Coaching and Mentoring: Introduction to Professional Business and Personal Coaching

Coach Lee is a Master coach specializing in working with business owners and professionals in being more profitable and productive while staying sane and balanced. Coaching Lee is the publisher of the award winning e-zine, 365 Days of Coaching, because life happens every day.


Warning: This is a paper written for a class in my doctorate program at Walden University. It is written for an academic audience. It isn’t the most exciting paper on coaching you will ever read, but hopefully somewhat informative.

When Luke Skywalker was perplexed, he went to Obe-Wan Kenobi. When King Arthur needed advice, he went to Merlin. When Pinocchio got in trouble, Jiminy Crickey provided guidance. But who is there to help everyday heroes determine how to better deal with stress, change, job problems, and other life issues? Where can an everyday hero find an Obe-Wan Kenobi? (Brickey, 1999, p. 109)

Out of the self-development self-help movements of the 60s and 70s has emerged a new profession, that of professional business and personal coaching. Coaching answers the question of who will support the everyday hero in their quest to be successful in life. According to Whitworth, House, Sandahl and Kimsey-House, People come to coaching because they want things to be different. They are looking for change or they have an important goal to reach. People come to coaching for lots of individual reasons. They are motivated to achieve specific goals: to write a book, to start a business, to have a healthier body. They come to coaching in order to be more effective or more satisfied at work. They hire a coach because they want to create more order and balance in their lives. Sometimes people want more from life, more peace of mind, more simplicity, more joy, and sometimes they want less: Less confusion, less stress, less financial pressure. In general they come to coaching because they want a better quality of life: more fulfillment, better balance, or a different process to accomplish their life desires. (Whitworth, Hourse, Sandahl, Kimsey-House, 1998. p. 5)

Coaching facilitates self-improvement by supporting the individual to systematically acquire the skills and tools to uncover the barriers that stand in the way of achieving personal and professional goals. Having a personal coach for the issues that come up in life is like having an athletic coach or physical trainer. Doyle points out that sports coaching and business coaching have several things in common such as:

- Both sports and business coaches strive to motivate, inspire, and get the extra mile from their players.
- Both demand commitment, action, and results for the team and the stakeholders that support the team.
- Both build trusting relationships with their players.
- Both need focus and vision.
- Both play to win.

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Coaching Defined

Doyle also points out that even though there are similarities, there are also major differences. A personal coach does what an athletic coach or trainer does, only in a more holistic way. A personal coach challenges the client to take the time to find out what is truly important in his or her life. A personal coach provides accountability for the things the clients says they want to accomplish, and supports the client in living up to his or her full potential. No matter where a person is in life, there is usually a desire to create more. This may be more success, more money, more friends, more of a sense of the meaning of life, or more connection that is spiritual.

To many people this means they must work hard, struggle, and do it alone. There is a belief that they must pay a price for what they wish to attain. That price is often high. Many people pay by jeopardizing their health, not having enough time to enjoy life, straining family relationships or lessening productivity. For many the effort results in the unexpected and they end up not enjoying what they worked so hard to obtain. Athletes and performers know about this trap. They know they need someone else, a trained someone else, to help them set goals, discover real needs, and work effectively toward ultimate goals of excellence. They are willing to hire a coach and know that no serious athlete or musician would expect to progress very far without one.

Coaching is growing in popularity, both for people interested in becoming coaches and for people looking to create more of what they want in their life. In Coaching for Leadership the editors remark that "Coaching is a rapidly growing vocation these days because so many of us are searching for a qualified person to help us develop and improve" (Goldsmith, Lyons, & Freas, 2000, p. 20). According to Nordli, "somewhere around the late 1980's, the term coaching came into business parlance" (CPJ, 1996, p. 87). Judge and Cowell point out that "Like many other innovations, it seems to have sprung up simultaneously on the east and west coasts of the United States" (Judge & Cowell, 1997, p. 71). The first person thought to use the term executive coaching was Dr. Dick Borough, a practitioner in Palo Alto, California, who used the term to describe his leadership development activities in 1985. Judge and Cowell point out that by 1988 the term coaching had become mainstream enough that Forbes magazine printed a controversial article written by Dyan Machan entitled, "Sigmund Freud meets Henry Ford."

