan's idea of non-contingent self-esteem, secure in their sense of self, irrespective of circumstances or opinions

The model, based on Mruk's ideas, helps to predict how clients may respond to coaching and the type of intervention potentially required. This model is, at least, a potentially useful diagnostic lens and implies that coaches require a range of worthiness-based and competence-based strategies at their command. Further, it suggests that the coach must be suitably adept at noticing and working with defensive and protective strategies, potentially testing their interpersonal skills. Use of this model depends, however, on the coach being able to understand and interpret the client's self-assessments, and accurately pick up associated behavioural clues as the interaction unfolds.

This model, while a useful starting point, cannot pretend to map the complexity of the entire self-esteem terrain. We would, however, argue that the model allowed the coach to perceive behaviours that would otherwise

be difficult to make sense of and differentiate a range of strategies accordingly. As long as the model is not seen as the only one useful and does not overly simplify a complex phenomenon, we can recommend it for coaches who are searching for useful tools to understand the issue of self-esteem in the coaching context.

Conclusion

Clearly the level and type of a coaching client's self-esteem has a bearing on their functioning and performance, and is thus of interest to practicing coaches. While it is unlikely that clients present with explicit self-esteem problems, self-esteem as a mediating factor is likely to attend in many coaching relationships. The theories outlined above predict that this may be both a positive force propelling change and growth in the client, but may also inhibit and limit what is possible in a coaching relationship. At its extreme, coaching may be rejected, not because of its inherent lack of value but because the client values themselves too much or too little to accept it. Similarly, those who might benefit from coaching the most might also have the greatest difficulties in using it effectively.

It is less clear from the literature whether 'base' self-esteem can be sustainably shifted as authors appear to differ on this point. If fixed, the level and type of self-esteem may cap the amount and direction of change that is possible, and thus the scope of the coach to intervene productively in this direction. However, temporary dips in self-esteem, as those caused by adverse external circumstances, may be very amenable to a coaching approach. Extreme low or high self-esteem might contra-indicate coaching and require referral to therapeutic assistance.

It is clear that self-esteem is a complex area, with a range of theories attempting to make sense of it. We argue that adult-development theories offer a unique perspective on this very complexity suggesting that simplistic approaches are unlikely to be helpful for coaches. One model of self-esteem has been used in this paper to illuminate a variety of coaching encounters with full recognition that it cannot reconcile all perspectives on this phenomenon. We believe, however, that for pragmatic purposes of coaching this model can serve as a useful tool.

Finally, it is worth noting the dangers of the coach becoming a further source of unhelpful comparison to the needy client, perpetuating a cycle of continued contingent low self-esteem. Perhaps, as Ryan et al. (2003) implies, the true role of the coach in working with self-esteem issues is to help them escape the trap of contingent self-worth, and develop an authentic and accurate sense of themselves, irrespective of successes, failures, opinions and the evaluations of others. Further, this might also suggest that the most useful coaches are those that have developed such a healthy sense of self and are able to restrain themselves from inflicting their own contingent needs on others.

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Evaluating the impact of a peer coaching intervention on well-being amongst psychology undergraduate students

Emma Short, Gail Kinman & Sarah Baker

Objectives: *To examine the effectiveness of a peer coaching intervention on aspects of well-being in students.*
Design: *A two-factor mixed design was employed.*
Method: *Two groups of third-year undergraduate psychology students participated in this study. The coaching group (N=32) comprised 24 females and eight males (mean age 25.23, SD=8.07) who were studying coaching psychology. This group was introduced to a model of coaching and practiced skills during lectures/seminars. They subsequently conducted and received five sessions of peer coaching before an examination period. The control group (N=33) comprised 30 females and three males (mean age 24.77, SD=5.57). This group were also third-year students, but were not studying coaching psychology or engaged in peer coaching.*

Measures were taken at Time 1 (pre-coaching intervention) and Time 2 (post-coaching intervention). Demographic data was obtained and the General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg, 1992) and the Inventory of Personal Problems (Berkham et al., 1996), were utilised. The topics covered in coaching sessions and the perceived effectiveness of the technique were examined at Time 2.
Results: *Levels of psychological distress were high at both data points. Findings highlighted significant differences in outcome variables for both groups between Times 1 and 2. Nonetheless, the increase in psychological distress was significantly lower in the peer coaching group. The most common topics covered in coaching sessions were relationships, health and career issues and 67 per cent of the sample found the intervention to be at least moderately effective.*
Conclusions: *Findings highlight the potential value of peer coaching in helping students manage their well-being during a potentially stressful period. Follow-up research is ongoing to examine ways of extending this technique in university settings.*

Keywords: *peer coaching, well-being, students, stress, interpersonal problems.*

THE NEED FOR research to evaluate the effectiveness of coaching strategies is widely recognised in the emerging field of coaching psychology (Linley, 2006). Indeed, it has been argued that without the systematic empirical evaluation of the success of coaching interventions, coaching practice may be seen as being based on hypothetical theories and conjecture (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007). It is, therefore, necessary to develop coaching techniques that are firmly grounded in evidence-based principles (Stober & Grant, 2006; Linley, 2006).

Solution-focused coaching is rapidly gaining popularity in the field. This technique does not seek to alleviate long-term underlying problems, but assists people in meeting their goals by helping them develop their skills and resources (Kauffman & Scoular, 2004). By examining the client's core values and life experiences, skills and resources that had previously been unrecognised may be brought to light. Solutions can subsequently be developed that help achieve the identified goals. Research findings indeed indicate that solution-focused coaching has the potential to enhance goal-setting and psychological functioning. Studies have found this technique may improve stress management capabilities and enhance goal striving, emotional well-being, hope, self-confidence and job satisfaction (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2006; Kauffman & Scoular, 2004; Seligman, 2002). There is

some evidence that gains might be maintained over time (Green, Oades & Grant, 2006).

Coaching in education

Peer-coaching has been described as a relationship between teachers based on sharing experiences, practices and planning, with learning taking place through observation and skills transfer (Joyce & Showers, 1996; Zwart et al., 2007). This technique has been used as a means of facilitating the implementation of new practices and approaches within teaching. The use of peer coaching to enhance the professional development of teachers is strongly endorsed by the UK Department of Education (DfEE, 2001). In the US, large corporations such as Microsoft, sponsor programmes to promote the positive benefits of peer-coaching interaction between teachers.

The model of peer coaching utilised in teaching typically entails groups of two to three teachers coming together to offer support, feedback and encouragement. Strategies employed include modelling from observed demonstration and skills transfer by assistance. Direct verbal feedback is avoided, however, as it may be perceived by colleagues as evaluative and, therefore, detrimental to the coaching process (Joyce & Showers, 1996). Within these peer-coaching programmes, the coach is seen as the person who teaches and the coachee as the person who learns through observation (Joyce & Showers, 1996). It could be argued that this approach has more in common with mentoring than coaching, as the teacher with experience offers guidance to a protégé to help them gain knowledge and skills (Greene & Grant, 2003). Coaching differs from mentoring as it is based on a collaborative relationship that aims to facilitate the development and enhancement of skills and performance through feedback, reflection and self-directed learning (Greene & Grant, 2003; Green, Grant & Rynsaardt, 2007).

Life coaching in education

Life coaching is a systematic, structured and goal-focused approach to helping individuals to construct individual solutions to make positive changes in their lives (Green, Oades & Grant, 2006; Spence & Grant, 2007). In contrast to standard educational tutoring, mentoring and coaching, which seeks to enhance and develop academic performance, the cognitive-behavioural, solution-focused model of life coaching can promote motivation, goal striving and attainment, and enhance personal growth in an educational setting (Grant, 2003; Green, Oades & Grant, 2006; Spence & Grant, 2007; Grant, 2008; Green, Grant & Rynsaardt, 2007; Spence & Grant, 2007). The coaching process can also exert a strong influence on psychological well-being; studies have found that life coaching can also help students manage anxiety and stress and, accordingly, enhance resilience and perceived quality of life (Grant, 2003; Campbell & Gardner, 2005; Spence & Grant, 2007).

Whilst life coaching is normally conducted in one-to-one sessions by trained professional coaches (Spence & Grant, 2007), it is argued that the use of peer coaching has the potential to enhance the skills and personal development of students. It has also been proposed that there can be benefits for the peer coach as well as the recipient of coaching, in terms of enhanced socio-emotional development and improved interpersonal skills such as active listening, questioning and probing (Ladyshewsky, 2006; Laske, 2006). Although studies have assessed the impact of life coaching in this context, as yet, little systematic research has been conducted that examines the impact of peer coaching techniques in students. The studies that have been conducted tend to yield contradictory findings. Sue-Chan and Latham (2004) and Spence and Grant (2007) reported that an external coach was perceived to be more credible and effective than a peer-coach, whereas other research has yielded more positive findings. Ladyshewsky (2006) observed that student

peer coaches have greater credibility than academic or support staff. Peer coaching by and for students has been found to promote self esteem, motivation and personal growth and enhance achievement (Hudson, 1999 Ladyshewsky, 2006; Zwart et al., 2007). Despite there being strong evidence that students can experience high levels of stress, especially during assessment periods, the impact of peer coaching on psychological well-being has been little examined in university environments. It is argued that this technique has the potential to enhance well-being in this context.

Student stress

There is evidence that university students are subjected to considerable stress and that this has increased in recent years (Benton et al., 2003; Gall, Evans & Bellerose, 2000) The most common stressors reported by students include relationship conflicts, academic pressure, health, financial difficulties, relationships with family, friends and peers and life transition problems (Green et al., 2007; Roussis & Wells, 2008). The final year of university study is thought to be particularly stressful owing to anxiety about examinations, dissertation preparation and plans for the future (Abouserie, 1994; Deary et al., 2003; Devonport & Lane, 2006).

It is important for universities to help students manage the stress they experience, as this is likely to lead to impaired academic performance as well as exert a negative impact on well-being (Akgun & Ciarrochi, 2003; Struthers, Perry & Menec, 2000). As highlighted above, final-year students may be particularly vulnerable. It is argued that interventions that help students develop their multi-tasking solutions and enhance their time management skills are likely to provide an additional benefit of providing life-long stress management skills (Hudd et al., 2000).

Aims of study

Based on the research reviewed above, it is proposed that cognitive behavioural, solution focused peer coaching has the potential to help students manage stress and enhance their well-being. This study, therefore, examines the effectiveness of a peer coaching intervention on levels of psychological distress and inter-personal problems in students during the run-up to a final year examination period. As it has been recommended that future research on the effectiveness of peer coaching in university settings should utilise students from the same cohort (Green et al., 2007), a group of final year psychology students from the University of Bedfordshire was studied.

The study context

Psychology students at the University of Bedfordshire have the option to study coaching psychology during the final year of their undergraduate degree. The module is rigorously evidence-based and incorporates academic and practical components. It aims to provide students with an understanding of the skills of peer coaching, the psychological principles that underlie them and the opportunity to develop and practice these skills. Students are required to engage in a supervised peer coaching practice with two peers. As the use of a model has been shown to be beneficial to the structure of coaching interventions (Greene & Grant, 2003), the TGROW model is utilised (Downey, 2003). This is an extension of the GROW model proposed by Whitmore (1996). The additional 'T' stands for Topic or Theme, and refers to the broad area that the coachee wants to work on.

Previous research that has evaluated the impact of peer coaching has typically exposed participants to intensive training in coaching techniques through, for example, one-day workshops (Grant, 2003; Green et al, 2006; Grant, 2008). There is evidence that exposing learners to information over an extended period of time and allowing them to gradually accumulate and practice skills is likely to deepen learning and increase insight (Grant, 2007). The present study, therefore, extends previous research by providing coaching training over a 12-week period.

Method
Design
This study utilised a longitudinal design, with two assessment points pre- and post-coaching separated by six weeks

Participants
Two groups of third-year undergraduate psychology students participated in this study. The coaching group (*N*=32) comprised 24 females and eight males with a mean age of 25.23 (*SD*=8.07). This group was registered on a module on coaching psychology and attended a one hour lecture and one hour tutorial each week. There were 33 participants in the control group which comprised 30 females and three males with a mean age of 24.77 (*SD*=5.57). Like the study group, the control group were final year psychology students, but were not studying coaching psychology or engaged in peer coaching. The participants for the coaching group and the control group were approached separately during classes. The request to participate was made at the beginning of a lecture by a researcher who was independent of the teaching team.

Measures
Demographic information
Age, gender, marital status, dependents, accommodation, education, employment and ethnicity were assessed.

Psychological distress
This was assessed by the 12-item General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12; Goldberg & Williams, 1988). This questionnaire is widely used as a measure of general distress. Items are rated on a fully anchored four-point scale. An example of an item is: 'Have you recently felt constantly under strain?', where responses range from 'not at all' to 'much more than usual'. Mean scores were taken across items, with high scores representing poorer well-being

Interpersonal problems
The IIP-32 (Barkham, Hardy & Startup,

1996) is a reliable and valid short form of the original Inventory of Interpersonal Problems developed by Horowitz et al. (1988). The IIP-32 consists of 32 items. Nineteen of the items are based on behaviour participants find difficult 'It is hard for me to…' (e.g. 'to disagree with other people', 'to be supportive of another person's goals in life') and 13 of the items are based on behaviour that participants do 'too much' (e.g. 'I fight with other people', 'I open up to people'). Each item is rated on five-point scale ranging from 'not at all' (0) to 'extremely' (4). Mean scores were calculated across items, with high scores indicating general interpersonal problems (Horowitz et al., 1988).

Topics addressed in coaching intervention
A single item investigated the type of problems that students discussed during the coaching intervention. Participants were asked to indicate areas from a specified list (e.g. 'Relationships', 'Health' and 'Career'). Participants were also given the option not to disclose this information.

Level of satisfaction with coaching intervention
This was examined by a single item that assessed satisfaction with the peer coaching intervention on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 'not effective' to 5 'extremely effective'.

Procedure
Participants in the control group were approached at university and asked to participate as control in a peer-coaching study. The control group comprised final year undergraduate psychology students who had not taken part in the peer-coaching intervention. Participants in the study group were introduced to the key principles and models of coaching, including the TGROW model (Downey, 2003) utilised in the study, during lectures on the coaching psychology module. As described above, coaching skills were practised and in seminars.

At Time 1 (pre-coaching intervention) measures of psychological distress and inter-

personal problems were taken from both the study group and the control group. The study group subsequently conducted and received five sessions of peer-coaching over six weeks, prior to an examination period.

At Time 2 (post-coaching intervention) measures of psychological distress and interpersonal problems were once again taken from both groups. In addition, measures of perceived effectiveness of the peer-coaching intervention and types of problems addressed in peer coaching were obtained from the study group. Time 2 measures were taken two weeks before the final exam period.

Ethics
The research received full ethical clearance from the Departmental Ethics Committee. Peer coaches were instructed to work within their competencies and to be mindful of the mental health of their coachees. Students were not obliged to participate in the research project. Codes were used to match data from Time 1 and Time 2 meaning that individual respondents were not identifiable to the researchers.

Results
Coaching topics and perceived success of coaching intervention
The most common topics covered in coaching sessions were relationships (36 per cent of participants), health (24 per cent) and career issues (44 per cent). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which

they believed the coaching intervention had been effective. As can be seen from Figure 1, 72 per cent found it to be 'quite effective' or 'moderately effective'. No respondents indicated that the intervention had been 'very effective' or 'not at all effective'.

Impact of coaching intervention
The means and standard deviations for the study variables at Time 1 (pre-coaching intervention) are shown in Table 1. Independent samples t-tests found no significant differences between the study and control groups on levels of psychological distress (p=.21) or interpersonal problems (p=.32).

In order to examine whether any significant change in any outcome variable occurred between Times 1 and 2, repeated measures t-tests were conducted. Table 2 provides details for the study group and the control group. As can be seen, for the study group no statistically significant differences were found between the two time points. However, the reduction in mean levels of self-reported personal problems at Time 2 approached significance at .06.

For the control group, mean levels of personal problems and psychological distress (indicated by the GHQ-12 scores) were higher at Time 2 than Time 1. The difference in levels of psychological distress was found to be statistically significant (t=−3.76, p=.002). Figure 2 shows the changes in the GHQ-12 scores for the study and control groups at times 1 and 2.

Table 1: Mean scores for study variables at Time 1.

	Study Group Mean scores *(SD)*	Control Group Mean scores *(SD)*
IIP–32	75.37 (22.85)	68.29 (18.67)
GHQ–12	15.71 (8.01)	14.82 (8.73)

Table 2: Mean scores and *SD* for study variables at Times 1 and 2.

| | Study Group | | Control Group | |
	Mean scores *(SD)*	T value/significance	Mean scores *(SD)*	T value/significance
GHQ-12				
Time 1	15.71 (8.01)		14.82 (8.73)	
Time 2	16.08 (9.06)	-0.59/ns	19. 89 (5.86)	-3.76/p=0.002
IIP-32				
Time 1	75.37 (22.85)		68.29 (18.67)	
Time 2	68.77 (18.32)	2.00/p=0.058	71.65 (5.86)	-1.01/ns

Figure 1: Perceived effectiveness of peer coaching Intervention.
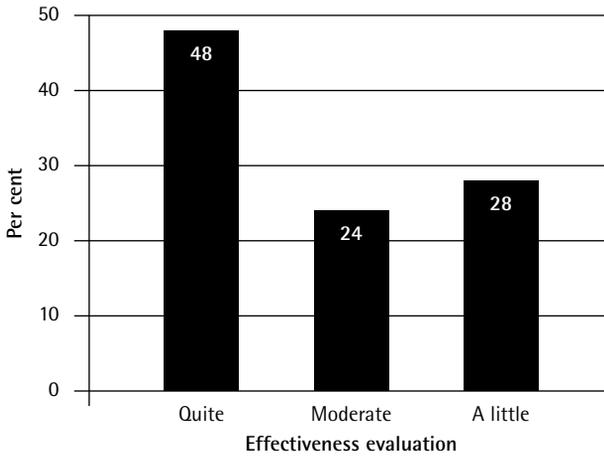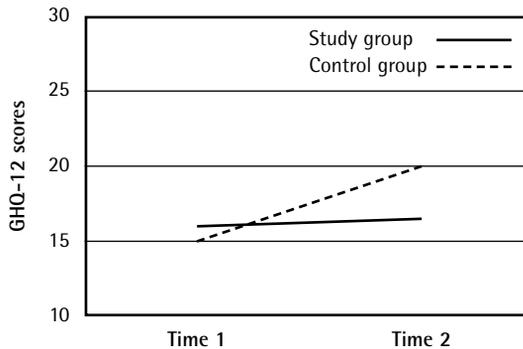

Figure 2: GHQ scores for Study and Control Groups at Times 1 and 2.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide evidence that a short programme of peer coaching may be beneficial for students at a stressful time in their lives. The peer coaching programme may have offered some protection from an increase in psychological distress during a stressful period. Some tentative evidence is also provided that peer coaching may protect students from enhanced interpersonal personal problems during this time.

