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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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WHY IS COACHING CONSIDERED A TOOL FOR TRANSFORMATION?

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article was to analyze the main characteristics of the coaching process and to describe the activities involved in order to reach conclusions regarding its importance. The methodology used to gather information was documentary in nature. Printed and digital books, scientific articles, and other documentary sources were consulted to support the discussion and conclusions. Among the principal conclusions is that the coaching process appears more frequently than we consciously recognize in everyday organizational practice.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article was to analyze the main characteristics of the coaching process and to describe these activities in order to arrive at conclusions concerning its importance. Coaching occurs more frequently than we consciously recognize. In some cases, we only realize that we are reviewing the tasks a collaborator must perform in carrying out his or her duties; however, we end up recommending the best way to carry them out. We also ask, "How have you been performing this function?" Sometimes we even dare to ask whether he or she has contributed any personal initiative to improve those functions. We do not limit ourselves merely to reading the organizational manual and the corresponding job description; rather, we encourage continuous improvement and conclude by asking, "Is it clear what you are going to do? What do you suggest for improving your performance?" Without realizing it, we are touching on several of the characteristic features of the coaching process. At the same time, one of the "golden rules of coaching" is active listening. Without interrupting the employee's account, we allow the person to express ideas concerning the issue under discussion. This, of course, occurs when one is aware of and knowledgeable about coaching techniques, so that the process may conclude with an alternative solution contributed precisely by the individual involved in the problem.

- From the city of Kocs came the word kocsi. That term later became Kutsche in German, cocchio in Italian, and coche in Spanish. Therefore, the word coach derives from coach/carriage, whose function was to transport people from one place to another.
- Today, the word coaching is an English term that may be translated as training, since it comes from the English verb to coach, meaning to train. Thus, the coach is the one who trains, and the coachee is the client, that is, the one being trained.

Some additional definitions offered by the same author include the following

- A blower of embers (Leonardo Wolk). The embers represent the dreams of people who want help awakening them and who need only a little motivation for an immediate response.
- Empowering people to change their lives, reach their potential, and create the life they want (International Coaching Group).
- A discipline that turns out to be therapeutic even though that is not its ultimate purpose.

Other definitions include the following

- (Whitmore 2022), in his book **Coaching: Method for Improving People's Performance**, offers what may be one of the best definitions through a play on words: "...coaching is concerned as much, if not more, with how things are done as with what is done..." he links results to the collaborative

LITERATURE REVIEW

- According to Wolk (2007), the word **coach** is of Hungarian origin.

relationship the coach has been able to create and to the new skills and behaviors the coachee has developed during the process.

- (Gallwey 1998) states that the coaching process consists of activating a person's potential by reducing internal interference in order to maximize performance. He also points out that coaching is undertaken for the purpose of improving another person. Although the word and process of coaching are associated with sports and training, they are equally applicable in the business environment.
- In his paper titled "The third generation of workplace coaching: Creating a culture of quality conversations," Grant (2016) notes that since the 1990s the coaching process has been used in different ways, whether in the workplace, in performance management, in leadership-skill development, or for training purposes aimed at developing internal coaching capability at work. However, it has not always been properly adapted to new workplace demands. Evolution and generational trends met the needs of their respective periods, but new generations have now emerged with a stronger focus on managerial personal development and performance orientation. Numerous organizations have studied this phenomenon.
- In the workplace context, (Jones and Woods 2016), in their study "The effectiveness of workplace coaching," examined the relationship between coaching and effectiveness in the workplace. Their analyses showed that coaching had overall positive effects, as well as positive effects on specific outcome criteria, both at the individual level and in affective skills. Internal coaching feedback also demonstrated a positive effect.
- Regarding the relationship between personality and executive self-efficacy, (De Haan and Burger 2016), in their article "A large-scale study of executive and workplace coaching," conducted a large-scale study of coaching among executives. Their findings indicated that coachees' perceptions of the coach's effectiveness were related to the strength of the working alliance. Regardless of personality traits, the strength of the working relationship appears to be key to the effectiveness of this process, together with an emphasis on the goals of that alliance and its characteristics.
- With respect to the effects of coaching beyond the organization, (Theeboom and Beersma 2013), in the article "Does coaching work? A meta-analysis on the effects of coaching on individual level outcomes in an organizational context," conducted a meta-analysis of coaching effectiveness in an organizational context, examining performance/skills, well-being, coping, work attitudes, and self-regulation. The results showed significant positive effects, thus representing an effective intervention within organizations.