In one of the first journal articles published on coaching, Evered and Selman provided the history of the word coach. They state that The word "coach" was first used in the modern sense of a sports coach in the 1889's (referring specifically to one who trained a team of athletes to win a boat race). Previously (beginning in the 1840's), the word "coach" was used colloquially at Oxford University to refer to a private (vs. university) tutor who prepared a student for an examination. But the very first use of the word "coach" in English occurred in the 1500's to refer to a particular kind of carriage. (It still does.) Hence the root meaning of the verb "to coach": to convey a valued person from where he or she was to where he or she wanted to be. (Evered & Selman, 1989, p. 16)

The word coach may not seem an appropriate word to use in the context of professional business and personal coaching, but when the root meaning of the verb is explored, it makes sense. In the book Coaching for Leadership the authors contend, "Coach" is an old French word meaning "a vehicle to transport people from one place to another." Today, a coach helps a person move up a level, by expanding a skill, by boosting performance, or even by changing the way a person thinks. Coaches help people grow. They help people see beyond what they are today to what they can become tomorrow. A great coach helps ordinary folks do extraordinary things. In short, a great coach provides sturdy shoulders to stand on so one can see farther than they might see on their own. (Goldsmith, Lyons, & Freas, 2000, p. 12)

Modern day professional coaches support their valued clients in assessing where they are and then supporting them in getting to where they want to be. Witherspoon continues on the theme of the word coach and explains,

Coaching is undertaken to bring out the best in people. The first use of the work in the English language was in reference to a particular kind of carriage. Hence, the basic meaning is to convey a valued person from where he or she was to where he or she wants to be. (Witherspoon, 2000, p. 167)

Personal coaching is the second fastest growing profession in the United States, and has been written about in Fortune Magazine, the Wall Street Journal, Time Magazine, and featured on shows such as CNN. In their book Co-Active Coaching, Whitworth, Kimsey-House, and Sandahl state that professional and personal coaching can be traced back to executive coaching in large organizations and to mentoring programs (1998). The International Coach Federation estimates that there are 15,000 full and part-time coaches throughout the United States. According to Thomas Leonard, founder of CoachU and currently the president of Coachville, the largest coaching organization in the world, there are more than 40,000 coaches worldwide. Leonard also asserts that the profession is increasing at 20% per year and is a multi-billion dollar industry.

Although the academic literature primarily focuses on only one type of coaching, executive, with some management and business coaching sprinkled in for good measure, there are actually many types of coaching available. Executive and management/business coaching is only a small portion of the coaching that is offered. "Executive coaches account for only 10% of the field" (Greco, 2001, p. 28). Among the most popular areas are:

- Personal/Life Coaching
- Developmental Coaching
- Executive Coaching
- Business Coaching
- Remedial Coaching
- Transitional Coaching
- Career Coaching

(According to research conducted by Gale, Liljenstrand, Pardieu, and Nebeker)

Titles most often used include Personal Coach, Executive Coach, Life Coach and Business Coach. Coaches with master degrees most frequently refer to themselves as Business Coaches, Consultants, Executive Coaches, Personal Coaches, and Developmental Coaches; coaches with Bachelor degrees use the titles, Professional Coach, Mentor and Life Coach, and coaches with Doctoral degrees use the titles, Mentor and Developmental Coach most frequently. The wide variety of coach titles indicates either that coaches practice in many different capacities or that there are many different names for very similar intentions. (2002, p. 8)

Of the 1,048 coaching articles listed on the International Coach Federation website, dating from 1993 to 2002, less than 10% of the mainstream media focused on executive coaching. The rest of the articles focused on life coaching, life transition, and career. The answer to why academia is not addressing the coaching phenomenon in a more holistic way is not in the scope of this paper, but does lend itself to further inquiry.