Mean scores for GHQ-12 for both groups were high in comparison with published norms from occupational groups and community samples (Mullarkey et al., 1999). This finding, together with other studies that highlight high levels of stress in final year students (e.g. Deary et al., 2003) clearly indicates that interventions are required to help them manage their psychological well-being more effectively. Although levels of psychological distress did not reduce after the peer coaching intervention, neither did they increase like those of the control group.

Coaching topics covered during sessions tended to correspond with those highlighted in previous studies as the main sources of stress in students (Roussis & Wells, 2008). Relationships, health and career issues appear to be the most salient sources of stress for final year students. Nonetheless future research might examine the type of problems presented during peer coaching sessions using a more free format as there may have been topics that were not included in the categories provided.

Previous research findings have suggested that coaching by peers may be seen as less effective than coaching by professionals (Sue-Chan & Latham, 2004; Spence & Grant, (2007).) The present study, however, provides strong evidence that peer coaching techniques can be successful in university settings. For the majority of participants (67 per cent), peer coaching was found to be at least moderately effective. This highlights the potential utility of peer coaching interventions for helping students formulate goals and manage stress. Findings have the potential to enhance support structures to foster resilience in student populations. Peer coaching might, therefore, be a practical, fruitful and low cost method by which student mental health might be managed during stressful periods.

Limitations of this study

Although it has added to the evidence base for the effectiveness of solution-focused peer coaching techniques in an educational context, the study had a number of limitations that should be taken into consideration. Firstly, the sample size is relatively small and a cohort from one year group . It is possible, therefore, that the results may not be generalised to the larger university population. In addition, self-report data was utilised, which may be subject to demand characteristics, such as social desirability bias; students may wish to represent their experience as positive, as a way of demonstrating engagement with the coaching process. Moreover, self-report of the benefits attributed to peer coaching may have tempered the validity of the results, as the data reflects a subjective estimate of the competence of the peer coach rather than an objective measure of the benefits provided. It is clear, however, that individual perceptions of the effectiveness of the process and individual well-being are fundamentally important in studies of this type.

Conclusion

This exploratory study has presented original data demonstrating some benefits of peer coaching within the higher education context. There are several areas where future research may be fruitful. Although peer coaching has been generally found to be effective, insight into the type of problems that are most receptive to peer coaching techniques is needed. Further work is also required to examine the benefits of peer coaching to student well-being and academic performance, together with the extent to which any benefits are maintained over time. It has been suggested that peer

coaching has benefits for the coach as well as the coachee (Ladyshewsky, 2006). The present study did not assess this issue, but the nature of these benefits to well-being and personal development should be further explored in a university environment.

Finally, although this study has examined the coachee's perception of coaching effectiveness, it would be useful to assess the coach's perception of the coachee's readiness and suitability to engage in peer coaching.

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Developmental coaching: Business benefit – fact or fad? An evaluative study to explore the impact of coaching in the workplace.

Elouise Leonard-Cross

Objectives: To contribute to research on the return on investment and business benefit of workplace coaching by using a quasi-experimental design. Specifically, to investigate the impact that in-house coaches, using developmental coaching approaches, had on levels of coachee self-efficacy.

Design: The study used action research (Lewin, 1946) and a quasi-experimental method to investigate the impact and process of developmental coaching, evaluating coaching which took place over a two-year period. A large sample and multiple data collection methods were utilised to ensure research was a valid reflection of the current status and perception of coaching within the organisation in the reported study.

Methodology: Thematic analysis of qualitative research informed the content of coach and coachee questionnaires, supported by a holistic literature review. Coachees and the comparative group of non-coached staff completed questionnaires assessing their general levels of self-efficacy and personal experiences of development. Coaches completed a self-perception questionnaire to capture their personal views on the experience and if any changes had been observed in the coachee which could relate to the construct of self-efficacy.

Results: Participants that had received developmental coaching (N=61) had higher levels of self-efficacy than the control group of participants (N=57) who had not received coaching.

Conclusions: This research aimed to explore whether developmental coaching does actually deliver business benefits and results suggest that coaching can impact positively upon an individual's level of self-efficacy.

Keywords: coaching, developmental coaching, self-efficacy, coaching return on investment (ROI), coaching culture, managers as coaches.

COACHING, as a process, has existed in different guises for centuries. In a business setting coaching is generally seen as a means of developing people, to enable more effective performance and fulfilment of potential (Zeus & Skiffington, 2006). Developmental coaching describes coaching that addresses the whole person. Being holistic in nature it can include home and work life, plus more personal professional issues (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004), such as relationships and career issues. It is essentially non-directive, as the coach assumes the role of the facilitator, primarily listening and asking questions and acting as a 'thought partner'. This is also the type of coaching preferred by most coachees (Bacon, 2003). The reported study considers developmental coaching within the workplace and begins with a literature review, looking at workplace coaching and current trends, evaluating the Return on Investment (RoI) of coaching and the concept of self-efficacy and possible coaching links.

Coaching within the workplace

Coaching is a large and expanding area, with a great deal of exposure within Learning and Development in a business setting (CIPD, 2006). Media coverage of coaching has tended to project a highly positive image and research suggests that the positive image of coaching presented in the media is supported by the experiences of the people involved (Hall et al., 1999).

Perceptions of coaching differ widely. With increased coverage it has become a more accessible development option which can help to shorten the learning curve and adaptation to new environment or role. Depending upon how coaching is used within an organisation it can impact upon a range of aspects of working life. The benefits identified include teamwork, quality, communications, job-satisfaction, flexibility, performance, ownership, succession planning and career planning (Williams & Offley, 2005). To develop and nurture talent of the future organisations must seek out staff that can grow and develop into roles, developing not just technical skill and job experience but also interpersonal skills. Coaching is one of the most powerful methods of developing these 'soft' skills (Bloch, 1996), however, as with any development intervention, it does not necessarily work successfully for all individuals and in all situations.

A recent change to coaching within the workplace has included the shift towards using internal coaches, as opposed to employing coaches external to the organisation (CIPD, 2006). Interest in line managers who can coach is growing. In a review of recent coaching research Lucas (2007) found 73 per cent of HR professionals surveyed anticipate an increase in the use of line managers as coaches over the next few years and 64 per cent consider there will be a decrease in coaching by external practitioners. This suggests organisations are not only looking to use coaching purely as a tool but also to develop, on a larger scale, by pursuing a 'coaching culture' which can be embedded into the organisation. This is echoed by research completed by CIPD (2006), whereby 75 per cent of organisations surveyed admitted they were committing time and effort in attempting to implement a coaching culture. This pursuit of a coaching culture can have benefits; with widespread quality, coaching an organisation can learn new things more quickly and adapt to change more effectively, which is particularly desirable in the current economic climate.

Implementing coaching within an organisation necessitates time, effort and a clear framework for stakeholders, coaches and coachees to function within. It is essential that coaching has top management commitment with a clear strategy that supports other organisational strategies (Hipkiss, 2006). Time factor was found to be one of the biggest barriers to an effective coaching process (Sutherland, 2005), tending to be abandoned in the face of more urgent, if less important, demands on the manager's time. To be successful coaching requires full integration and using internal coaches necessitates considered decisions on how best to select individuals who are capable to undertake what is required (Johnson, 2004). Having internal coaches allows the dual development benefit of up-skilling managers and offering coaching to staff members. The generic nature of many coaching skills also allows managers to improve their leadership skills (Wilson, 2005), which has the capacity to add strategic value; the potential of which has rarely been evaluated and remains largely untapped (Rider, 2002). In a study comparing managers' successes on project work, following either coach training or conventional approaches, there was a 22.4 per cent increase in productivity after management training but 88 per cent after coach training (Olivero et al., 1997). Considering this, it is clear that by taking the view that coaching is a purely individual development option organisations can fail to capitalise on the full benefit that is attainable through coaching (Rider, 2002) which can include not only benefits from coaching delivery but also the skills and performance development that can come from functioning within a coaching framework and operating coach and coachee development.

Investment must be made in coach training to ensure they are credible and effective, with time and focus to raise self-belief, awareness and responsibility (Brown & Wilkes, 2004). The standard of the coach development is an important consideration, particularly for organisations pursuing a coaching culture, as a good quality internal

coach can be instrumental in spreading the positive message of coaching throughout an organisation (King & Eaton, 1999). The European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) identify standards in coach development, for coaches working within a specific context that is known to them (workplace) a foundation level training should typically involve five days training (Parsloe, 2006). Within the host organisation, which was the basis for the reported study, the coach training was at two levels (first line management and middle/senior management), externally accredited and involved facilitated teaching, reflection and supervised practice.

Evaluating coaching

Literature and business media suggest coaching is highly prevalent, however, a key criticism levied at coaching is for the lack of evaluation that takes place. Although establishing the effectiveness of coaching is important, coaching programmes, if evaluated at all, are often only reviewed at the reactionary level of the coachees (Fairhurst, 2007). Therefore, successful strategies and approaches are less likely to be identified making it difficult to learn from and model success stories (Kearns, 2006). It is questioned whether coaching offers a valuable return on investment (RoI) for organisations and studies have identified different figures for this. The RoI identified through evaluative studies has ranged from 200 per cent net over one year (Kearns, 2006) to 5.7 times the original organisation investment (McGovern et al., 2001).

Key issues in evaluating coaching centre around separating tangible benefits, for example, performance, improved income generation and intangible benefits, for example, interpersonal skills and workplace dynamics. Intangible elements, despite being less easy to assess than tangible elements, are crucial when measuring the impact coaching has on the bottom line (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006). A range of intangible benefits identified by Sutherland

(2005) included career progression for over a quarter of coachees, 50 per cent implemented service improvement projects, 57 per cent job enrichment and 43 per cent undertaking or registering for further study. Increased levels of self-esteem, problem solving skills and greater insight were also reported. Parker-Wilkins' (2006) study found coaching produced intangible and monetary benefits for seven out of eight business impact areas and RoI of 689 per cent. Smither et al. (2003) found managers who worked with a coach were more likely to set specific goals and solicit ideas for improvement from their supervisors and ratings from their direct line reports were also more improved.

To successfully evaluate a coaching programme, sources, in addition to the coachee, should be included. The perspective of the coach can add valuable insights into aspects of the coaching relationship and individual outcomes. Fairhurst (2007) argues four main sources should be considered when evaluating – coaches, coachees, organisational perspective and documents. In addition, it is proposed evaluation should include attitude questionnaires with rating scales, allowing for both negative and positive perceptions and face-to-face interviews which allow for more in-depth exploration.

Self-efficacy links to coaching

Considering the less tangible business benefits of coaching requires firstly looking at the benefits for the individuals that have participated in developmental coaching. Key benefits for coachees often include increased confidence and more effective problem solving techniques, with change becoming easier because the skills needed to make it happen are more readily acquired (Redshaw, 2000). An individual's estimate, or personal judgment, of their own ability to succeed in reaching a specific goal is referred to as 'self-efficacy' (Bandura, 1997) and this appears to echo coaching outcomes for many individuals. Self efficacy has been seen to be integral in an individual's perception of

reaching improved performance (Gist & Mitchell, 1992) and increases the likelihood of achieving success. It has been suggested that self-belief may play a role in cognitive engagement and that enhancing this may lead to increased use of cognitive strategies that, in turn, may lead to improved performance (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). An individual requires relevant skills to accomplish tasks but self-perceptions of capability help determine what individuals do with the knowledge and skills they have (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy beliefs influence the choices made and courses of action pursued; most engage in tasks they feel competent and confident in and avoid those which they do not. Levels of self-efficacy help to determine how much effort an individual will expend on an activity, how long they will persevere when confronted by obstacles and how resilient they will be in the face of adverse situations.

Pajares (1997) completed a review on self-efficacy research and found efficacy beliefs impact upon the amount of stress and anxiety individuals experience. Lower levels of self-efficacy result in higher levels of anxiety, as the individual believes things are tougher than they actually are, which fosters stress and depression. Coaching has two components; skill development and psychological development. The intent of the psychological component is to develop the coachee's self-efficacy (Popper & Lipshitz, 1992). A key differential is between self-efficacy and the concept of self-esteem. Self-efficacy is a pre-requisite for successful performance, while self-esteem tends to be enhanced following that success (Cockerill et al., 1996).

Although self-efficacy is a key psychological concept, and scholars have increasingly emphasised the importance of a person's cognitive estimate of their capability to perform a given task, there are few studies of the construct within business literature (Luthans & Peterson, 2002). Verbal coaching and information that a person receives about their performance, skills and any future

expectations of them all influence self-efficacy (Bandura, 2004), by persuading the individual (explicitly and implicitly) that a given performance level, goal or aim is attainable. An individual with high self-efficacy works harder and longer than an individual with low self-efficacy (Wood & Bandura, 1989) thus the construct has a huge impact on individual performance and organisational development. Self-efficacy may be a key variable that is altered by the process of coaching and, as this has been seen to be such a central psychological construct in high achieving individuals, may account, in part, for the success of developmental coaching.

Aim
The reported study aims to contribute to research on the RoI and business benefit of workplace coaching by investigating the impact of developmental coaching on levels of self efficacy, using a quasi-experimental design.

Hypothesis
1. Participants that have received developmental coaching will have significantly higher levels of self-efficacy than participants that have not, based on a multiple choice self-efficacy measure.

Rationale for methodology
Although there is often a positive regard for coaching within business settings, many do not fully understand the concept of coaching, considering it to be a remedial action for those with specific performance gaps, therefore, the need exists to develop a more coherent and well understood perception of the nature and benefits of business coaching (Clegg et al., 2005). This supports the need for exploratory field research, using valid methods to investigate what is actually going on in practice and the real impacts on all involved. In an attempt to identify specific 'intangible' benefits from coaching the reported study has focused around changes in behaviour and percep-

tions of the coach and coachee that have direct business benefit, plus individual benefit. Comparing a coached group with a 'control' group can be a very effective approach (Carter, 2006); therefore, this design was employed in the coachee questionnaire phase of research. The successful mastery and vicarious experiences of a coach may mean that the process of coaching could also improve the coaches' levels of self-efficacy. This has not received extensive consideration within coaching research literature, so was built into the reported study to explore the possibility of the coach developing in this way.

The reported study contributes to this growing area of coaching by using an internal coaching programme, which trains management volunteers as coaches who then undertake a practical coaching role within a large organisation. The reported study includes coaches, coachees and stakeholders representing the organisations perspective, plus access to organisational documentation supporting the process. Coaching within the host organisation had taken place over a two year period which enabled the evaluation to encapsulate coaches and coachees at different levels of the process, from a more reactionary initial 'feel good' factor to those seeing behavioural and business impacts and benefits.

Methodology
The overall design of the study was based on action research, deemed suitable due to the nature of coaching and the insufficient volume of experimental and field research. Action research, in the context of the reported study, is the process of research that uses knowledge gained as a basis for reflection for the researcher, the outcome of which is used to inform and direct the subsequent action taken.

A quasi-experimental post-test design was used for the study (Breakwell et al., 2000) as the focus groups, interviews and questionnaires were carried out following the coaching intervention. To ensure validity a

host organisation was identified to enable field research to be completed. Figure 1 outlines the key stages in research. The research took place within a large public sector organisation, employing in excess of 3000 staff over 12 geographical locations. The organisation had implemented accredited coach training from July 2005, offering those in management level posts the opportunity to undertake a coaching qualification. The time frame and extensive coach training that had taken place within the organisation enabled access to a large sample.

Focus groups and interviews
This stage of research was qualitative, with separate focus groups held with coached staff and coaches. One-to-one interviews took place with coachees and stakeholders. A range of open questions were used to facilitate discussion around key areas. A vast amount of data was gathered and interrogated for key themes, which were the basis of questionnaire design.

Questionnaires
The staff questionnaire was quasi-experimental; participants were either in a coached or non-coached group, however, this was based on development over the previous two years and the researcher had no control over group allocation. As this phase of the research was comparative an independent groups design was employed. The predictor (or independent) variable in the staff questionnaire phase was membership of the coached or non-coached staff group. The predicted (or dependent) variable was the scorings given to the self-efficacy and self rating questions. Equal numbers of questionnaires were sent to coached staff and randomly selected non-coached staff (with a return rate of 82 per cent and 77 per cent respectively).