Reviewing the characteristics mentioned by each of these authors, the first definition leads to the conclusion that coaching has the function of transporting people from one place to another. Figuratively speaking, the first stage is when a person recognizes that there is a conflict or problem to be solved. This problem may have been detected either by the individual or by his or her immediate supervisor. The second stage, the ideal one, is when that problem has been resolved, in this case with the support of the coach. In a second sense, the coach is the one who trains and the coachee is the client, that is, the one being trained. Under this scheme, the coachee may be considered a member of a sports team, since the notion of training originates in the field of sports. For administrative purposes, however, that team may be a work team, and the function of the coach is to train the person so that he or she can give the best of himself or herself and, with the coach's help, draw from personal experience in the relevant field the solution to the problem being addressed. The definition proposed by the International Coaching Group emphasizes empowering people to change their lives, reach their potential, and create the life they want. This process is related to the objective of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, a discipline that seeks to help human beings mentally program themselves in a positive way. Thus, if

people are empowered to change their lives, they will do so from a positive perspective toward that transformation. Under this approach, they are expected to reach their potential and, in that way, set different and better life goals and objectives; in other words, to attain fullness, enjoy a better quality of life, and become fulfilled individuals. Another important element present in the coaching process is self-esteem. (Branden 2011), in his book *The Power of Self-Esteem*, defines it as confidence in one's own mind, in one's ability to think and to solve life's problems, and in one's aptitude to face the challenges that arise over time. He also refers to the rights one has as a person—for example, the right to be happy, to dignity, and to enjoy fully what has been achieved through one's own efforts. Alongside the coaching process, the coachee's self-esteem is strengthened.

Scheme for the Development of the Coaching Process (Wolk)

A preliminary step consists of establishing expectations between coach and coachee. According to Wolk, these expectations include defining and making explicit the gaps, as well as setting goals between coach and coachee regarding the scope of coaching. For example, being "happy in my job" is a highly abstract expression. The coach must guide the inquiry in order to translate it into concrete facts: "What would need to happen for you to say that you are happy in your job?" The emphasis is on changing one's own actions rather than attempting to change others. To the extent that a person knows and accepts himself or herself, that person becomes capable of accepting others. This introspection motivates the achievement of goals. A subsequent preliminary step involves taking into account the following coaching guidelines.

Preliminary Coaching Guidelines

1. Active and reflective listening, in addition to fully understanding the problem being addressed. If necessary, for greater certainty, the coach should restate to the coachee what has been understood and confirm whether that is indeed the problem to be solved. This shows that the issue has been understood and that there is a shared understanding of the problem.
- Body position and eye contact: making the coachee feel comfortable implies the convenience of maintaining appropriate eye contact. Looking the coachee in the eyes is meaningful because it demonstrates focused attention on that individual.
2. Do not interrupt, with the intention of inspiring trust.
3. Do not complete the other person's sentences: this is a check on comprehension and a reflection on action. This guideline may be put into practice by explaining what has been understood about the problem and asking the coachee whether the explanation accurately expresses the issue and whether it is clear what has been understood.
4. Intuition: sometimes we believe we know something without knowing why or where that knowledge comes from. In any case, it is important to ask whether that is what was actually expressed rather than what is merely intuited or interpreted. This also helps avoid bias in the proposed solution.
5. Respect for the other as a legitimate other. Colloquially speaking, this means giving the other person a voice and acknowledging that the person is different from us. It is not a matter of telling the person what to do—much less how the person should be or act—but of drawing out from within that person the courage and motivation needed for the response to become informed and action-oriented.
6. Focus on ontological change rather than one's own interests, without forgetting that the person before us is a human being facing a problem that must be solved.
7. Do not give advice. Even if we believe we have the best solution, we must remember that it is not our solution; our role is mediation that motivates action.
8. Do not tell the person what to do, much less how he or she should be or act. Otherwise, it will seem as though one claims

superior expertise over the other person, who is facing a problem and is being supported from the standpoint of a mediator and motivator rather than through imposition.

9. Eliminate expressions such as “you have to,” “you should,” or “the correct thing would be,” so that the person feels that his or her own decision carries weight in solving the problem.
10. Validate the coachee’s opinion. By asking, “What would you do to solve this?” the coach allows the person to express an opinion aimed at solving the problem while becoming directly involved in the solution.
11. Do not apply pressure. If a climate of trust is achieved, the coachee will feel free to express ideas openly.
12. Empathy—putting oneself in the other person’s shoes, helps in understanding the conflictive situation more fully.
13. Be skilled in formulating questions. Knowing how to ask, balancing assertion with inquiry, following a line of questioning rather than jumping from one topic to another. Questions should motivate analytic responses, for example: “What do you think about this?” “How would you solve it if that were the case?” “What are you going to do about this problem?” “Would you be willing to contribute to the solution?”

For the entire coaching process to be carried out, according to Wolk’s own framework, it is necessary to develop the following stages with their respective steps:

The Four stages and the Seven Steps of Coaching

- Stage I. Introduction/Opening: Step 1.
- Stage II. Exploration, understanding, and interpretation: Steps 2, 3, and 4.
- Stage III. Expansion: Steps 5 and 6.
- Stage IV. Closure: Step 7.