Coaching Defined

One of the most difficult things about coaching is to define what it is. Bivens contends that coaching is an overused and often misunderstood concept in business and leadership development circles today. Our mental model for coaching greats, in this country at least, consists of a picture scrapbook formed from experiences with childhood sports coaches or visual images of the Vince Lombardi's, Woody Haye's, Bear Bryant's or Bobby Knight's of our own era. (Bivens, 1996, p.50)

While these images can serve to inspire because of the ability of the coach to produce winners, they also typify coaches (usually men) who also demonstrate a darker side of coaching. Behavior such as verbal abuse, playing injured players, intimidation, and the coach as God philosophy are also part of the athletic coaches' behavioral playbook (Bivens). In contrast, business and personal coaches draw on the positive lessons from the great coaches and add a partnership component that includes
Coaching Compared to Other Professions

Although often compared to various disciplines, coaching is a distinct profession that combines the best of many areas of personal development. Coaching is an eclectic mix of concepts and methods that are used in new and distinct ways. Instead of trying to analyze the past and figure out what is wrong, a coach supports the client in assessing where they are in the present, where they want to be, and how they can get to where they want to go. Traditional methods such as adult education, management training, consulting skills, and mentoring skills are combined and synthesized to create a coaching modality.

In the past society was closer knit and elder family members would take the role of coaching a younger relative through the trials and tribulations of life. With American society being increasingly mobile, families often do not stay in close proximity and frequently people find themselves far from home and the support of family.

An alternative to a family member is to find a mentor outside of the family. Although mentoring can be an answer to getting support, many times it is difficult to find an appropriate mentor and mentoring tends to be hierarchical in nature, with the mentor bestowing knowledge upon the mentee. Mentoring is a relationship that is established with someone who is an expert in his or her field and has something to teach the mentee. The mentor is usually older and more experienced than the mentee. The mentor bestows their knowledge and wisdom and the mentee looks up to the mentor and seeks guidance and advice from the mentor. A coaching relationship is a partnership where the coach walks side by side with the client. Coaches support their clients in drawing on their own wisdom to find answers and then to follow their own inner guidance.

Traditionally people would turn to therapists in times of transition, however therapists tend to work with dysfunctional people to get them back to functional. A coach, on the other hand, works with functional people to get them to exceptional. MacRae (2002) points out that while the coaching process has its roots in psychology, it should not be confused with therapy or counseling. Coaches deal with highly functional people and the emphasis is on strengths and achievements rather than weaknesses and problems. Evered and Selman point out that "coaching is not especially concerned with resolving personal or psychological problems, except perhaps peripherally" (Evered & Selman, 1989, p. 24). Landsberg points out that "great coaches, in contrast to great psychologists, typically do not delve deeply into the coachee’s psyche" (Landsberg, 1997, p. 104). In addition coaching is present and future-focused in contrast with therapy that focuses on the past and how to heal it. Beam points out that "Unlike a therapist, a coach is more concerned with the future than with the past, with action than with introspection and with how things can happen rather than why they did" (Beam, 2001, p. 58). The confusion between coaching and therapy in part could be because therapy is evolving and many therapists now incorporate coaching skills into their therapy. This is fine, therapist can coach, but coaches do not do therapy. Kouski contends that coaching is about living at a holistic way, which might sound somewhat like therapy, but instead of worrying about the past, coaches focus on the future and work on the notion that people are responsible for their own success and need to take steps toward achieving it.

Coaching is a form of consulting. The difference between coaching and consulting is the consultant comes in as an expert, fixes something, and leaves. In contrast the coach does not claim to be an expert in the coachee's life or business, but knows that the client is the expert and simply needs to be supported in discovering and implementing his or her best ideas. Where typically the consultant is an expert in the field, a coach does not claim to be an expert, however, is there to bring the expertise out in the client. The coach does not claim to have the answers, but instead has the questions that will support the client in finding his or her own answers.