The coach questionnaire was non-comparative and used to evaluate the programme and gain coach opinion on the impact of developmental coaching upon their coachee. Questionnaires were sent to

Figure 1: Overview of stages of research.
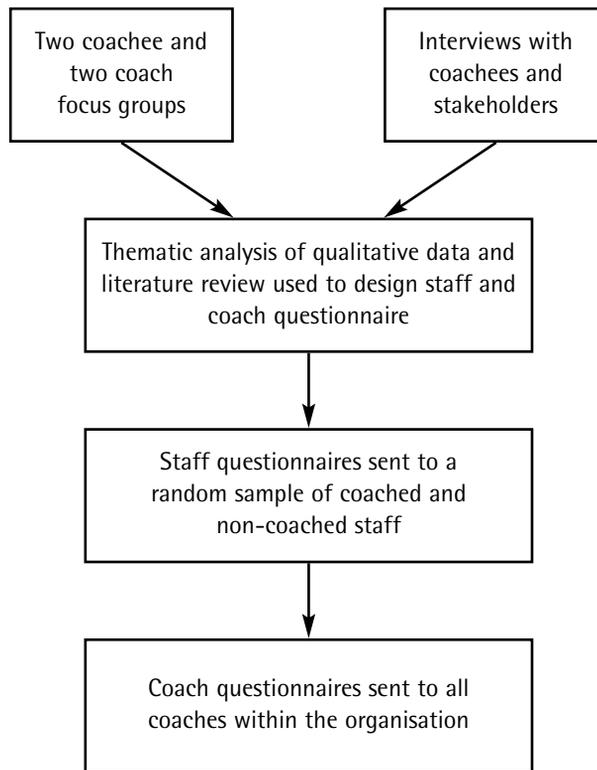
all staff who had undertaken a coaching role within the last two years (with a 70 per cent return rate).

Questionnaires were sent to all 74 staff within the organisation who had received developmental coaching during the previous two years (a greater number of staff in total had received developmental coaching but had left the organisation). The same questionnaire was sent to an equal number of staff who had not received developmental coaching, these staff were matched to the coached staff based on geographical location and job type and were randomly selected by contacts in each geographical location who had no additional knowledge on the research. Coach questionnaires were sent to all 75 staff who had undertaken coach

training and practical coaching delivery during the previous two years. All held managerial level posts.

Coached and non-coached staff questionnaires were developed based on thematic analysis of the coachee focus groups and interviews. As data from the focus group suggested possible increases of general self-efficacy in a number of coached staff a reliable and valid self-efficacy measure was included to assess general levels of self-efficacy. The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) (Schwarzer and Jerusalem, 1995) tool was selected due to its simple questions and accessible language, good reliability and criterion related validity. In samples from 23 nations, Cronbach's alphas ranged from .76 to .90, with the majority in the high .80s. For

consistency GSES four-option rating scale was utilised for all subsequent questions.

Based on themes extracted from focus group data and literature, questions on personal state, views on the future and understanding of the concept of coaching were also included. Two anxiety state questions, related to job changes and the future were included based on research that suggested anxiety is negatively correlated to higher levels of self-efficacy. In addition general questions on access to development options were included to evaluate staff opinion. Three of the questions were designed in a different direction to the others therefore required reversing at the analysis stage. Eleven evaluative questions on the coachee's experience of coaching were included as a separate section at the end of the questionnaire, only staff who had received developmental coaching during the previous two years were directed to complete these.

The coach questionnaire was devised based on coach focus groups and coachee focus groups and interviews. Questions were included on the coaches perceptions of the coachees levels of self-efficacy, specifically whether the coach perceived that coaching had increased these. These were similar in nature to the content of the GSES but were re-worded to fit with the coaches' perspective. For consistency the same rating scale used in the staff questionnaire was used throughout the coach questionnaire. Three questions were included to establish whether being a coach had any impact upon the coach's personal perceived level of self-efficacy.

Participants
All participants were employed by the host organisation and worked within an Administration and Clerical function. All coached staff that participated had experienced developmental coaching during the previous two years. All coaches that participated had undertaken coach training within the previous two years. Two focus groups were held with coached staff, eight individuals participated in total. Two focus groups were held

with coaches, nine individuals participated in total. Smaller focus groups were utilised as they are often seen to be more appropriate for complex topics (Kruger & Casey, 2000).

Analyses and findings

Qualitative data
Transcripts from focus groups and interviews were analysed for key trends and concepts. This included coding to themes of self-efficacy, understanding of coaching, benefits of coaching, issues with coaching and career perceptions. These were used as the basis for the design of the questionnaire. This data offered insight into the real life experiences of receiving developmental coaching and for coaches the impact of coach training and undertaking a coaching role.

Staff questionnaire
The self-efficacy measure included in the questionnaire was the key element of research investigating whether participants that had received developmental coaching would have significantly higher levels of self-efficacy than those who had not, based on a multiple choice self-efficacy measure. Initial analyses of the data indicated the suitability of parametric testing so an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the combined self-efficacy scores on the GSES for coached and non-coached participants. Scores for coached staff (M=3.29, SD=.26) were significantly higher than those of non-coached staff (M=2.89, SD=.30), t(116)=7.70, p<.001. The magnitude of the differences of the means was large (eta squared=.34), suggesting 34 per cent of variance in self-efficacy was explained by whether coaching was received.

Two anxiety measure questions were incorporated into the questionnaire, based on literature that suggested higher levels of self-efficacy were linked to lower levels of anxiety. The combined anxiety scores for coached (M=2.32, SD=.76) and non-coached staff (M=2.13, SD=.81) were not found to differ significantly, t(116)=1.30, p=.197. To

support the concept of higher levels of self-efficacy increasing how optimistic an individual feels about the future, two questions were included relating to this. Coached staff (*M*=3.04, *SD*=.57) were significantly happier with their career progression and direction then non-coached staff (*M*=2.61, *SD*=.56), *t*(116)=4.16, *p*<.001. Staff who had received coaching (*M*=3.07, *SD*=.75) rated their satisfaction at work significantly higher than those who had not received coaching (*M*=2.63, *SD*=.65), *t*(116)=3.36, *p*=.001 and coached staff (*M*=3.69, *SD*=.53) also felt more aware of their strengths and weaknesses than non-coached staff (*M*=3.30, *SD*=.46), *t*(116)=4.24, *p*<.001.

Figure 2 details the breakdown of ratings for each of the coaching experience evaluation questions in percentages. Data reflects a generally beneficial experience of coaching.

Coach Questionnaire

The coach questionnaire was issued to individuals who had undertaken a coaching role during the previous two years and had no comparative group. The data was interrogated by gaining frequencies for each of the constructs.

The perceptions of coaches supported the findings in the coachee questionnaire – that as a result of coaching levels of self-efficacy had increased. From the data 92 per cent of coaches in the sample felt it was moderately or exactly true that their coachee was now more able to deal efficiently with unexpected events, 88 per cent believed coachees had skills to address unforeseen situations, 94.1 per cent believed their coachee was more able to deal with difficulties and 94.2 per cent felt coachees were more able to generate solutions to problems – all as a result of receiving coaching. All coaches in the sample felt it was either moderately or exactly true that their coachee was clearer of their goals and aims due to being coached.

Acting as a coach also appears to have impacted on the coaches' perceptions of their levels of general self-efficacy with 98.1 per cent of the sample feeling it was moderately

or exactly true that acting as a coach gave them skills that would help them to deal with issues in the future. Additionally 86.6 per cent of the sample felt that it had made them clearer on personal goals and 94.2 per cent more able to generate solutions to problems.

Discussion and conclusions

The linking of the construct of self-efficacy as an intangible product of developmental workplace coaching opens up an interesting research avenue, such intangible benefits are often very difficult to define and quantify (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006). This study found that levels of general self-efficacy were significantly higher in the sample of coached staff than the sample of non-coached staff. In addition to the GSES showing higher levels of self efficacy, comments from coachees in focus groups and on questionnaires supported this general feeling '…through the coaching I have received I have learned to turn threats or barriers into opportunities' and 'I can now go into different places that I do not know and feel ok about myself and that I can deal with whatever comes with it.' Coaches were asked about coachees levels of self-efficacy by rating five questions based on the GSES questions in the staff questionnaire, this was to get a more reflective picture from both perspectives of the process. This data supported the coachee perceptions of higher self-efficacy with coaches perceiving areas around dealing with unexpected events, difficulties and unforeseen situations, clarity on personal goals and generating solutions to problems as increased due to being coached.

Increased levels of self-efficacy result in further benefits for the organisation and individual. These incude communications, job-satisfaction, quality, flexibility, performance, ownership, succession planning and career planning (Williams & Offley, 2005). The questionnaire asked participants to rate general benefits (skills, confidence, self-understanding and career direction) from the coaching process and these were based on examples identified during focus groups.

Figure 2: Coachees evaluation of the impact of participating in developmental coaching (*N*=59).

	Not at all true %	Hardly true %	Moderately true %	Exactly true %
I feel coaching has had a positive impact on me personally	3.3	6.7	35.0	55.0
Coaching has given me skills I will continue to use	6.7	6.7	40.0	46.7
I feel more confident in my abilities due to being coached	5.0	13.3	36.7	45.0
Coaching has helped give me a clearer career direction	13.3	21.7	41.7	23.3
I have made positive changes to my life due to being coached	10.0	23.3	36.7	30.0
I would recommend coaching to others	3.3	9.8	26.2	60.7
Coaching has given me a greater understanding of myself	6.7	8.3	40.0	45.0
I felt that coaching positively challenged me	10.0	13.3	38.3	38.3
The coaching I received mainly involved me generating solutions, with the support of my coach	3.3	6.7	51.7	38.3
My coach clearly explained the process of coaching to me	1.6	1.6	31.1	65.6
My coach and I discussed ground rules and we completed a coaching contract	3.3	4.9	19.7	72.1

These did support some of the specific benefits identified in previous literature, particularly around confidence, performance and job satisfaction. As these are all wide and complex areas each could be investigated in a greater depth to help to establish specific RoI for the organisation. The coached sample of participants were significantly happier with their career direction and progression, more satisfied with work and more aware of personal strengths and weaknesses than non-coached staff. Contentment with role and career direction links to organisational commitment and loyalty (CIPD, 2006) and, as such, reduces attrition and supports the organisations ability to retain talent and employ succession planning, developing

individuals in areas relevant to business need. Recent figures for the cost of employee attrition suggests the average cost per employee to be £7750 (CIPD, 2007). If a clear link between developmental coaching and retention of staff can be made it would make a strong argument for the RoI of coaching.

It has been suggested that coaching has significant benefit to both the coach and coachee (Sweeney, 2007) and literature suggests that the process of coaching results in learning for the coach, which is a largely untapped potential for adding strategic value (Rider, 2002). In the reported study, coaches responses indicated a perceived increase in personal self-efficacy. Three ques-

tions on personal self-efficacy were included, based on comments made in focus groups. The majority of coaches in the sample felt they had improved their ability to deal more effectively with issues, generate solutions to problems and gain clarity on personal goals, due to undertaking a coaching role. This is an interesting addition to the area and one that would benefit from further investigation. As only three questions were included this would need to be expanded to offer data of real value but this does offer a fascinating avenue of research, particularly with some element of post intervention measure taken and the introduction of a control group of non-coaching managers.

Discussion of methodology
Action research supported the explorative style of the study and enabled a blend of qualitative and quantitative data, allowing greater insight into how coaching impacts upon those that experience it and those that act as coaches. Adaptations were made based on information found during the qualitative phases and questionnaire design was heavily influenced by content of the focus groups. As coaching experiences are individual and personal, it is appropriate that further explorative research employs similar methodologies; a questionnaire alone would not reveal the complexities of experiences and variations in impact that the process has. The data in the reported study integrated a range of experiences, which in itself was an interesting reflection of the distinctions between different phases of the process of coaching. Experiences ranged from more reactionary perspectives, for coaches this included feeling as though they were on a steep learning curve and for coachees a 'feel good' factor, whereas others, who had a greater level of experience, tended to have a more holistic view of the overall process and could reflect on the benefits or drawbacks. This is an important consideration for any future research – that participants at a particular phase in the process may have similar viewpoints or experiences however this may not truly represent the overall experience, rather that it is a snapshot reflecting the current level of personal experience. Including, in research, experiences gained within a range of timescales adds to the validity and contributes to a more reflective picture of the complexities of workplace coaching. Action research allowed for a range of information to be integrated, blending data from coaches and coachees plus also key stakeholders and original material used for coach training, all of which are elements that Fairhurst (2007) advocates should be included in a thorough coaching evaluation.

Limitations and recommendations for future research
Within the area of coaching research there are few empirical coaching studies. This study used a quasi-experimental approach to investigate the levels of self-efficacy, however, due to the timescales of the study, the only access to coached staff was post-coaching, so a pre-intervention measure was not taken. Although a significant difference on levels of self-efficacy existed between the coached and non-coached sample groups it is not possible to know whether a difference existed prior to the coaching intervention. A future study with a design that incorporates a pre- and post-intervention measure would be insightful and a significant change would help to offer a strong link between developmental coaching and increased levels of self-efficacy. A methodological issue was that participants were only 'informally matched' on the criteria of same work location and job role. As such, this was essentially a non-equivalent control group design with the key issue of sampling biases a weakness of the study (Breakwell et al., 2000). A more structured matched pairs design, particularly matching work experience, education level, age and gender would help reduce variation attributable to individual differences. Feldman and Lanku (2005) criticise the lack of empirical studies in coaching, with many using a self-report approach rather than a more systematic and evidence-based approach to more

thoroughly document the effectiveness of coaching. Although the reported study has employed self-report measures, qualitative research in the form of focus groups and interviews were included to gain a greater depth and breadth of understanding of coaching within the host organisation.

Two limitations were caused by the questionnaire scale. The first was that some participants felt that the limited four options did not allow them to express what they felt fully, requiring more 'middle ground' – 'there seemed to be a big gap between these two statements' (not at all true and exactly true). The scale may also have contributed to the strongly significant results and this must be considered. In any future studies the possibly of further options added to the existing scale, such as a six-option rating scale to force choice to one end of the scale or the other, or even a seven-option scale with an unknown or 'equal' choice could be considered.

Summary

As an explorative study the research has revealed some interesting findings. The link between self-efficacy and the experience of receiving developmental coaching gives some insight into the specific individual outcomes and may help to label benefits that have in the past been seen as 'intangible'. In the past much focus has been on the benefits brought by receiving coaching, however, the findings of the reported study suggest that there are benefits to the coach, from both the skills training received and the experience of undertaking a coaching role. Assessing the RoI of coaching is challenging, however, using psychologically grounded approaches can greatly contribute to the effectiveness of the evaluation by informing the design of the process and supporting the identification of the less tangible business benefits. The reported study aimed to explore whether developmental coaching does actually deliver business benefits and results suggest that coaching is indeed a developmental tool, capable of producing a range of positive workplace outcomes.

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A grounded theory study of the coachee experience: The implications for training and practice in coaching psychology

Jonathan Passmore

Objectives: This study sought to identify the key behaviours used by executive coaches that were perceived by coachees to have the most favourable impact on their experience and progress.
Design: The study used a semi-structured interview design within a qualitative approach.
Methods: Grounded theory was employed to analyse the transcripts and to build a series of descriptive and conceptual codes.
Results: The results from this small-scale study suggest that coachees seek not only particular behaviours but also certain personal attributes in a coach. Key behaviours and attributes identified were common sense confidentiality, being collaborative, setting take-away tasks, balancing challenge and support, stimulating problem-solving, effective communication, staying focused, containing emotions, helping develop alternative perspectives, use of a variety of focusing tools and techniques and use of self as a tool.
Conclusions: The study makes some tentative practical recommendations for those involved in coaching practice and coach training.

Keywords: executive coaching, grounded theory, coach behaviours, coach training, coaching research study and coachee perceptions.

Coaching's emerging literature

THE TERM 'COACHING' has been applied to a wide range of activities across a diverse range of populations and issues. Activities include resolving relationship difficulties (Jacobsen, 1977); job coaching to help disadvantaged individuals gain and retain employment (Davis, Bates & Cuvo, 1983); careers coaching (Scandura, 1992); peer coaching within education (Scarnati, Kent & MacKenzie, 1993); coaching to improve executive performance (Tobias, 1996); coaching to help people with cognitive difficulties learn new skills (Dalton et al., 1997); coaching to improve performance in interviews (Maurer, Solamon & Troxtel, 1998); coaching to improve sales performance (Rich, 1998) coaching to support older couples coping with infertility (Scharf & Weinshel, 2000); and coaching applicants to fake malingering on psychological tests (Suhr & Gunstad, 2000). While this is by no means a definitive list, it illustrates the wide range of activities to which 'coaching' has been applied.

The literature on coaching has mushroomed over the past five years, reflecting the growth in coaching practice. The emerging coaching market has been estimated to be worth US $2billion (Fillery & Lane, 2006), and there has been a plethora of publications. However, the majority of publications have been atheoretical, offering case studies or new coaching models devised by coaching practitioners. In the past four years this has begun to change. The focus of recent papers has been on two questions. Firstly does coaching have an effect and what effect does it have on the coachee? Secondly, what does the coach do which contributes to change in the coachee.