The Seven Steps

1. Generate context. Contract.
2. Agree on process objectives; set goals.
3. Explore the current situation.
4. Reinterpret interpretive gaps.
5. Design effective actions.
6. Role playing.
7. Final reflections and closure.

Description of the four stages and their corresponding steps

Stage I. Introduction/Opening: Step 1

On the one hand, the coachee is already aware of the problem, even if a possible solution is not yet clear. The coach must review and create an appropriate context for carrying out the process, devoting time to preparation in order to establish a context of trust, authority, confidentiality, physical and emotional space, permission from the coachee, and agreements based on mutual respect. This amounts to establishing a kind of contract between the two parties and creating an adequate climate and context. In this first interview, the exchange is bidirectional (Coach–Coachee assessment), although the questions are almost always asked by the coach in order to draw out the problem, understand it, and follow up with further questions to ensure certainty about the issue in question. The coachee’s participation consists of responding and explaining what has been asked. If trust has been achieved, the coachee will express his or her point of view directly and without evasion. The coach lays the groundwork for the task, defines the basic agreements, helps generate context for the subsequent steps, and most importantly establishes the bond of trust between coach and coachee.

Stage II. Exploration, understanding, and interpretation: Steps 2, 3, and 4

Step 2. Exploration consists of agreeing on process objectives and setting goals and/or activities—something like confirming: this is the

problem, but where do you want to arrive when we finish this process?

Step 3. Understanding explores the current situation without judgments or criticism on the part of the coach, but rather by genuinely trying to understand the coachee. Key questions such as “What is happening?” make it possible to explore the full situation. It is a process of reasoning aimed at avoiding subjective distortions.

Step 4. Interpretation. By this point, the coach should already have a broad picture of the problem and have interpreted each detail explained by the coachee. This is the appropriate moment to ask questions that help reinterpret interpretive gaps. The distance between the current situation and the desired situation should be reduced. The declaration and explanation of a break or turning point begins, using questions such as “What is happening?” Wolk illustrates this as follows: “... defining and making explicit the gaps and setting goals between coach and coachee regarding the scope of coaching. For example, being “happy in my job” is a very abstract term. The coach must guide the inquiry so as to make it concrete: “What would need to happen for you to say that you are happy in your job, in changing your own actions rather than trying to change others...?” Once the scope has been defined, in this example it is necessary to understand the coachee’s own perception of what being happy means, and that answer becomes the basis for continuing the process.

Stage III. Expansion: Steps 5 and 6

Step 5. Design effective actions. At this point, it is advisable to explore alternatives and possibilities for action. The coachee designs future-oriented actions, seeking new alternatives that may contribute to changing the current situation and, therefore, achieving the desired outcome. The coachee broadens the view of both the problem and its possible solutions; once these are analyzed, a more informed and better thought-out alternative becomes possible.

A key reflection here is: “I cannot change the past, but I can design the future.”

Step 6. Role playing. This is a practical simulation of a future situation. The key question is: “How would you feel if the objective of ... were achieved?” It may involve a role reversal—for example, if I were the person causing the problem, what would you advise me to do or what should I do to solve it? The coachee expresses his or her point of view regarding how, from that perspective, the other person should act in order to reach a solution.

Stage IV. Closure: Step 7. Final reflections are carried out and the process is closed.

The integration of both learning and commitments established for action is reinforced. The coach must act impeccably and bring the process to an appropriate close. One may interpret this as meaning that the coach must be so convinced by the coachee’s responses that the coach already feels part of the solution without having imposed a personal viewpoint. The confidence with which the coachee is empowered by what has been achieved will be key to the coachee’s sound development and transformational change, as well as to the coachee’s involvement in solving the problem or case addressed.

CONCLUSION

Every process should begin with a diagnosis, that is, identifying the problem to be addressed, in order to continue with this specific coaching process. In this case, the following idea applies: “individual learning is also applicable within organizations and is called management, which is the art of coordinating people, actions, and resources in order to achieve the objective of an organization”. Although an immediate supervisor may at times have exercised a coaching process without knowing that it was coaching, that person may have intuitively followed the process and achieved a

transformational change in the subordinate. Once one becomes conscious of the process, the solution is now developed with the intervention of the coachee. The preceding reflection is not only about learning and knowing, but also about asking ourselves who we want to be and how we ought to be within an organization. Thus, it is a matter of learning plus transformation, and that experience will be applicable not only in one situation but, once incorporated into the subordinate's body of knowledge, may be applied each time that person faces conflicts or challenges, because personal transformation has already taken place and preparedness has been achieved.

As a colophon, "Coaching is a powerful tool for designing the future and managing a different world."

Nothing has changed.

Only I have changed.

Therefore, everything has changed. — Hindu proverb.

As with the reflection in the previous paragraph, when I change, my world changes. This applies not only in the professional sphere or in workplace performance, but also in the personal life of every individual. Try it!

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