Evered and Selman contend, the coach's job is not primarily to give information, although some information giving is involved. As a rule, a coach is not an expert. Technical expertise frequently is less relevant than the ability to enable or empower the coachee to go beyond the current level of performance. An insight into the player, in all his or her uniqueness, far outweighs the mere delivery of information. (Evered & Selman, 1989, p. 24)

In addition, the relationship with a consultant is usually focused on a particular area and is short term. The relationship with a coach is holistic in nature and is usually a longer term relationship. Borkowski offers advice on how to know if a consultant or coach should be hired. If the task is something that is important, but does not have to be done by the person facing the task, then the task should be delegated to a consultant or other expert in the area. If the task is important and is something that can only be executed by the person faced with the task, and he or she is running into obstacles and stumbling blocks and is looking to use this opportunity for both personal and professional growth and development, than a coach, not a consultant is needed. A consultant will move a project along to completion; a coach supports a person in accomplishing their personal and professional goals in a holistic way.

Coaching also differs from counseling in several ways. While a counselor provides information and expertise, the relationship is normally hierarchical, perhaps even authoritarian in nature. A coaching relationship is not hierarchical; the client and the coach partner to create a better future for the client.

Coaching does share similarities with other professions. However, coaching is distinctly different in many ways. Coaching is not hierarchical in nature, works on bringing out the brilliance and wisdom of the client, and supports the client in designing his or her own process for success. The coach does not claim or need to be an expert in the client's life, but rather uses tools that support the client in drawing on his or her own wisdom and expertise. Coaching skills can be used in conjunction with other professions and therefore may cause confusion along the lines of clearly understanding the distinction between coaching and something else.
According to Greco (2001), approaches and credentials are certainly the biggest obstacle facing this emerging industry. To establish levels of competencies and key distinguishers for coaches, thirty-six coaches from the International Coach Federation came together to establish the current competencies. The basic coaching competencies established were:

**Setting Foundation**
1. Meeting ethical guidelines and professional standards
2. Establishing the coaching agreement

**Co-Creating the Relationship**
3. Establishing trust and intimacy with the client
4. Coaching presence

**Communicating effectively**
5. Active listening
6. Powerful Questions
7. Direct Communications

**Facilitating Learning and Results**
8. Creating Awareness
9. Designing Actions
10. Planning and Goal Setting
11. Managing Process and Accountability

(Retrieved 17 December, 2002, from [www.coachfederation.org](http://www.coachfederation.org))

These competencies are a great starting point in understanding what coaches do. Unfortunately, there has been no research to discover if indeed coaches do what is laid out in the ICF's list. As important as these are, to date there is no evidence that coaches actually follow these guidelines when coaching. Although not in the scope of this paper, this area of coaching requires further research and validation of these competencies.

Culled from the research on executive, management, and business literature coaching, mainstream books and article and the researcher's own experience as a coach, an understanding does begin to emerge as to what tools coaches use to support their clients in achieving success. These tools are used within the context of any type of coaching, regardless if the coach is working with an executive or professional, business owner, or simply an individual that is seeking to enhance his or her life.

Bivens (1996) contends that there are four techniques for effective coaching. These four aspects are as follows:

1. Ask empowering questions
2. Set goals
3. Clarify current Reality
4. Give feedback freely.

**Questioning**

According to Bivens (1996), the single most powerful thing a coach does is to ask powerful nonjudgmental questions which help raise the awareness of the performer and increase his or her focus. MacRae offers that the coach's primary role is simple, ask questions. Borkowski adds that questioning, probes or prompts are the coach's primary tools to get the client to scan his or her thoughts and feelings and focus on the critical variables and contexts. Coaches do not claim to have the answers; what they do have are the powerful questions that will move the client along in his or her discovery of what is truly important.

Bivens (1996) contends that by coaching the clients to find their own answers, the coach creates an environment within which they make clear distinctions about current reality, create options, and most importantly, take action because the solution is theirs. Coaches empower with questions. Examples of empowering questions according to Bivens (p. 52) are:

- What result would you like to achieve?
- How would that change this situation?
- What would that bring you?... the team?... the company?
- What is your most powerful next step?
- What resources would you need?
- What obstacles, if any, do you anticipate? How might you minimize them?
- When will you complete this step?
- How can I best coach you?