In 2001 a literature review undertaken by Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson (2001) suggested that only seven studies had been published by that date which attempted to explain the efficacy of executive coaching (Foster & Lendl, 1996; Garman, Whiston & Zlatoper, 2000; Gegner, 1997; Hall, Otazo & Hollenbeck, 1999; Judge & Cowell, 1997;

Laske, 1999; Olivero, Bane & Kopelman, 1997). The findings were the beginning of the development for a case for coaching's positive effect. Specifically they suggested that coaching could act as a desensitiser to workplace stress (Foster & Lendl, 1996), aid skills transfer (Olivero, Bane & Kopelman, 1997) and contribute to changes in management style (Gegner, 1997). More recent studies (Bush, 2005; Conway, 2000; Dawdy, 2004; Day et al., 2008; Evers, Brouwers & Tomic 2006; Gonzalez, 2004; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005; Kampa-Kokesch, 2002; McGovern et al., 2001; Orenstein, 2006; Smither & London, 2003; Sue-Chan & Latham, 2004; Turner, 2004; Wang & Wentling, 2001) have built on these early efforts and are critically reviewed elsewhere (Passmore & Gibbes, 2007). Others writers have reviewed the progress of coaching research and have suggested that coaching is beginning to build a evidence base for its practice which has been missing since Gorby (1937) popularised the notion that coaching could contribute to workplace performance (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006). The range and quantity of studies is still developing, with a series of on-going random controlled trials and longitudinal studies underway. The growth of communities of interest within psychology has increased in a number of countries outside the US, from Australia and the UK to Norway and Denmark. These changes are also being reflected in practice with the emergence of postgraduate coaching training psychology courses and coaching research centres.

The published studies suggest that coaching can contribute towards leadership behaviours such as charisma and inspiration, (Kampa-Kokesch, 2002), it can contribute to improved goal setting and self regard (Evers, Brouwers & Tomic, 2006), it can also aid the development of wider behaviours which are the focus of the specific coaching intervention (Orenstein, 2006), it aids skills transfer (Turner, 2004), contributes to positive peer perceptions of the effectiveness of the individual (Smither & London, 2003), it can

enhance resilience (Green, Grant & Rynsaardt, 2007) and have a positive impact on stress reduction (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005).

The key question which follows for psychologists involved in coaching practice and coach training is; if coaching is an effective intervention, what do coaches need to learn to be effective? The focus of this paper is on the practical aspects of the coachee's experience and its implications for both experienced and new coaches working in organisations.

Some writers have highlighted the similarities between coaching and counselling and have argued that researchers can find the answers to which coach behaviours are most effective by reviewing research on therapy (McKenna & Davis, 2009). Others have argued that such a perspective is useful but it fails to take account of the differences between the world of therapy and the organisational world of executive coaching (Passmore, 2009). Such differences include the multiple clients, from the individual to the HR commissioning manager to the individual's line manager. They all hold expectations about the coaching assignments and the outcomes which will be achieved. Using counselling research also fails to acknowledge the need for the coach to understand the business environment, and use this understanding to frame and inform their questions. Senior people have limited time and do not want to explain the role of the Company Secretary or what a 'PID' is for example (a PID is a document used in project management). There is recognition that overall the line between coaching and counselling remains blurred (Peterson, In press).

Previous work has been conducted on coach behaviours. Hall et al.'s (1999) study used a thematic analysis based on coachee interviews. It identified a list of coaching behaviours that coachees found helpful and less helpful. These included reflecting back, being caring and having good listening skills. Other factors have been identified as important including. The coaches' credibility has

been identified in a number of studies (Hall et al., 1999; Sue-Chan & Latham, 2004). The coaches' collaborative style of working has also been cited (Gonzalez, 2004; Hall et al., 1999). Gonzalez has drawn attention to the use of a discursive rather than instructive style, the need for the coach to be authentic and have integrity the coaches skills in probing and challenging the coachee (Gonzalez, 2004). Other writers have highlighted that it is useful for the coach to have a rich career history which they bring to the coaching work (Bush, 2005; Hall et al., 1999). Jones and Spooner noted the value for the coach to be confident about their own abilities, the importance of confidential on the part of the coach and for the coach to be friendly without becoming a friend (Jones & Spooner, 2006). Also identified in the studies in this area has been for the coach to build the relationship (Day et al., 2008), to provide candid feedback (Lubbe, 2005), to foster self-awareness in their coachee (Luebbe, 2005) and for the coach to focus exclusively on the needs of the coachee (Hall, Otazo & Hollenbeck, 1999; Jones & Spooner, 2006). In respect of the coachee's behaviour few studies have considered this area, but Bush recognised the importance of the individual's commitment to the process as a key determinant of success (Bush, 2005).

At an organisational level, aspects of culture were identified as being important too (Bush, 2005). Of particular importance was the ability to build a partnership with the client organisation and careful matching of coach and coachee (Bush, 2005; Laske, 1999; Luebbe, 2005).

While the majority of these studies have gathered views from coaches, relatively few papers have given a voice to the coachee's experiences (Peterson, 1996; Keil et al., 1996; Blattner, 2005). The focus of these papers has tended to be on a single case study as opposed to a consideration of a range of coachees.

Method

This study used a grounded theory qualitative methodology to explore data gathered from participants. The objective was to discover the personal experiences of coachees'. Grounded theory was selected as a tool for its dual focus on both the grounded individual experiences and it encouragement for researchers to theorise with the data. As a qualitative methodology it was considered ideal as a tool to explore the social processes of coaching with a small participant sample (Charmaz, 2006). While a number of alternative methods have been offered, this study followed the original methodology offered by Glaser & Strauss (1967).

Participants

The qualitative study involved interviews with six directors; three men and three women, five white European and one black Caribbean participant from the public sector. The age range of the participants was from 40 to 55. All the participants held board level positions. The directors ranged in experience from new appointee; having been appointed within the past six months and experienced directors in post for more than five years. All participants had received a minimum of eight hours face-to-face executive coaching from trained experienced coaches.

The coaches were trained executive coaches and had completed a minimum of a Postgraduate Certificate in coaching and 100 hours executive coaching experience. Two coaches were selected; one man and one woman, both were in the age range 45 to 55. The coaches used both GROW/behavioural (Alexander, 2006) and cognitive behavioural coaching approaches (CBC) Neenan (2006). One coach was a psychologist, the other a human resources professional.

The number of participants was limited due to a desire to engage in detail with the material and work to produce a conceptual representation of their experiences of coaching.

Data collection

An initial interview protocol was developed and piloted on two participants. This data was not used in the study. Participant responses from the pilot led to further refinement of the interview protocol for the study. This included the addition of a number of prompts, to stimulate participants, if limited responses were given.

A semi-structured method was chosen as it facilitated the development of rapport, allowed greater flexibility and allowed the researcher to enter novel areas with the aim of generating richer data.

The final interview protocol centred around six core themes:

● Personal experience of executive coaching.
● The perception of usefulness of executive coaching.
● Impact of executive coaching on self-regard.
● Transfer of executive coaching techniques into workplace practice.
● Reflection of what the coaches practice (tools and techniques).
● Perception of its long-term value.

In the study a detailed coding structure was used. The transcription used a recognised method in the transcription (Wetherell & Edley, 1999) which drew upon the Jefferson system (Jefferson, 1985) which incorporated data on both the words and the way in which words were delivered.

Data analysis

The creation of themes and sub-themes were undertaken manually, rather than through the use of coding software. This decision reflected a desire to obtain a detailed understanding of the data through engaging with the data line by line. Each segment of data was given a separate code with the letter referring to the participant and the number referring to the segment in the transcript.

The researcher used a seven-stage process (Figure 1). The first stage involved the collection and storage of data from which the initial generation of codes were produced. The second stage involved a series of reviews of the descriptive codes. This involved memo writing, creating links between items and refining the coding system. The third stage was to group these descriptive codes into conceptual codes. The fourth stage was to review the findings through an independent researcher. The independent researcher developed her own categories from the descriptive codes. The researcher then compared both categories and their contents and used these to develop a revised coding structure. The fifth stage was to build a framework based on the descriptive codes from the researcher and the reviewer. In the sixth stage a participant was invited to review the descriptive model and the results were compared with the existing literature and with the quantitative study findings. The final stage was to use the coding to build a conceptual diagram to summarise the emerging model.

Results

The results were clustered under six themes (Table 1). This paper concentrates on the findings relating to coach attributes and coach behaviours. In this distinction, attributes were considered to be personal qualities; 'something which a coach has'. In contrast coach behaviours were 'things which the coach does'. It is acknowledged that this is a fine distinction, but reflects the language used by participants in their study.

The Coach's attributes

(i) Coach's experience

The previous experience brought by the coach to the coaching session appeared to be a feature identified as a positive contribution to the relationship, giving confidence to the coachee and contributing to the session.

> '…and then the coach pointing, you know, using valuable and relevant examples from their knowledge of how…{XYZ company}… operates, to guide me through that process.' (J41)

Figure 1: Seven stage research method.

Table 1: Main themes.

Main Theme	Sub-theme
Coachee expectations	● Mentoring experiences
	● Action Learning Set (ALS) experiences
	● Coachee previous experiences
Properties of the session	● Length of session
	● Frequency
	● Timing
The attributes of the coach	● Coach experience
	● Coach is affirming
	● Coach is non-judgemental
	● Coach is trustworthy
	● Coach is independent
The coach's behaviour	● 'Common sense' confidentiality
	● Holding emotions
	● Challenge and support
	● Problem solving
	● Setting take-away tasks
	● Being non-directive
	● Using self as a tool
	● Developing alternative perspectives
	● Questioning, listening & reflecting
	● Staying focused
	● Being empathetic
	● Using tools and techniques
The coachee's behaviour	● Preparation
	● Using notes
	● Being authentic
Outcomes	● Behavioural adaptation
	● Exploring motivation
	● Sense of self
	● Learning transfer
	● Managing emotions
	● Holistic view
	● A shared vision
	● Team relationships
	● Staff retention

(ii) Affirming and supportive coach

A second attribute was the idea of the coach as an affirming and supportive individual. While for some this was expressed as affirming, for others this was expressed as the coach providing a space to confide and help sort out problems. Also important was the focus of the session towards the coachees' needs, rather than serving the purpose of the coach.

> *'or affirming that I was right in terms of the approach.' (J33)*
> *'I think it's just, it's just re-affirmation all the time.' (A99)*

(iii) Coach non-judgemental

This slightly different perspective of this same attribute was the idea of the coach as non-judgemental.

> *'…and having a listener who, you know, is not judgemental, but pointing me in the right direction…' (J32–34)*

(iv) Coach is trustworthy

Another perspective within this theme was of the coach being trustworthy. On some occasions this was described as an attribute of the coach and on other occasions as a characteristic. It is difficult to differentiate between these as attributes are in part revealed through behaviours as well as through the credibility and reputation of the coach.

Coachees expected the coach to be worthy of their trust. This was central to building a working relationship.

> *'…and I felt I could trust, I think trust was a key element of it…' (J75–76)*

(v) Coach's independence

A fourth attribute was for the coach to be independent.

> *'Um…so that was very valuable, and it also allowed, me to get that stuff out on the table and talk about it from so…from a real outsiders perspective. That was helpful…' (W22)*

The Coach's behaviours

A second core theme that this paper focuses upon is the coach's behaviour. Coachees identified 12 behaviours which contributed favourably towards their coaching experience; maintaining confidentiality, containing emotions, using a mixture of challenge and support, stimulating problem solving, setting take-away tasks for the coachee, being collaborative, using self as a tool, encouraging the development of alternative perspectives, using effective communications skills such as questioning, listening and reflecting, staying focused during the session, being emphatic plus their use of helpful tools and techniques.

(i) Uses 'common sense' confidentiality

This has previously been identified as one of the cornerstones of the coaching relationship (Ahern, 2001). Generally coachees described a high level of faith in the process. This may reflect the contracting aspect where clear ground rules were set out by the coaches. It may also be an unspoken expectation based on previous experiences of mentoring relationships, which a number of the coachees had held in the past or were maintaining alongside the executive coaching.

(ii) Holding emotion

The aspect of the coach holding, containing or offering a safe space for emotions was viewed by coachees not as a passive act but an active process undertaken by the coach. The use of these behaviours encouraged the coachees to feel confident to be even more open with information. There also appeared to be a link here to the attribute of trust built up by the coach during the forming stage of the relationship.

> *'the coach was a sponge really, no…a wall where I can bounce things off, stuff didn't disappear it came back at me, and I'm answering questions…' (S35-36)*

For others this space was critical as the coach stepped into roles neglected by others. This was most prevalent for one of the coachees who described his experiences in stark terms

during the period as he explained feelings of depression following the loss of a parent and change in his role at work.

(iii) Challenge and support

The ability of the coach to be both challenging and supportive was identified as a key ingredient.

> '...but I think that, well they pushed and pushed in terms of trying to bring me out, in the coaching sessions, and I was then getting more out of it by the second and third sessions...' (F5-6)

The skill of challenging, however, was identified as being most useful when the challenge was present. For some style was important in this process, for others the style of challenge was less critically. What was important was that challenge was present within the relationship.

> 'the fact that they might have done that in a nice way rather than an aggressive way, is more about style isn't it, but I think their style is still to challenge.' (S99)

Coachees were specific about the ways in the coach used challenge. Challenge could be effective both when used as a style within questioning but also through the coach's use of listening and silence.

> '...sometimes the coach challenged me just through listening.' (S99)

Coachee's indentified that challenge was most effective in helping the individual to recognise and move beyond the comfortable habitual behaviours which they used day to day.

> '...that was the thing that was at first, was really bugging me, because I was in a comfort zone, and you know I quite like doing similar things that I know I'm good at, and I remember I take these higher things, complex almost, but I wasn't thinking about that, and that's one more thing that's happened, that I have crawled out of completely out of some of the real comfort zones.' (D56)

In addition to challenge was the empathetic behaviours which could be characterised as being supportive. This was expressed through listening and displaying interest in the coachee's story.

The link between this behaviour and personal attributes is difficult to separate. In some cases the coachees saw this as the coach acting in a particular way and others saw this as a personal quality or attribute of the coach.

(iv) Problem solving

Coachees identified two aspects in the process of effective problem solving. The first was the adoption by the coach of a solution focus towards issues which involved helping the coachee to explore barriers and hurdles and developing plans to overcome these. The second was the coachee's development of a meta-skill following engagement in the process. Coachees identified that the coaching process had helped them become more effective problem solvers. This was strongest where the GROW and CBC models were explained as part of the coaching relationship.

(v) Setting take-away tasks

The use of tasks outside of coaching had mixed responses. Some found tasks irrelevant, while others found them to be useful and constructive exercises which encouraged reflection and resolution to issues. A key factor in differentiating between valued tasks and less valued tasks was the nature of the task itself. Where the task was reflective, coachee's expressed value in the task. More action orientation tasks were less valued. This distinction was explained by coachees in terms of the different types of coaching required for different types of managers, with senior managers requiring a focus on strategy and reflection, while middle managers require more operational and behavioural tasks to take away.

(vi) Being non-directive

The ability for the coach to work collaboratively with the coachee, was identified as helpful.

> 'Um...I don't think I would have responded well if the relationship had been a more directive relationship.' (F90)

However, the coach needed to do more than ask questions. Coachees saw it as legitimate for coaches to both offer and to give advice, especially where this advice was grounded in the real life and relevant experience of the coach.

> '*I may have asked for them to expand, rather than just listen, but to actually give me some information.*' (S83)

(vii) Using self as a tool

The coach using themselves as a tool to help illustrate a key point was referred to by coachees as useful, such as the coaching sharing a story from their personal experience of working in an organisation.

> '*I can now see that they knew where the outcome should be leading me, but not telling me, getting me to think it through…*' (D66-69)

(viii) Offering alternative perspectives

This behaviour was identified by coachees of being particularly helpful. The development of an alternative perspective was facilitated by the use of challenge by the coach or by the coach asking probing questions.

> '*you know they'd ask me a question and I'd give them an answer, and then they'd just push me a little bit further to make me think deeper about the reality of the situation, or whether there are extra dimensions actually to my approach.*' (F31-32)

On other occasions the coachees identified the behaviour developing from the position of the coach as an outsider to the situation or organisation.

> '*…I wouldn't talk in the way I did to them that day to anyone in this organisation, and so I couldn't possibly have got that from anybody else in this organisation what I got back that day…*' (A56-57)

(ix) Questioning, listening and reflecting back

Coachees made reference to the coach's use of questioning, listening and reflecting back. The use of questions encouraged coachees to consider issues in more depth and in a more challenging way. The questioning style was also valued for encouraging the coachee to make clear the reasons for actions and artic-

ulate future courses of action, in particular making actions part of a conscious process.

> '*…the techniques that they were using was asking me the questions that forced me to think through…information I already had in my mind, and perhaps hadn't acknowledged consciously.*' (S30)

A second aspect within the communication behaviours was the use of reflection by the coach. In this behaviour the coach summarised the essence of the previous statement to capture its meaning and highlight potential omissions or thinking errors through the simple restatement of the words. Coachees appeared to value this because it provided space to think and consider the issue from a different perspective.

> '*…turned things back on me that were plainly ridiculous, were plainly questionable, or plainly needed more consideration by me.*' (A21)

The third aspect within the communication behaviours identified by coachees was listening. Coachees suggested that the quality of listening was different in coaching compared to how they were listened to elsewhere.

> '*They might not have welcomed that, but I welcomed that, so you know, they were able to uh…provide that uh listening…um, they liked to listen.*' (A20)

This was facilitated by the coach remaining focused during the coaching session.

While valuable as separate behaviours, coachees identified how these elements were integrated to provide powerful interventions that helped them come to their own solutions during the coaching sessions.

> '*…they listened and then they reflected back and through open questions they helped me to find my own solutions…*' (J103-106)

Here the coachee implies the real skill is combining these three qualities together, blending them into a set of behaviours.

(x) Staying focused

The further theme was the ability for the coach to keep the coachee focused. This was seen as helpful and involved bringing the

coachee back to the issue in hand and staying solution focused rather than allowing the conversation to slip towards a past orientated approach.

(xi) Being empathetic
Coachees identified the response of their coach to thoughts and feelings that they shared as helpful. The ability to be empathetic to these thoughts and feelings through both verbal and non-verbal communications was noted and valued. There are clear parallels here with earlier statements on communication skills used by the coach as well as on holding emotions.