Bivens continues, "The most vivid ah-ha for anyone willing to try this approach is how often the answer lies within the person being coached. All we have to do is ask the right questions as the coach" (Bivens, 1996, p. 52).

**Goal Setting**

Norvell emphasized that "working toward goals in a deliberate manner is what coaching is about" (Norvell, 1998, p. 3). A coaching relationship supports the client with setting goals, staying focused on those goals, and overcoming obstacles. Like their counterparts in athletic coaches, coaches will not run the races, rather they support the client is discovering how to achieve what he or she wants and how to set benchmarks for performance along the way. Because coaching is action oriented, goal setting is vital to the process to support the client in knowing what actions to take and to measure his or her success. Coaching is about setting goals based on what the client wants and values and then supporting the client through the process of achieving those goals.

In coaching, goal setting involves setting long-term goals, as well as short-term and sub-goals to those long-term goals in order to accomplish the desired results.
According to Bivens,

Once a long term goal is established, a more immediate goal for the coaching session is determined. This ensures that the coach is indeed facilitating the creative thought processes of the person being coached. It also helps both people know when the session is complete. Mutual goals, both long term and session goals, are established through dialogue and the use of empowering questions. After goal setting, the next step is to clarify current reality. (Bivens, 1996, p. 4)

Clarify Current Reality

Before coaching can begin, the coach and client must be very clear on where the client is in his or her life, career, and level of satisfaction. Before a plan can be created to support the client in moving forward, the coach and client must know where the client is moving from. This process requires a dialog with the client to establish what is really going on in his or her life. Although this may sound like common sense, oftentimes clients are not clear about what is really going on in his and her life and need assistance to sort everything out. Bivens points out that As important as goal setting is, an accurate picture of current reality is equally important and, typically, harder to determine. Since it is the starting line for our goal, we can only generate effective options for action if we know where we truly are in relation to the goal. (Bivens, 1996, p. 8)

Obtaining a clear picture of the client's perspective and where he or she is in life is an important step in successfully moving forward in the coaching.

Providing Feedback

Providing feedback to the client is one of the coach's primary roles. The coach supports the client by sharing his or her observations about what the coach notices. Bivens points out that "feedback serves two purposes for human development, it helps us know what worked and what didn't" (Bivens, 1996, p. 9).

MacRae points out that the primary role of the coach is to "ask the right questions and provide accurate feedback" (MacRae, 2002, p. 3.). A coach can often see what a client cannot see. Borkowski emphasized the importance of feedback as follows, "Feedback: by acting as a mirror the coach allows the client to see that which resides in their blind-spots. We all have blind-spots and we need others to help us see them" (Borkowski, 2001, p. 4).

Conclusion

According to Isley, "sustained coaching and tailoring, tailored to each person's needs, can drive greater success than a start-and-stop, one-size-fits-all approach that focuses more on penalties for failure and less on coaching for success" (Isley, 2001, p. 8). Greco points out that,

The experience may sound a little New Agey, and it is. But people at the top of their game, any game, are turning to coaches for championship, egging on, and bar-raising. Andreas Boccelli has a coach, Tiger Woods has a coach, even George W. Bush and Al Gore had coaches. (Greco, 2001, p. 30)

People are hiring coaches in record numbers. There are reasons for this phenomenon. There are many people who are tired of just getting by in life and are ready to do something special and meaningful with their lives. Although they are ready to do more with their lives and live life more fully, they don't have the skills or experience to know what steps need to be taken. A coach can offer another perspective and help the client create a plan to make the changes he or she wants in life.

People are beginning to realize that many of their dreams and goals that seemed like pipe dreams can become a reality. People are less willing to settle for less and are more willing to take the risk that needs to be taken to make their dreams come true. A coach has a large tool kit of skills and techniques that support the client in making their dreams and goals come true. In today's economic environment people now have the time and resources to invest in themselves and in the personal growth required to transform their dreams and goals into reality.

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Bibliography


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