(xii) Tools and techniques
Coachees also appreciated a coach with an array of tools and techniques which the coach was able to draw on during the coaching session to help the coachee consider things from a new perspective. In the case of the quotes the coachees referred to the use of visualisation techniques drawn from cognitive behavioural coaching (Palmer, 2008) and mindfulness meditation (Passmore & Marianetti, 2007).

'It was very, very, very useful, at the very beginning, you know using that visualising…' (J84)

'And the other technique, well it's not a technique, but the other, the other aspect I think was just retracing what I said before, just being given the time to um…you called it mindfulness…' (S38–39)

The behaviours are summarised in Table 2.

Discussion
This paper sought to derive, from the data, a set of practical implications which can usefully inform the work of coaching psychologists, both as practitioners but also as trainers of coaches.

The findings presented above provide a descriptive account of how coachees' viewed their coaching experiences. This is where the previous published studies have stopped. In this paper an effort has been made, using Grounded Theory methods, to conceptualise the data, and review this against material from previous studies.

A reflection on previous studies
The nature of Grounded Theory studies requires an exploration and consideration of the literature after the completion of the study, rather than before, as a means of preventing the coding being influenced by previous findings.

Table 2: Summary of coach behaviours.

Key coaching behaviours
Agreeing 'common sense' confidentiality rules
Holding the emotions of the coachee
Providing both challenge and support
Offering mechanisms for problem solving
Setting take-away tasks
Being non-directive
Using themself as a tool
Helping the coachee develop alternative perspectives
Questioning,
Listening
Reflecting back
Staying focused on the topic
Being empathetic

In this paper the subsequent research is contained at the start of the paper. In broad terms the results from this research echoed earlier studies, such as Hall et al. (1999) with the recognition of the need for the coach to offer a style which is both collaborative and discursive, to have a rich career history and thus be credible. Also valued were the skills in listening, questioning and summarising alongside a mastery of coaching techniques, which all added to the credibility and perceived competence of the coach. In this sense the qualitative study drew together the findings from the previous collection of studies on coach behaviour and identified the common ingredients identified by coaches and confirmed by coachees.

In reviewing these findings alongside previously published work a number of implications emerge which have been offered below. It is acknowledged that the nature of interpretation is that others who review the results may be drawn to emphasise different aspects. Further the use of a sample drawn from senior managers at board level and using two coaches who employed specific methodologies will also have implications for the results. The use of psychodynamic coaching or working with middle managers may have identified different features. In this paper I will focus on three possible implications for coaching psychology practitioners and three implications for those involved in coach training.

Some implications for coaching psychology practice

The study identified a number of possible issues for coaching practice and we will focus on three of these in this discussion; problem solving, setting take away tasks and the role of challenging the coachee. The selection of these three reflects that coaching practice differs from practices in counselling, where a difference stance might be adopted in these three areas.

Problem solving

Coachees valued using problem-solving models as well as understanding the models that they were using. There are two benefits. Firstly by using a problem-solving style the coach encouraged the coachee to recognise potential pitfalls and develop ways to manage these. The second benefit is the potential role the coach can plan in meta-learning (Argyris & Schon, 1978). This learning is enhanced when explicit information is shared with the coachee about the techniques being used. This allowed the coachee to begin to apply these techniques for themselves. While cognitive behaviour therapy has traditionally encouraged the counsellor to share the techniques as part of the approach, this is not discussed in the wider coaching literature. Coaching practitioners may wish to reflect on the way they which they work and where this is relevant to share explicitly their approaches with coachees, teaching them the techniques for later use.

Takeaway tasks

The use of takeaway tasks (homework) is a feature of counselling practice, but is rarely discussed in the coaching literature. Drawing on the experiences of this group of senior managers takeaway tasks were seen both positively and negatively. The perspective seemed to have been influenced by the type of task or action agreed. Where the task was reflective coachees in this group experienced this as valuable, while more action orientation tasks were perceived by to be less valuable. The high value placed on more reflective tasks may reflect the seniority of the group who were all board level coachees. However, it may also reflect power dynamics within the coaching relationship. In counselling the power dynamic is often seen as the client being less powerful than the therapist. In coaching, particularly in senior management coaching, the reverse is usually true. Two implications emerge. The first is there may be value in the coach engaging in a two-way discussion about the type of takeaway tasks, so the coachee considers this openly and explicitly with the coachee. Second, the coach needs to be sensitive to

the status and experience of the coachee and to make a judgement about these factors and the nature of the individual.

Challenge and support
Some studies within the literature mention the importance of providing challenge (Gonzalez, 2004; Hall et al., 1999 Jones & Spooner, 2006). However, in the majority of studies the focus is more towards building the relationship and skills in empathy. The focus in this direction may reflect the strong counselling orientation within coaching. While these skills are valuable, participants in this study also recognised the importance of challenge. Reflective questions, body language and silence are power tools which participants in this study recognised as useful in helping them reflect in a way they had not previously done about the issue.

Some implications for the training of individuals in coaching
Having discussed three aspects relating to coaching psychology practice, I will discuss three issues from the study relating to coach training. These three aspects are; managing confidentiality, understanding of sector and business management and developing attributes as well as skills.

Understanding confidentiality
Coachees' in this study valued coaches who treated what was said in confidence. The confidence of the coachee was derived from the clear commitments given during the contracting process as well as a lack of come back from others on what had been said. However, coachees' treated confidentiality as 'common-sense'. In many one to one relationships, such as counselling, the boundaries are clear. There is no report back mechanism to the doctor (general practitioner) on the detailed conversations in the sessions or sharing information with family members. It's a confidential relationship, save for serious illegality or risk of harm. However, in coaching confidentiality is more complex, as a result of multiple stakeholders,

particularly when the 'client' (the person paying) is the organisation, who may expect and request a detailed report.

This suggests a need in coach training for an exploration of confidentiality: what confidentiality includes and what may be outside of the confidentiality agreement. It also suggests a need for greater levels of high quality support for coaches, possibly for those who have most recently trained. Such support could offer a wider well of experience from which to draw.

Understanding leadership
A second issue to consider in coach training is the value of exploring wider organisational and leadership issues as part of coach training. Participants identified the use of non-directive approaches as being preferable to directive approaches. This may reflect their status as senior managers and may reflect wider psychological preferences which we as humans have in the way we respond to directive behaviours (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). For the coach, these findings amplify the need to develop skills of listening, summarising and asking open questions. However, the coach needs to do more than use good questions and summarising skills. Coachees identified value in the coach being able to understand and interpret. This requires the coach to understand and empathise with the leadership role.

The process of becoming
A third issue is the development of skills and of personal attributes. The skills aspects may be labelled the 'doing' aspect of coaching. The personal attributes aspects may be considered to be the 'being' aspect of the coach.

In the UK counselling courses are often over-subscribed, with more students than places available. Applicants are selected based on their perceived ability to be able to undertake the course successfully and a judgement by the course team that they will make an effective therapist. In contrast coaching has a stronger market approach. The growth in coach training has been led

by commercial organisations and most coaches still are either untrained or their training consists of a few days with a commercial provider, or worse a video to watch at home. However, participants in this study suggested they were seeking both skills and attributes; things the coach did, as well as things the coach was. It may be argued that such personal attributes take longer to acquire than the average commercial coaching course and may even be innate. A move to more robust selection procedures for coach training may select out the individuals who may be less able to take on the coaching role.

Summary

This paper focuses on a small-scale study of coaching practice as experienced by board level executives using a Grounded Theory methodology. This study identified a wide range of coaching behaviours which were valued by coachees and confirmed that these findings were echoed by a range of previous studies. It suggests that coachees' value coaching not only as a result of the behaviours used by the coach but also as a result of the attributes of their coach. These attributes may be more difficult and take more time to acquire as they relate to personal qualities of the coach. A series of practical implications are drawn out from the study for coaching psychologists and the training of coaches.

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Exceptional executive coaches: Practices and attributes

Gavin R. Dagley*

Objectives: *Human resources (HR) professionals responsible for purchasing executive coaching services represent a unique research resource as independent and invested observers of coaching practices. The research objective was to explore this group's knowledge to better understand what differentiates the work of exceptional coaches.*

Design: *The study was a survey design.*

Methods: *Twenty experienced executive coaching purchasers completed 90-minute structured interviews based around a 40-item questionnaire regarding their experiences of locating and working with exceptional coaches. Saturation testing and a post-analysis survey provided support for the emergent themes.*

Results: *Purchasers defined a 'great outcome' from coaching as 'behaviour change.' Descriptions of executive-coachees' experiences grouped around themes of engagement, deeper conversations, insight and responsibility, and positive growth. The exceptional coaching capabilities that facilitated these experiences were: credibility, empathy and respect, holding the professional self, diagnostic skill and insight, approach flexibility and range, working to the business context, a philosophy of personal responsibility, and skilful challenging.*

Conclusions: *Themes resolved into a process model of exceptional executive coaching that incorporated environmental, executive, and task characteristics as other influential factors. Discussion focused on the remedial implications of using behaviour change as the outcome definition. Despite this implication, executives nevertheless seemed to experience executive coaching as positive and, at times, transformational. The work of exceptional coaches may be at its most distinctive when the required behaviour change is particularly demanding, and when outcomes are based on transformational change.*

Keywords: *executive coaching, coach capabilities, practices, attributes, factors influencing outcomes.*

IN SUPPORT of the needs of a young and rapidly growing discipline, coaching researchers are producing literature at an ever increasing rate (Grant, 2009). Within that body of research there exists a growing recognition by researchers of the particular differentiators that make executive coaching a unique sub-discipline within the broader coaching framework. Kilburg (2000), in an early definition of executive coaching, recognised two important differentiating features: the dual-client aspects of the work (i.e. the executive and the organisation), and the consequent need to produce outcomes for both within a business context.

The limitation of intervention approaches in the definition to 'behavioural techniques' may have been unnecessarily narrow. Grant, Curtayne and Burton (in press) extended this definition by demonstrating that cognitive-behavioural approaches also produce change in executive coaching work. Even Kilburg (2004) has extended the 'behavioural techniques' aspect of his earlier definition by providing extensive discussion of the applicability of psychoanalytic principles. Abbott and Rosinski (2007) went further and discussed the six evidence-based approaches to coaching as being cognitive-behavioural, psychoanalytic, adult development, action learning, systemic, and positive psychology.

Bluckert (2005) argued that outcomes from coaching were related to two different

*In conjunction with the Australian Human Resources Institute.

forms of executive coaching: one focused on learning and development, leading to performance improvement, and the second focused on change. That is, one area of work is helping executives acquire new knowledge and skills to help them be more effective in their roles. Change-based work, by contrast, has less of a focus on educational aspects than on helping executives to make different choices regarding their behavioural patterns, particularly in their interpersonal interactions.

Laske (2007) argued that these two forms may in fact be different levels of the same work. Whether or not they represent levels or substantially different genres, coaches working in these different forms may require identifiably different skill sets and experience bases. In a pair of studies, de Haan (2008a, 2008b) researched the difference between inexperienced and experienced coaches in critical moments of coaching practice. De Hann found that experienced coaches were more able to tolerate tension in the coaching relationship, and were more likely to deliberately inquire into those tensions with the executive. This implies a level of personal development in the coach to be able to tolerate and work with discomfort, and that such characteristics would not be developed through a skill acquisition-oriented training programme. Bluckert (2005) made this call for change more explicit and advocated for a need to shift the emphasis of coach training to incorporate a more substantial focus on the personal development of the coach.

Coaches may be expected to deal with more than discomfort in the coaching relationship. Spence, Cavanagh and Grant (2006) called for coaches to be better equipped to deal with the range and depth of issues that can be presented in a coaching environment, and that the coaching process may open up deep-seated anxieties (Gray, 2006). Grant (2007) indicated that coaches may also need to be equipped to deal with a range of psychological pathologies existing in the executive coachee cohort. Even where

issues are not in the realm of disorders, coaches may be confronted routinely with long-standing behaviour problems (Berman & Bradt, 2006), and that exceptional coaches will be those who are the most effective in dealing with such issues.

Although there is a growing body of literature discussing recommended coaching practices and the factors that predict successful coaching outcomes, (e.g. Dagley, 2006; Greif, 2007), there seems to have been little or no investigation of the practices of those coaches identified as exceptional practitioners. An understanding of the work of exceptional coaches would serve to identify the sorts of outcomes that are possible from such work, and the practices that lead to those results. Such data would also provide a useful basis to inform the measurement of outcomes, the training and accreditation of executive coaches, and effective methods for coach selection. The focus of the present research was to provide a description of exceptional executive coaching work through the use of interviews with informed observers and purchasers of executive coaching services, and discussion of their experiences of working with coaches who they believed were exceptional. The specific objective of the study was to understand better what differentiates the work of exceptional coaches.

Method
Participants
Of the 20 experienced purchasers of executive coaching services who completed interviews, 12 were female and eight were male. In their primary roles, 11 worked in general Human Resources positions and nine in specialist leadership development roles. Regarding geographical spread, 10 of the respondents were from Melbourne, nine from Sydney, and one from Brisbane. Three of the 20 participants now work as coaches or in coach training roles and two others are undertaking postgraduate study in coaching.

One of the purchasers became a participant as a result of responding to an electronic advertisement placed by the

Australian Human Resources Institute. All other purchasers participated as a result of snowball selection (Minichiello et al., 1995) through networked contacts. Only four of this group of purchasers were known to the researcher prior to participation in the research.

Purchasers had an average of six-and-a-half years experience working with executive coaches (ranging from six months to 15 years), and had been responsible for coaching programmes for an estimated 605 executives (costing approximately $6.2 million) in the preceding two years. Although the proportion of their roles spent on executive coaching averaged 14 per cent (and only one exceeded 25 per cent), the purchasers estimated that they had worked in some capacity with 210 coaches in the last two years, and felt they had sufficient exposure to 98 of them to discuss their work.

Materials

Structured interviews formed the basis for data collection. The interviews centred around a 40-item questionnaire designed to explore the purchasers' experiences and perceptions about the definition of 'a great outcome' from coaching work, description of a nominated exceptional coach, and case studies of exceptional coaching work. The questions are included in Appendix A. The interview included questions on a range of related topics including purchaser demographic information, coach location and selection methods, outcome measurement, and recommendations regarding executive coach accreditation. Questions 3.7, and 5.1 to 6.2 provided the bulk of the data that are the focus of this paper.

Piloting of the questionnaire and interview with one potential participant in the study provided the opportunity to improve question wording, and to check for the completeness of the questionnaire. As a result of piloting, the initial questionnaire was substantially shortened to enable completion of the interview within 90 minutes. Data from this interview was excluded from the analysis.

Procedure

Interviews occurred face-to-face or by telephone and each lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Interview participants received a copy of the research proposal, and an information sheet describing the research, the procedures, and the rights and obligations of participation. The purchasers also received a written consent form for signature (which was agreed verbally in the case of phone interviews). Prior to commencing the interview, purchasers received a verbal briefing and had the opportunity to ask any questions.

Handwritten records of purchaser responses provided the source data for later transcription into Excel spreadsheets. A sample of respondents received copies of their transcripts for verification of accuracy and all were returned with only minor amendments.

Analysis

All interview data were transcribed into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets in groups that followed the section headings of the questionnaire (e.g. definition, assessment of outcomes, differentiation of coaches). The responses were then coded (within those section headings) regarding the concepts or lower-order themes that each comment addressed. These lower-order themes were then themselves coded to identify associated lower-order themes and the higher order themes to which they appeared to relate (e.g. 'maintains integrity of approach' and 'able to hold the dark stuff' as lower-order themes were coded to the higher order theme of 'holds the professional self').

Refinement and validation of the themes and development of propositions occurred through extracting the key supporting quotations and validating these against the higher order themes, and re-investigating the original transcripts for conflicting data. These processes, along with the reporting phase, follow the qualitative data analysis stages described by Taylor and Bogdan (1984).

The final three interviews in the series were not included in the initial analysis process. These last interviews were used as a 'saturation' check (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to provide assurance that all the major themes had been correctly identified and that further interviewing was unlikely to add further information. No new themes emerged as a result of the analysis of these final three interviews. Regarding the range of participants who have been quoted in the paper, 14 of the 17 purchasers whose data formed the original analysis supplied quotes included in the results section.

As a further check on the validity of the emergent themes, all participants received a survey requesting them to supply importance ratings for the themes identified in the analysis. Seven of the 20 purchasers replied to the survey and provided ratings.

Results

'Great outcome'

Purchasers provided a range of responses in answer to the question 'what characterises a "great outcome" from coaching?' The responses can be grouped under four broad headings: direct coaching outcomes, identifiable measurement points, downstream effects, and factors that were influential in generating those outcomes.

Purchasers provided a clear message that great coaching results in 'behaviour change.' As one purchaser described it, 'the superordinate goal is based around the belief that leaders shape culture, and improving the level of constructive behaviour of leaders is the underlying goal.' All but one of the 'direct coaching outcomes' responses were related to behavioural change.

Of those purchasers who described a 'great result' in terms of the identifiable measurement points of these outcomes, 11 of 12 identified the observations of the executives' colleagues regarding the behavioural changes (in addition to the reports from the executive coaches themselves) as the best evidence of success. Downstream benefits of the coaching outcomes grouped under two headings: personal outcomes (increased self-esteem, confidence, engagement, and motivation), and realisation of potential (transition success, retention, and career development). The downstream gains are what appear to produce the benefits to organisations.

> From my perspective, [a great outcome] is to hear about a [professional services firm] partner that has turned around a situation that they were struggling with, or have stepped up to the plate and are operating at the level you would expect. Our organisation uses practice teams and the leaders of those teams are reluctant leaders. Management is frowned upon here! They hadn't been doing well, but through coaching they have been able to turn it around. Now they are able to influence and persuade partners to come on board, and that wouldn't have happened without coaching, and it is an important outcome for the business.

The purchasers also provided responses that hinted at the mechanisms for coaching success – the 'how' factors of achieving behavioural change. Principal among these was the personal and professional development of the executive. One purchaser described how 'I enjoy watching the executive uncover and develop an area which was a blind spot or something that was "unchangeable"'. That is, rather than simply adopting compliant behaviour, executives might be building the behavioural change on a foundation of addressing and building awareness about a blind spot or difficult area, and translating that awareness into action.

Exceptional coaching practices

In response to a question about what it was the exceptional coaches can do that weaker coaches cannot, purchasers provided indications about the experiences of the executives when working with exceptional coaches. As one purchaser described it, 'They keep the motivation of the coachee. They produce change faster.' Another reported that:

They get the individual to believe there is a reason to and then go about getting that change. They are 'lights on and go' right from the start. For tough issues they get the executive to really understand the issue, what they want to change, and to own it.

Another indicated that exceptional coaches are 'able to get to deeper conversations more quickly, and motivate people to take personal responsibility for their own development and growth.'

These quotations indicate that executives' experiences of exceptional coaching include the following themes: engagement, deeper conversations, and insight and responsibility. The themes that emerged from the remaining questions identified the coaching practices that prompted these executive experiences (as described in Table 1).

Engagement

Purchasers indicated that one of the central factors in producing behavioural change was the ability of the coach rapidly to connect and engage with the executive around the coaching task or mandate. Their responses indicated that three factors or coaching capabilities facilitated that connection: credibility, empathy and respect, and the ability of the coach to work effectively and in role when under personal or professional pressure – to 'hold the professional self.'

Credibility was established (or lost) fairly early in the relationship. As one purchaser phrased it, 'It's about building credibility. It's all about those first impressions. If a coach is not slick in the first meeting then it doesn't work out as well.'

Purchasers indicated that credibility is based on both acquired experience and performance in-the-moment. In relation to experience, one purchaser commented that '[exceptional coaches] relate to the individual they are coaching in terms of knowledge and experience. Lower-level coaches just don't have the experience of organisations, organisational politics etc. It's about breadth and depth of experience.'

Experience, though, is not enough. As another purchaser described it:

The weaker coach just plays what is in front of him, and then drags out one of his tools or techniques. [The nominated coach] was able to slot into the executive team at a huge industrial organisation where he was coaching and was working with a very senior player who was not doing well. He was able to navigate that minefield exceptionally well. That is why he is top of the heap.

Purchasers also described a very human quality in the interactions between coach and executive. They listed empathy and respect, trust-building, rapport-building, subtlety, creating safety, and listening skills as

Table 1: Exceptional executive coaching capabilities.

Executive experience	Coaching capabilities
engagement	credibility
	empathy and respect
	holding the professional self
deeper conversations	diagnostic skill and insight
	approach flexibility and range
insight and responsibility	works to the business context
	a philosophy of personal responsibility
	skilful challenging

some of the factors that contributed to that quality. One purchaser described her nominated coach's 'ability to build rapport with our most difficult people. Other coaches would not be as quick to build rapport and that would give opportunities for the executive to exit the coaching.' Another said that '[exceptional coaches] are able to immerse themselves in the coachee's world. Others pretend that they do but they don't. That's the biggest [differentiator].'

The theme of holding the professional self represents a complex mixture of interrelated ideas. Sub-themes in this grouping include maintaining integrity of approach; the ability to remain un-phased and effective in working with conflict, tension and anxiety; staying 'ego-free'; maintaining professional separation and boundaries; humility; and remaining focused on the executive's needs rather than on the coach's own personal or business development needs. One purchaser commented that:

> to be extremely honest, we use [this nominated coach] with our most difficult executives. She is able to engage with them without engaging in a 'pissing competition.' These are usually men, very senior, and aggressive, and can easily result in a clash of egos. She seems to be able to do it 'ego free.'

Another commented that:

> [Exceptional coaches] can sit with the ambiguity of the situation. They are comfortable in being uncomfortable. They are not overly concerned if the executive is uncomfortable and they are not tied up in their own egos about making the executive feel good. It is about getting the right result.

Deeper conversations

A number of purchasers commented on exceptional coaches' diagnostic ability to intuit and understand the underlying factors that are at the core of the work with each particular executive. They commented that this ability relates to having a deep understanding of the human condition and an awareness of systemic issues at play. Comments included:

> She is exceptional at seeing patterns and unconscious responses, defences and behaviours … The most powerful changes occur at the core, where her expertise is.

> She can really get to the nub of the issue – the difficult places that the individual doesn't want to go. Other coaches can work with surface issues but haven't the skills to get to the nub of the issue.

Purchasers indicated that exceptional coaches have a broad range of approaches and methods in their repertoires, and are flexible in the way they approach the work.

> Weaker coaches have an 'I have this 10-step method and I will apply it' approach, rather than tailoring the work to each executive. It is not 'one-size-fits-all'. Weaker coaches' work is a monologue, not a dialogue. It is not about engaging, not about discussing. They come with a preconceived notion and dump it onto the executive, give them homework, and then expect outcomes.

Insight and responsibility

In supporting the executive experience of greater insight and an increased sense of personal responsibility for action, purchasers indicated that exceptional coaches remain aware that they are working in a business context. They recognise that (usually) they have two clients – the executive and the organisation funding the work. Comments indicated the exceptional coach was business-centric, aware of the organisational context, and was reliable in working to the brief and thorough in following-up. For example,

> [this coach] is thorough. Some coaches will say they will do things and not do it. When we follow up together she opens her little notebook and she carefully closes the loop on all things she said she would do.

This does not necessarily imply that the coach is constrained by the brief. A few

purchasers alluded to the need to satisfy the business brief and, where necessary and appropriate, go beyond the brief to get to what is important for the development of the executive (as intimated by comments in the previous sections about diagnostic insight and approach flexibility). By way of example, a purchaser commented that one of the key factors in the success of the work described in his case study was due to 'the flexibility of [the coach's] approach and an open-mindedness and willingness to push the boundaries past what the organisation required.'

Exceptional coaches are able to engage and motivate executives toward action and change. This category of responses represents two important sub-themes. Firstly, the exceptional coach uses an approach that is underpinned by a philosophy that the primary responsibility for change rests with the executive, not the coach. Secondly, the coach uses highly-refined coaching practices intended to raise and work with issues that are difficult or uncomfortable for the executive – the practice of 'challenging.' One purchaser indicated that both these key factors were instrumental in the success of her nominated coach. '[It is not only] her philosophy of coaching and of personal responsibility, but also her courage. She would probe into areas that were maybe uncomfortable.'

In assisting executives to take responsibility for action, exceptional coaches recognise the need for coaches to stay in the coaching role rather than moving to an expert or consultant role. The purchasers identified the markers of this ability to manage the responsibility for developing solutions. Firstly, they identified what happens in the coaching. As one purchaser observed, his nominated coach is able to 'motivate people to take personal responsibility for their own development and growth.'

Secondly, the purchasers identified two practices that supported this philosophy of personal responsibility. Those practices are to ask good questions and never give advice. For example:

I've seen weaker coaches give misguided advice – choosing the path for the executive rather than the executive choosing – for example, advising a person about an important decision. You need to be careful with coaching as you can end up with more issues, particularly if the coach lets his or her ego get in the way.

More than half the respondents provided relatively lengthy quotes about the importance to success of the coach's skilful challenging of the executive, including the ability to deliver difficult messages. As one purchaser put it:

The skill was about delivering the feedback that no-one else in the organisation could give. The coach supported the person, while delivering the hard stuff. That was the exceptional bit. There is such a high potential for shame in those situations.

The purchasers were clear that skilful challenging was more than just the ability to articulate difficult, uncomfortable or anxiety-provoking messages. The practice represents a combination of: courage, the (previously discussed) ability to hold the professional self, the ability to deliver the message with sensitivity and respect, and the ability to deliver the message while maintaining the connection and relationship. The following quotes provide some illustration.

It's … a style thing. Managers in this organisation expect to feel 'push back' and exceptional coaches can do that. It takes a fair amount of personal fortitude for a coach to do that considering the risks to the assignment. Executives have said about this coach that 'he won't let you get away with things.'

[The outcome] was about the ability to challenge and ask hard questions. [But he also] demonstrated a sense of respect and appropriateness in the way he went about the practice. And it was again that boundary awareness.

Other factors

Purchasers responded to a question about what factors, other than the coach, had a major influence on outcomes and results. They identified three areas: factors in the environment, factors related to the executive, and the characteristics of the task or mandate for the coaching work.

Environmental factors

Purchasers indicated that important environmental factors included: organisational perceptions about executive coaching, organisational culture, the ability of the executive to make time for the work, the length of the assignment, and the setup of the assignment including the negotiation of confidentiality. Regarding confidentiality, one purchaser commented that

> [It's about] confidentiality and the 'hygiene factors.' Despite the fact that a lot of senior executives use coaches, few are comfortable to talk about it. It is not about weaknesses, but about building strengths. A lot of HR managers ask 'how is it going,' but that confidentiality – it's almost sacred. They should be focusing on outcomes, not what is going on inside the coaching.

Among the organisational factors, the most common theme was the involvement of and support from the sponsoring leader. One purchaser commented that '[an important factor is the] support from the direct manager. Without that support it doesn't really matter what they do. But with strong buy-in from the manager it usually means the coaching will be successful.'

Executive factors

More than organisational factors though, it was factors related to the executive-coachee, and in particular, the executive's orientation to the coaching task that drew the most comment. One purchaser's response summarised the theme:

> [A major influence was] the conclusions the executive has reached about themselves and what they need to do,

[as well as] the conclusions of significant others (be that the boss or the spouse or someone else) – who can focus the executive on doing something differently. It is also about the life stage that they are at. There are transition points in life and careers, and where [the executives] are in relation to those can affect the coaching.

Purchasers generally did not discuss in any depth the characteristics or circumstances of the executives that might predict or influence their orientation to coaching tasks. One purchaser, however, shed some light on the perception issues that might underpin executive reluctance.

> [This] was a very senior manager who was recently promoted, but had previously had a 'fatal flaw.' He was performing exceptionally well at the lower level but showed behaviours that would just not be acceptable at the next level up. He was given feedback that he would not progress any further in the organisation if he didn't change, and may even lose his current role. It was politically a very sensitive issue. The executive was not happy about doing executive coaching and felt that in agreeing to do this he would be accepting that he had a problem, and he was a really challenging individual to work with. It was pretty charged for the individual and for his manager.

Task factors

Purchasers also identified the task itself as an influential factor, particularly as regards task clarity and the extent of the communication and agreement around the objectives. The majority of those discussing the influence of task indicated that it was important to 'be really clear on the outcomes you want to achieve for the individuals and the business.'

Sometimes, however, a coach will need to operate in an environment where the task description has not been well articulated. For example, one purchaser commented that '[it is important] there are clear goals

upfront from both parties. [But] often the manager doesn't convey his or her expectations that well to the executive.'

Outcomes

Purchaser responses suggest that the relationship between task and outcome is not always a direct relationship, but is mediated by (or results in a concurrent outcome of) a positive and transformational change in the executive. In describing a case study of exceptional coaching, one purchaser commented that 'the coach inspired an increased confidence in the executive in a way I didn't think possible.' Another reported that 'I've seen this [coach] start, and within the first few minutes, recognise the acute anxiety of this person and be able to reframe that as positive energy in a short time. That's a really key attribute.'

The executives' experiences ultimately seem to have been positive and personally valuable, despite the difficult material addressed. A purchaser described the following example.

Six months into the programme I received a call [from the executive coachee]. 'I just had to give you this feedback. I have had this problem with

anger for most of my life but I regard these six months as the best investment of time in my entire life. I have learned so much. I have come so far. It doesn't mean I won't regress, but it is the best thing I've done.'

This transformation might sometimes be evidenced by the strength of the residual relationship with the coach. Sometimes, however, that residual relationship can have negative connotations.

Some other coaches in this organisation, the ones I call 'the Rasputins' have their own hooks into the business. They have lost their objectivity and don't really add value even though they charge a lot. They seem to act more as 'trusted friend.' The coaching I saw [from the nominated exceptional coach] was the opposite of that.

Models

The following models, illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, represent an interpretation of the linkages between the various themes identified in the purchasers' responses about exceptional executive coaching work. The first model (Figure 1) represents a high-level interpretation of the themes of what it takes

Figure 1: Summary model of exceptional executive coaching.
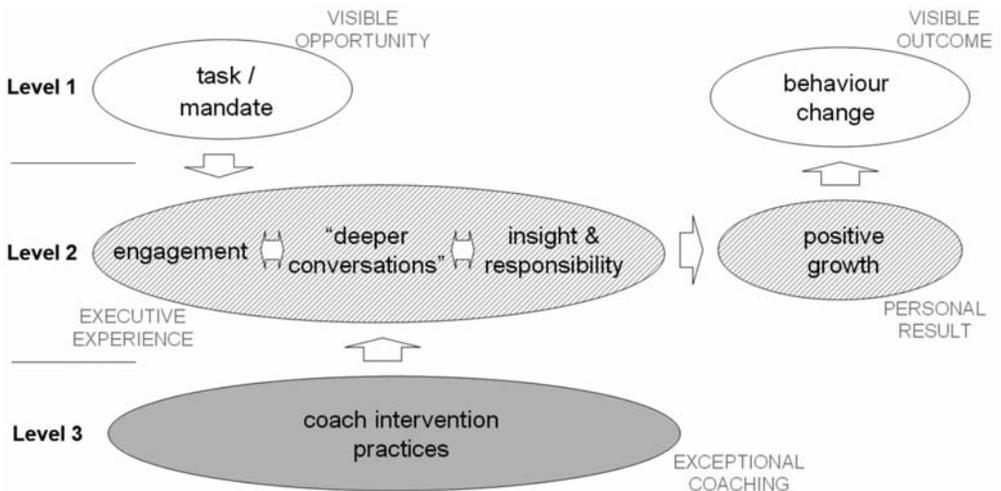
to achieve 'great outcomes,' without differentiating any individual coach intervention practices.

The various components of exceptional coaching that exist between the identification of the task and the resulting behavioural change can be grouped on three levels. Level 1 represents the parts of the model that are visible to people outside the coaching relationship – in particular, the task or mandate that prompted the coaching work, and any behaviour change that resulted. Those external people (such as the HR manager, the sponsoring manager, and subordinates) are usually not privy to the interactions and events that occurred between coach and executive.

Level 2 represents the experiences of the executive within the coaching relationship. They are divided into two parts: the processes that the executive experiences (engagement, deeper conversations, and insight and responsibility), and the results of those processes (being positive personal and/or professional growth). An assumption underpinning the model is that sustained changes in entrenched and complex behaviours will not occur without personal and/or professional growth.

Level 3 of the model represents all the practices and attributes that the coach brings to the work. These, along with the other external drivers, are described below in Figure 2.

This model represents a complex development of the previous model (Figure 1), and includes the detail of the eight exceptional coaching practices discussed by purchasers. The other major development of this model over its predecessor is to describe in more detail the construction and the ongoing role of the working relationship. This model illustrates that the working relationship is a result of three factors; environmental factors (such as the sponsoring leader's involvement and support, and the organisational culture), factors and characteristics related to the individual executive (such as personality, and motivation to engage in coaching), and the coach's abilities at forging a connection with the executive. The linkages between these factors and the working relationship are not direct, but are mediated by the characteristics of the task or mandate of the coaching work.

The second important aspect of the working relationship is its pervasive and ongoing influence in facilitating the deeper conversations and the insight and responsibility components of the executive's experience of coaching. That is, the working relationship forms a foundational component of all the coaching work, and is reciprocally interdependent with other aspects of the executive's experience of the work.

Model validation

To test whether the model in Figure 2 represented a valid interpretation of the data, the 20 purchasers who participated in the interview process each received an e-mail that listed the components of the model. The seven who responded provided ratings on a 10-point scale regarding the importance of each component, with '1' indicating not important, '5' indicating moderately important, and '10' indicating critically important.

Purchasers responded to two questions, and indicated the importance of each of the factors to: 'exceptional executive coaching work that results in behaviour change in the executive' (see Table 2), and 'the ability of the coach to deliver exceptional executive coaching' (see Table 3). The average ratings for all factors were 7.4 or above, indicating that the identified factors were important components in achieving outcomes through executive coaching.

Purchasers also described any factors that had not been listed, but that they believed had an important bearing on achieving successful outcomes in executive coaching work. Their responses described factors related to task clarity, executive commitment and disclosure, and the sustainability of changes. All of these factors had been identified in the original data and had been subsumed under higher-order factors in the model.

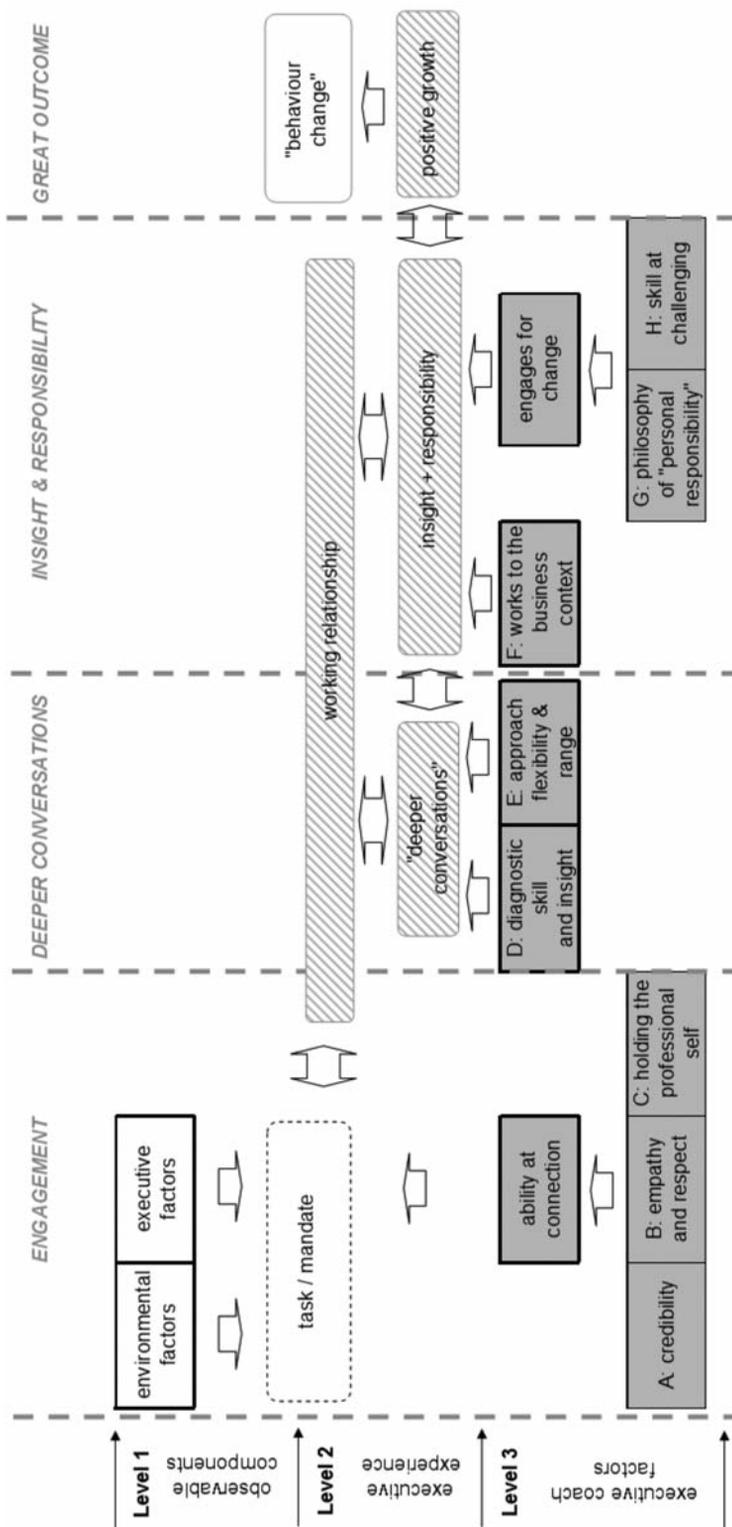Figure 2: Detailed model of exceptional executive coaching.

GREAT OUTCOME

"behaviour change"

positive growth

INSIGHT & RESPONSIBILITY

working relationship

insight + responsibility

engages for change

H: skill at challenging

G: philosophy of "personal responsibility"

F: works to the business context

DEEPER CONVERSATIONS

"deeper conversations"

E: approach flexibility & range

D: diagnostic skill and insight

ENGAGEMENT

executive factors

environmental factors

task / mandate

ability at connection

C: holding the professional self

B: empathy and respect

A: credibility

Level 1 observable components

Level 2 executive experience

Level 3 executive coach factors

Table 2: Factors in exceptional executive coaching that result in behaviour change.

Factor	Average importance rating*	SD
Structural factors		
Environmental factors	8.3	1.7
Executive factors	8.7	1.3
Task factors	8.0	1.7
Executive experience of the coaching		
The working relationship	9.0	1.5
'Deeper conversations'	8.1	0.9
Awareness and insight	8.1	1.3
Taking responsibility for change	9.3	1.1
Positive growth experience	7.4	1.8

*Practitioners rated importance on a 10-point scale, with '10' indicating the factor was critically important,
'5' indicating moderate importance, and '1' indicating the factor was not important.

Table 3: Practices and attributes that affect a coach's ability to deliver exceptional coaching.

Coach practices and attributes	Average importance rating*	SD
Credibility	8.6	1.1
Empathy and respect	7.7	1.7
'Holding the professional self'	7.7	1.8
Diagnostic skill and insight	8.6	1.4
Flexibility and range in approach	7.9	1.3
Working to the business context	8.0	1.3
A philosophy of 'personal responsibility'	8.4	1.4
Skilful challenging	8.7	1.0

*Practitioners rated importance on a 10-point scale, with '10' indicating the factor was critically important,
'5' indicating moderate importance, and '1' indicating the factor was not important.

Discussion

The objective of the research was to understand the factors that differentiate the work of exceptional coaches. The results indicate that such coaches are able to deliver against an identifiable range of capabilities as required by the work, and deliver with considerable skill.

Exceptional coaching
Multiple factors
Both the interviews and the subsequent validation inquiries indicated that exceptional coaching results are products of both the coach's delivery and of a number of other critical factors that can materially affect outcomes. Those critical factors were: environmental factors (such as the involvement of the sponsoring manager, the culture of the organisation, and the structure of the coaching programme), executive factors (including the motivation and commitment of the executive, personality factors, and outside influences affecting the executive's professional life), and task factors (such as the clarity of the objectives, and the perceived remediality of the work).

The results also provide a clear indication to purchasers of coaching services that simply hiring a good coach, without paying

attention to the other key factors, may well limit results. Purchasers provided a long list of these detracting factors, the most common being an unmotivated or uncommitted executive, poor feedback and clarification about the reasons for coaching and the task being undertaken, and the lack of involvement or lack of support of a sponsoring executive.

Exceptional coach characteristics

Exceptional coaching seems to be related to the ability of the coach to facilitate particular executive experiences (i.e. engagement with the coach, in-depth conversations, the development of personal insight and responsibility for action, and a sense of personal and/or professional growth). The results, along with the subsequent validation work, indicate that exceptional coaches employ eight practices and attributes in their work, and that these practices and attributes influence the capacity of the coach to facilitate those executive experiences.

One of the important findings from this research is that exceptional coaches do not appear to display factors or characteristics that are absent in less accomplished coaches. The primary point of differentiation appears to be that they are able to deliver against all and any of these quite basic characteristics (as is required in the work), and deliver at an observably superior level of expertise.

The most demanding of these characteristics are likely to be those that create personal discomfort for the coach (de Haan, 2008a, de Haan, 2008b). The purchasers indicated that exceptional coaches tended to earn their reputations around the ability to work in conflicted situations, to resist the temptation to move from a coaching role (and start to supply solutions), and to provide uncomfortable and challenging feedback while maintaining connection with the executive. As intimated by DuCharme (2004) and Laske (2007), effective functioning in such environments may make demands that go beyond a cognitive-behavioural skill set, and are related to the personal qualities and personal development of the coach.

Outcome definition

The interviewees in this research were clear about the purpose of executive coaching. Almost without exception they described a 'great outcome' from coaching as being 'behaviour change.' Behaviour change has a clear implication that the executive's current behavioural set has been observed as inadequate or detrimental to the effective performance of the executive in role, and that the task of coaching is to improve behaviours – to make a positive change.

Such a definition has an unpalatably strong flavour of 'remediation.' This may be a key factor regarding difficulties with: the positioning of executive coaching in organisations, the ability of sponsoring managers to provide clear feedback about the issues that they would like to see resolved, and (therefore) the ability to measure outcomes. One can almost hear the internal dialogue of the sponsoring manager or HR professional. 'The coaching is not remedial – really – it's developmental! So we can't really say it's because you're not doing well here!!' These points may mean that the differentiation of 'remedial' and 'developmental' coaching may not be as clear as one might hope. A possible redefinition of the two forms might differentiate the work simply on the basis of the starting point, with remedial work having a larger element of mandated participation.

This emphasis on behaviour change may be the result of the study design. The purchasers who provided interview data were discussing the work of exceptional coaches. Exceptional coaches are likely to distinguish themselves when the work is at its most difficult. It would not be a stretch to describe those assignments as the charged or complex ones, dealing with entrenched behavioural issues.

The term 'behaviour change' also appears to be an insufficient description of the results of exceptional work. The sorts of

changes observed by purchasers were idiosyncratic, complex, and around entrenched patterns (which might not be obvious at the outset of the work – see Berman & Bradt, 2006). Further, the outcomes seemed to be sustainable (rather than simply compliant), and such changes seemed to occur as a result of positive individual personal and/or professional growth.

The purchasers did not, however, emphasise (or even describe) negative experiences for executives when working with exceptional coaches. They certainly provided evidence of challenging and demanding moments in the work, but the executives' experiences overall appeared to be positive and often transformational.

One of the characteristics of the work of exceptional coaches may be the ability to identify and persist with difficult tasks in such a way that executives come away with a sense of accomplishment and increased self-belief at the end of the work. Purchasers supported Bluckert's (2005) contention that there are distinctions between various forms of executive coaching. Examples of these forms included 'C-suite'-level coaching versus coaching for mid-level managers, and coaching for particular skills or issues versus 'fatal flaw' coaching. One of the key differentiators between the coaching subtypes may be the balance in the work between the executive's need for skill acquisition, and the need for insight and taking on of responsibility for change (or as one purchaser described it, building the capability in individuals to 'improve through reflecting on practice').

Such a distinction would also tend to indicate what coaching attributes, and therefore which coaches, are likely to be the most effective. The evidence from the interviews is that exceptional coaches can be effective in both areas – skill acquisition and more fundamental change – but that less accomplished coaches (commonly with a more systematised or rigid approach) may only be effective when skill acquisition is the key task.

Limitations

In respect of its generalisability, the obvious limitations of this study are the small number of respondents (in both the original sample and in the validation study) and the opportunistic sampling technique. These limitations may result in biases in the data due to under- or over-representation from particular purchaser groups.

The effects of these limiting factors have been mitigated to some extent by the use of saturation testing (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and of post-data-analysis validation surveys to provide some support that: (a) all the themes that might be present in the population group have been captured in the data collection process; and (b) that those themes have been correctly identified through the analysis process.

A further limitation to the generalisability of the results is that the themes identified in this research may not be applicable to mainstream coaching work – work that would not satisfy the 'exceptional' label. The data collected in this study represent an exploration of one extreme end of a continuum of coaching delivery, and therefore its generalisability may be limited.

Future research

This study is the first of three in a planned research programme. The second study consists of interviews with the exceptional coaches nominated by purchasers in the current study. Interviews with executive-clients of these nominated coaches form the basis of the third study in the series. Data collection for both these studies is well under way, with a number of interviews completed with nominated coaches and executive clients. It will be fascinating to compare the impressions of the purchasers in the current study with the realities and perceptions described by coaches and executives in the later studies.

The development and growth of a discipline (or industry, or profession) that purports to hold integrity and human values at its core seems to demonstrate a remarkable resemblance to some of the early stages of

human social development described by Erikson (1963) – in particular, the striving for: a sense of personal (vs. professional) adequacy, intellectual and applied competence, and an integrated image as a unique individual (vs. discipline). Unfortunately, when compared to Erikson's model, executive coaching appears to be squarely in the middle of its teenage years.

Drake (2008) described a hope that the executive coaching industry may be moving toward an era that belongs to the artisan. That time may indeed be approaching, and a broad and thoughtful research base will mean that such an era can be embraced both on the basis of evidence-based principles and the recognition of artistry. One of the key messages from this research is that exceptional coaches may be artisans, and that what differentiates them is not what they do (the described factors are unsurprising), but the exquisite expertise in how they do it – and the essentially human and personal qualities that underpin such expertise.

The underlying purpose of this research goes beyond simple description of complex work. Research such as this has little value if it does not serve to inform (and possibly educate) the buying public. Positioned in that conflicted nexus between human development and organisational performance pragmatism, executive coaching can only flourish in the longer term in an environment of informed and critical purchasers.

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Appendix A: Interview questions

1 Definition of executive coaching:

1.1 The following is a frequently quoted definition of executive coaching:

'Executive coaching is 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 assist the client to achieve a mutually defined 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 formerly defined coaching agreement.' (Kilburg, 2000)

How well does this match with your ideas of a good definition?

Does this match sufficiently to use as a definition for this interview?

1.2 In your view, what changes could be made to the definition to make it more complete or accurate?

2 Experience of respondent and contact with coaches

2.1 What is your current role?

What proportion of your work is related directly with executive coaching?

2.2 For how long have you been in working with executive coaches (other than working as a coach)?

2.3 Approximately how many executives would have been involved with executive coaching programmes for which you held significant responsibility in the last two years?

2.4 What is the approximate average cost per executive for these coaching programmes?

What was the average duration (number of sessions or elapsed time) of the programmes?

2.5 How many coaches have you worked with in the last two years?

2.6 How many coaches have you worked with in the last two years whose work you feel you know well enough to discuss?

3 Methods of assessment of coaching outcomes

3.1 In the executive coaching programmes you have been involved with, how have you or the organisation measured the results?

What is your principle method?

3.2 How strong and credible has the data been that resulted from these approaches?

Which parts have been the most useful?

3.3 How difficult have you found it to get really strong measures of executive coaching outcomes?

3.4 What constraints exist that might make the measurement of executive coaching difficult to achieve?

3.5 What advice would you offer to those seeking to use executive coaching regarding the measurement of outcomes?

3.6 To what extent have you attempted to assess and compare the individual performances of your coaches?
   How well has that approach worked?

3.7 What characterises a 'great outcome' from coaching?

4   Nomination of an exceptional executive coach

4.1 Can you offer the name of an executive coach who you believe is outstanding or exceptional?

4.2 Would you be happy for me to approach her or him for participation in this research programme, on your recommendation?

5   Differentiation of an exceptional coach from lesser coaches

5.1 For what reasons do you rate this coach as exceptional?

5.2 How much of your belief that this coach is exceptional is influenced by your personal experience of the coach (vs feedback from other sources)?

5.3 At what point and why did you suspect this coach might be exceptional?

5.4 What characterises the differences between this coach and some of your weaker coaches?

5.5 What can these exceptional coaches do that less effective coaches cannot?

5.6 What other factors can have a major influence on outcomes and results?

5.7 As regards coaching approach or method, how well does the use of a single consistent model work in executive coaching?

6   Case example of exceptional coaching work

6.1 Can you describe an example of the coach's work that best illustrates what it is that makes this coach exceptional?

6.2 What was it about the coach that most contributed to this exceptional result?

7   Location and selection of coaches

7.1 How do you currently go about finding your coaches?

7.2 What selection methods do you use to evaluate potential coaches?

7.3 What is the relative importance of the following criteria in your selection process (using a 4 (high rating) to 1 (low/nil rating) scale)?
   qualifications and training   business experience
   coaching experience/clients list   counselling experience
   face credibility   psychologist
   clarity around method(s)   industry experience
   use of supervision   professional/ethics
   other (please specify)

7.4 What important things have you learned about how to go about selecting coaches?

7.5 What proportion of your selection decision would actually be based on your subjective opinion (be that an impression, your intuition or your experience) vs. strict criteria?

7.6 What things to do not necessarily point towards coaching efficacy (that is, what can lead someone astray in the selection process)?

7.7 Can you remember a time when you have been fooled that a coach seemed better than he or she was?

What were the circumstances?

7.8 How did you find this particular nominated exceptional coach?

7.9 What selection methods highlighted the particular factors and skills that make him or her exceptional?

7.10 If you urgently had to find another exceptional coach, how would you go about it?

7.11 In your opinion, can anyone be an excellent coach with appropriate training?

7.12 If you could mandate it, what would you require in terms of (1) training and (2) experience as the minimum for a professional accreditation?

8   Changed perceptions as a result of interview

8.1 How, if at all, has this interview clarified your perceptions of exceptional executive coaching?

8.2 What question would you have liked to discuss that wasn't asked?

Report

Executive coaching can enhance transformational leadership

Tom Cerni, Guy J. Curtis & Susan H. Colmar

Objectives: Epstein's (1998) Cognitive-experiential Self theory (CEST) suggests that all behaviour is guided by two different processing systems – the rational and experiential. This brief report presents results of a study looking at the impact of a 10-week coaching intervention programme based on Epstein's CEST theory on transformational leadership among 14 secondary school principals.
Design: Set up as a pre-test, post-test control-group research design, the present study tested whether changes to CEST information-processing systems could bring about changes in leadership style.
Method: School principals in the intervention group focused on developing their rational system and constructive elements of the experiential system. At the commencement of the coaching intervention programme all school staff in the 14 schools were invited to rate their school principal using the MLQ (5X) questionnaire.
Results: The results of a 10-week coaching intervention programme showed that there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores for the intervention group, as rated by their school staff. The control group remained unchanged. Qualitative results indicate that the school principal in the intervention group became more reflective about their thinking processes and leadership practices.
Conclusion: This study provides initial evidence that by creating changes to rational and constructive thinking, it is possible to increase coachee's use of transformational leadership techniques.

Keywords: coaching, leadership, transformational, information-processing, education.

EXECUTIVE COACHING aims to enhance the effectiveness of leaders and performance of organisations (Nelson & Hogan, 2009) by connecting the *who* (talented employees) and the *how* (leadership development) with organisational goals and strategies (Wood & Gordon, 2009). To achieve these outcomes coaches first need to develop a personal understanding of themselves and their responses to change (Kemp, 2009). In the educational setting, high-performing principals, much like CEOs, recognise that the tensions created by daily dilemmas require attention from both the cognitive and affective perspectives, and finding a balance involves considering the logical solution as well as the intuitive one (Lindsay, Halfacre & Welch, 2004). One theory that provides a relevant framework for leaders and coaches to understand their behaviour and how to respond effectively to change is the Cognitive-Experiential Self Theory (CEST; Epstein, 1998).

Epstein et al. (1996) proposed that: 'people process information by two parallel, interactive systems' (p.391), which interact harmoniously but operate in different ways. The rational system, falling within the realms of conscious control, is analytical, whereas the experiential system operates both at the conscious and preconscious level and is holistic (see Figure 1). It is hypothesised that the overlapping region between the two systems is an expandable region of intuitive wisdom and creativity (Bucci, 1985; Epstein 1994). In the CEST model the experiential system acts as a default, unless the rational processing system is consciously activated (Sadler-Smith, Hodgkinson & Sinclair, 2008).

Figure 1: Association between information–processing and levels of consciousness.
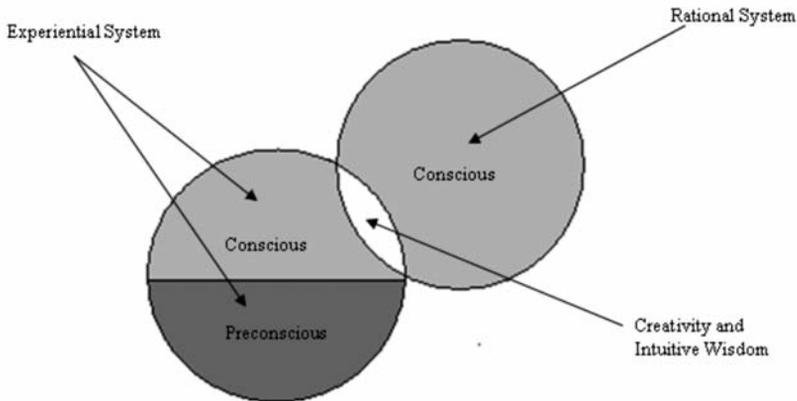
Both the rational and experiential systems can offer assistance to leaders. The rational system appears to complement management learning, as it can assist leaders make logical inferences and solve abstract problems. The experiential system on the other hand, with its intimate association with affect, can be both constructive and destructive (Epstein, 1998) when it comes to leadership. Constructive thinking is defined 'as the degree to which a person's automatic thinking, that is, the thinking that occurs without deliberate intention – facilitates solving problems in everyday life at a minimum cost in stress' (Epstein, 1998, p.26). For example, good constructive thinkers tend to interpret new situations as challenges rather than as threats, and view issues positively but not to an unrealistic degree (Epstein, 2001). The constructive components of the experiential system are: global constructive thinking, emotional coping, behavioural coping and their respective subscales. The destructive components are: personal superstitious thinking, categorical thinking, esoteric thinking, and naïve optimism (Epstein, 2001). If leaders are better able to understand their own rational and experiential systems, and how the two systems regulate each other for them to respond adaptively (Berger, 2007), the development of more productive leadership outcomes may result.

Research has found that transformational leaders increase motivation (Bogler, 2001), job satisfaction, and commitment (Koh, 1990). Transformational leadership appears to be a particularly effective approach in educational settings (Leithwood, 1994). In relation to CEST, the rational system and constructive elements of the experiential system have a strong positive relationship to transformational leadership (Cerni, Curtis & Colmar, 2008). However, the connection established by previous research only demonstrates that these systems are related to, but not necessarily that their use causes, transformational leadership techniques (Cerni et al., 2008). The present study addressed this limitation of previous research by coaching school principals in their use of the rational system and constructive elements of the experiential system, and measuring its impact on their use of transformational leadership techniques.

Method

Using a pre-post control group design, eight secondary school principals participated in the coaching programme over 10 weeks. Six other principals were assigned to a control group. At the commencement and end of the coaching-intervention programme all staff (intervention $N=242$, control $N=109$) from each of the 14 schools rated their principal using the Multifactor Leadership Ques-

tionnaire (MLQ-5X; Bass & Avolio, 1997). The MLQ-5X assesses five factors associated with transformational leadership: idealised influence – attributed, idealised influence – behaviour, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration.

The coaching-intervention programme developed for this study was based on Epstein's constructive thinking programme (Epstein, 1998). As an experienced counselling psychologist, the first author delivered the coaching-intervention programme to principals in the intervention group. The sequence of the coaching-intervention program consisted of the following three steps:

Step 1. During the initial meeting the school principal was presented with the coaching-intervention workbook and the first author explained the structure of the coaching program, the CEST information-processing systems and constructive thinking.

Step 2. One-hour individual meetings were held weekly with principals in the intervention group. During the meetings principals were asked to select 10 specific items to apply in the forthcoming week: four from the rational system, two from global constructive thinking, and two each from emotional and behavioural coping, which are subscales of constructive thinking. For example, if the principal wanted to further develop their rational system, they may have selected the following item, 'I will provide clear, explainable reasons for my decisions.' (Rational-Experiential Inventory; Epstein, Pacini & Norris, 1998).

Step 3. During the follow-up meeting the school principal commented on the events during the week and explained how the selected 10 items influenced their primary construal of experience, their secondary mental responses to that construal, and behavioural outcomes that attended this mental response. If the construal, secondary mental response, and behavioural outcome were maladaptive or destructive, the researcher worked with school principals to develop a set of alternative constructive responses. At the end of the session principals were given the opportunity to select 10 new items to work on during the following week. The remaining seven meetings typically involved working through the identified events, evaluating the 10 selected items, select 10 new items for the following week or repeating previously chosen items. A one-hour semi-structured interview was conducted during the last session.

Results and discussion

The study combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches to evaluating the success of the coaching-intervention and the potential causal relationship between CEST information-processing systems and transformational leadership. Quantitative results showed a significant increase in principals' staff-rated transformational leadership scores from the pre-test (M=60.35, SD=10.10) to the post-test (M=61.33, SD=9.76) scores ($t(240)$=2.13, p<.03). Results also showed that the intervention group had a significant positive change in the transformational leadership factors of idealised influence (attributed) $t(240)$=3.33, p<.0001 and individualised consideration, $t(240)$=2.81, p<.0001. There was no significant difference in staff ratings of principals in the control group on the transformational scale $t(107)$=.140, p=.89, or the five factors that make up transformational leadership.

The qualitative results showed that the majority of principals found that the coaching-intervention programme enabled them to be more aware of their thinking processes, and to use intentional choice of strategies to develop effective communication. As one principal indicated: *'I guess I have always had a sense of working towards a positive outcome but I didn't have a sense of technique, whereas now, I have a sense of techniques that do that'* (Principal 6).

In summary, the eight principals who participated in the 10-week coaching-intervention programme were rated higher by their

staff on transformational leadership compared to the principals in the control group. The 10-week coaching-intervention programme appears to have been effective since it deeply engaged leaders in thinking, reflecting, analysis, and practice with the strong component of coaching and feedback (Peterson, 2002). This study provides initial evidence that changing information-processing styles can influence leadership style. These results could be of assistance to coaching professionals who wish to employ an evidence-based technique for improving thinking and leadership (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007).

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Special Group in Coaching Psychology News

Ho Law

H ELLO. As the new Chair for the Special Group in Coaching Psychology (SGCP), I would like to welcome you to the first edition of the *International Coaching Psychology Review* for 2010. It still seems like only yesterday since I met many of you at our annual conference – the 2nd European Coaching Psychology Conference at the Royal Holloway, University of London in the UK. Having just become the Chair, within 24 hours, I received many heart felt congratulations from the participants at the conference. Many of you told me how wonderful the conference had been and that you had thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Thank you for your feedback and support. The conference was a great success; it is likely that we shall have our next annual conference at the same venue in December. I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at our next conference.

Before I set out my vision for 2010, I would like to pause for a moment to reflect on and celebrate the coming of age of the SGCP as a community, and coaching psychology as a profession. On reflection, SGCP would not have existed or become what it is now without many selfless contributions from the past Chairs and Committee members.

As part of honouring their work, I would like to mention the significant work that the past Chairs achieved during their terms of office. There is a long list of significant contributions from our former Chairs; I shall name a few here:

● The setting up of the Coaching Psychology Forum and then the formulation of the proposal for the SGCP (Stephen Palmer, 2005).

● The setting up of *The Coaching Psychologist* and the *International Coaching Psychology Review* publications (Stephen Palmer, 2005).

● The establishment of our profession and community of coaching psychologists (Siobhain O'Riordan, 2007).

● The inclusion in the British Psychological Society Directory of Chartered Psychologists for those who provide coaching psychology services (Pauline Willis, 2006, and Alison Whybrow, 2008).

● The continuous improvement of the website (Vicky Ellam-Dyson, 2009).

● The introduction of the peer practice groups as a means of engaging our members. (Vicky Ellam-Dyson, 2009)

Many congratulations to Dr Alison Whybrow for getting the Award for her distinguished contribution to the discipline of coaching psychology in 2009.

All of these achievements have provided us with a firm foundation to move forward. Now we can be more externally focused, more outward looking, beyond the current membership and look at how we can start to spread the word far and wide.

Looking ahead for the year 2010, my vision for the SGCP is to aim to:

● Engage our wider communities that are beyond coaching and coaching psychology.

● Raise the public awareness of the SGCP and coaching psychology, about the benefits that coaching psychology can bring to our everyday life, be it about personal development, career

progression, business performance, community cohesion, social or climate change.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRWx_3YnBfE

The above is an integral part of our strategy for next year and I am delighted to know that we have a 'Fresh' and 'Engaging' committee. Vicky Ellam-Dyson and I are very proud of the work of the Committee and how engaged they have been in supporting the extensive work of the SGCP. The achievements of the SGCP would not have been possible without your support and hard work.

For many organisations, the start of the new year is usually the away-day season for corporate bonding and strategic planning. SGCP had its strategy away-day on 22 January. My vision was shared and supported by all the Committee members. Our strategic plan was discussed, debated and re-drafted. The overall strategic aim (in draft) was translated as: To promote, develop, encourage and support coaching psychology in a way which engages and is responsive to both our current membership and the wider community. We aim to translate the above vision into our business plan for this year and beyond. I will announce the achievement and progress of our plan in the next edition.

The above strategic aim resonates with Peter Zarris', IGCP (p.90) enthusiasm in supporting the first International Congress of Coaching Psychology (ICCP). I too hope that SGCP will help jumpstart the International Congress as part of our annual conference in December 2010 with the aims to 'promote and advance coaching psychology' and engage the international community. Year 2010 is truly an exciting time. Watch this space.

We strive to continuously promote the benefits of our members. In 2010 we are offering many new features; resources and continuous professional development events. Please do visit our website www.sgcp.org.uk and you will notice the new design and updates.

The *International Coaching Psychology Review (ICPR)* represents one of our distinguished achievements; and I thank you – the editors, contributors and readers for your support. Through the publication of *ICPR* and various other means, we shall continue to build a relationship with other professional bodies to achieve our aims. I welcome your ideas and feedback – please e-mail me.

Ho Law
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Interest Group in Coaching Psychology News

Peter Zarris

Dear IGCP members.

ON BEHALF of the National Committee of the IGCP I would like to wish you all a successful, healthy and interesting 2010. We look forward to continuing our relationship with each of our members and continue to build our alliance with our good friends and partners at the British Psychological Society Special Group for Coaching Psychology.

Over the last couple of years we have been successful at maintaining a solid membership base and also in providing what I believe to be outstanding professional development events. This has been a credit to the local state committees and I would like at this stage to express my gratitude to the State Convenors of the east coast, namely Nic Eddy, David Heap and Patrea O'Donoghue and the various local committees. I would also like to acknowledge and pass on my thanks and support to the rest of the National Committee, including the National Executives Aaron McEwan and Henry McNicol who are the Secretary and Treasurer respectfully. And finally my sincere thanks to Rebecca (South Australia) and Vicki (ACT) for taking over and initialising groups in those areas. Obviously Perth still remains one area of focus for us.

The next 12 months
The next 12 months of course will be crucial for the IGCP, as we seek to move away from merely a group that provides professional development to also seeking to have a stronger impact in defining the role of Coaching Psychology and in accreditation for Coaching Psychology skills and experiences.

Nonetheless the key things to look out for over the next 12 months will be:

1: *The International Coaching Psychology Review (ICPR)*
The *ICPR* will continue as a bi-annual publication in partnership with the SCGP.

This will be made available online and the National Committee will be considering the options and possibilities in making printed versions available for purchase.

2: The fourth National Symposium
The fourth National IGCP Symposium will occur in Melbourne later this year.

The head of the Symposium Subcommittee is Nic Eddy who is also the State Convener.

Details of the National Symposium will be made available and this event continues to be one of the cornerstones of the IGCP professional development focus.

3: 1st International Congress of Coaching Psychology
Whilst we are very much in the early stages of discussion, the IGCP is hoping to play an important role in the first International Congress of Coaching Psychology, which may be held late in 2010 through to 2011.

The aim of this will be to promote the development of the Coaching Psychology profession and to bring together the Coaching Psychology community among other positives. The IGCP hopes to be an active participant and partner in this event.

In addition to this there will be other initiatives including encouraging and creating incentives for members to contribute to the *ICPR* and other coaching publications and also continuing our local state based events on an ongoing basis.

Looking forward to continuing working with all of you and continuing to develop Coaching Psychology, particularly in these changing times.

Peter Zarris
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Notes

Notes

Special Group in Coaching Psychology

The British Psychological Society

1st International Congress of Coaching Psychology 2010 – 2011

The UK event will be hosted by the
BPS Special Group in Coaching Psychology

14th and 15th December 2010, City University London, UK

This will be the first in a series of events, forming part of an international congress held around the world. The SGCP co-sponsored stage will debate and discuss coaching psychology, evidence the contribution this area of psychological enquiry and practice makes at an individual, group, organisational and societal level, and enhance the global integration of this rapidly developing discipline and profession. The events will bring together the coaching psychology community both at the individual and professional body levels.

Other stages of the congress will be held during 2011, hosted in a number of countries including Australia, sponsored by their regional coaching psychology groups. Pre-congress events may also be held.

Details of the UK event can be found at www.sgcp.org.uk

Details of all the events can be found at: www.coachingpsychologycongress.org

Drawing from a distinguished pool of national and international speakers, participants will be delighted with the breadth and depth of keynote presentations, masterclasses, symposia, mini skills workshops, research papers and poster presentations.

Delegates will have the opportunity to participate in debates and discussions, and continue to develop and consolidate relationships with peers across the community.

We invite you to consider presenting your work at this UK event. Participants in previous years' events describe their experience as one of warmth, openness and energy. For further information and submission details see the SGCP website: www.sgcp.org.uk or e-mail sgcpcon@bps.org.uk

Call for Papers for SGCP hosted event: Deadline 28th May 2010

For members of the BPS, the 2010 membership fee to join SGCP is £8.50
(The cost to join the BPS as an affiliate member is £24)

SGCP membership benefits include membership rates at our events and conferences and free copies of the 'International Coaching Psychology Review' and 'The Coaching Psychologist'.

4. Online submission process

(1) All manuscripts must be submitted to a Co-ordinating Editor by e-mail to:
Stephen Palmer (UK): dr.palmer@btinternet.com
Michael Cavanagh (Australia): michaelc@psych.usyd.edu.au

(2) The submission must include the following as separate files:
- Title page consisting of manuscript title, authors' full names and affiliations, name and address for corresponding author.
- Abstract.
- Full manuscript omitting authors' names and affiliations. Figures and tables can be attached separately if necessary.

5. Manuscript requirements

- Contributions must be typed in double spacing with wide margins. All sheets must be numbered.
- Tables should be typed in double spacing, each on a separate page with a self-explanatory title. Tables should be comprehensible without reference to the text. They should be placed at the end of the manuscript with their approximate locations indicated in the text.
- Figures can be included at the end of the document or attached as separate files, carefully labelled in initial capital/lower case lettering with symbols in a form consistent with text use. Unnecessary background patterns, lines and shading should be avoided. Captions should be listed on a separate page. The resolution of digital images must be at least 300 dpi.
- For articles containing original scientific research, a structured abstract of up to 250 words should be included with the headings: Objectives, Design, Methods, Results, Conclusions. Review articles should use these headings: Purpose, Methods, Results, Conclusions.
- Overall, the presentation of papers should conform to the British Psychological Society's Style Guide (available at www.bps.org.uk/ publications/publications_home.cfm in PDF format). Non-discriminatory language should be used throughout. Spelling should be Anglicised when appropriate. Text should be concise and written for an international readership of applied psychologists. Sensationalist and unsubstantiated views are discouraged. Abbreviations, acronyms and unfamiliar specialist terms should be explained in the text on first use.
- Particular care should be taken to ensure that references are accurate and complete. Give all journal titles in full. Referencing should follow BPS formats. For example:
  Billington, T. (2000). *Separating, losing and excluding children: Narratives of difference*. London: Routledge/Falmer.
  Elliott, J.G. (2000). Dynamic assessment in educational contexts: Purpose and promise. In C. Lidz & J.G. Elliott (Eds.), *Dynamic assessment: Prevailing models and applications* (pp.713–740). New York: J.A.I. Press.
  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.
- SI units must be used for all measurements, rounded off to practical values if appropriate, with the Imperial equivalent in parentheses.
- In normal circumstances, effect size should be incorporated.
- Authors are requested to avoid the use of sexist language.
- Authors are responsible for acquiring written permission to publish lengthy quotations, illustrations, etc. for which they do not own copyright.

6. Brief reports

These should be limited to 1000 words and may include research studies and theoretical, critical or review comments whose essential contribution can be made briefly. A summary of not more than 50 words should be provided.

7. Publication ethics

BPS Code of Conduct – Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines.
Principles of Publishing – Principle of Publishing.

8. Supplementary data

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Contents