

APECS (Association for Professional Executive Coaching & Supervision) and Henley Management College Conference

Dilemmas and Choices in Coaching for 2007

10th May 2007, Henley Management College

About APECS

APECS is the Association for Professional Executive Coaching & Supervision (APECS). We are a not-for-profit organisation, which accredits executive coaches and the supervisors of executive coaches. Our aims are:

- To safeguard and develop the standards of professional coaching and supervision.
- To provide a stimulating forum for individuals engaged in buying or delivering professional coaching.

APECS enables coaches, supervisors and corporate buyers of executive coaching to: meet at regular member events; receive premium-value information relating to executive coaching and supervision; exchange views and experience, and provide mutual support and development.

APECS has a growing number of corporate members. To find out more about the benefits of joining APECS, contact: Pam Atkinson, Membership Secretary (email: pam.atkinson@apecs.org).

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Welcome and Introduction

Patricia Bossons, Director of Henley Coaching Services and Chris Bones, Principal, Henley Management College

“Character and integrity are as important in a manager as capability.” Chris Bones

Patricia Bossons welcomed participants to the conference on behalf of APECS, the Association for Professional Executive Coaching and Supervision, and Henley Management College. Highlighting the fact that Henley has been established for sixty years; it is the third largest provider of executive education and is ranked number 1 by the latest Economist Intelligence Unit survey.

Chris Bones then set the context for the conference. If you invest in creating management capability you create wealth – and this wealth is both personal and for the community. Education puts more resources back into the community. Therefore, understanding the nature of executive education is vital. There are several significant issues.

First, we learn as much from each other as we do from faculty. Participation is very important and education is about joint exploration and discussion.

Also, character and integrity are as important in a manager as capability. In addition, it is our choices that shape who we are more than simply our capabilities. Coaching is about helping us make the right choices.

Five choices and related challenges are confronting businesses and these can be addressed by coaching.

1. Reputation and relationships – both are essential but very difficult to sustain. For example, how do you develop people so that they think interconnectedly? How do you support senior executives?
2. Leadership and change – the challenge of focusing and leading

people through new, important and unfamiliar issues.

3. Growth – how can this be sustained? Growth is an issue that goes beyond costs and revenue to include innovation and collaboration.
4. Execution – the need to succeed with projects, processes and systems. Job titles may stay the same but priorities and work does not.
5. Learning – how organisations and individuals can best learn and leverage their knowledge.

However, coaching itself faces significant challenges. These include the fact that people are not adequately qualified, there needs to be more coaching of coaches, greater supervision and better adherence to professional standards. In future, the challenge for coaching is not to survive, it is to excel.

Myths, Beliefs and Opportunities in 2007 and Beyond

Graham Alexander, Alexander Corporation and Co-founder of the GROW model

“High performance coaching means achieving measurable and sustainable improvements in performance, in line with the clear and explicit needs of the business, beyond what the individual thought was possible for themselves.” Graham Alexander

There is much misunderstanding and confusion about high performance coaching. It clearly means improving an individual's performance but two elements are often overlooked. First, the need for this to be in line with the priorities of the business; second, for individuals to strive for excellence, reaching beyond what they believed could be accomplished.



Coaching myths

There are several coaching myths that are misleading, unhelpful and confusing for the profession. These beliefs, which need to be recognised and countered, include the views that:

- Coaching is everywhere – this is not the case. Also, we need to be clear about the quality of coaching that we mean.
- It is remedial – again, this is a fallacy. Coaching enables people to move to the next level.
- The pay-offs are long-term – this is plainly incorrect. Although pay-offs are long-term, they are also much more immediate.
- The ‘tell’ style works and is helpful – there may be times when this is true, but surely coaching also relies on a questioning approach?
- Coaches have to be content experts – not true at all. An understanding of the technical content issues may be helpful at times but it is not essential.

The nature of coaching: what it is and why it matters

It is important to understand the nature of coaching:

- Coaching always adds value.
- Coaching is in line with modern business characteristics and needs.
- Coaching enhances performance, increases learning and improves well-being.
- The capability of human beings to self-discover is enormous.
- Coaching is both supportive and challenging.
- Managers need to lead, manage and coach.
- Coaching enhances performance, increases learning and improves well-being.

What are the pitfalls of executive coaching?

- Not agreeing a goal for the session.
- Interjecting too much.
- Trying to control the session.
- Leading the coachee.
- Not allowing silence.
- Taking too long and allowing too much ‘story’.

- Getting in one’s head – being too focused on oneself.
- Not taking process checks.
- Ignoring emotions.
- Trying to do it right, look good, help or save the coachee.
- In discussion with two prominent and successful CEOs, Justin King of J.Sainsbury and Andy Coslett of Intercontinental Hotels, three qualities were highlighted as defining an effective leader and coach.
- First is the need for authenticity, meaning that they have tried to be themselves when leading people rather than assuming a fake, contrived or idealised persona. The key is to be the best version of you, not anything else. Second, be prepared to learn as you go. What matters is not simply what you know, but how you react to the unknown. Finally, understand that leadership is all about people.

In particular, coaching invariably requires a change of approach. It means moving from questions that highlight the coach’s expertise to questions that show the coachee’s expertise. This means asking questions whose answers you don’t know – for example:

- Tell me what you think is going on?
- What went wrong and how might you improve it?
- What could you do now?
- When can I have it finished by?
- Is there any way I can help you?

Q&A with Graham Alexander

How would you compare the relative merits of sports coaches (for example, Alex Ferguson versus Jose Mourinho)?

The key is to look at their leadership through the other end of the telescope – meaning you should consider their effects, the results they’ve achieved. They also highlight the fact that there are very different approaches to successful coaching: some prefer to create a supportive ‘performance’ climate, while others are much more directive.



What are the main differences between an external coach and leaders within an organisation who coach? Openness and honesty are non-negotiable but can be difficult to achieve with internal coaches (at least, in some organisations). The priority for coaches is to create environments where challenge is ever-present and integrity, openness and trust are strong and consistent. Coaches also have to deliver value and this can be achieved with external coaches who bring to bear external experience and a different perspective.

How do you measure the value of coaching? Assessment and profiling is valuable and it is useful to gain external comments and perspectives before starting. This leads on to the need to be clear about the priorities for external coaching and, depending on what these are, how they can best be measured. Also, agree in advance what success will look like – and only then let the coaching commence.

“It is important to coach people on their strengths, helping them to use and develop these even further, rather than trying to improve a weakness where the improvement and benefit may be limited.” Graham Alexander

How would you approach coaching for small and medium-sized enterprises? Understand the priorities and issues, and allow coaching to be driven by the firm’s own specific situation. This may involve an additional exploratory meeting rather than just a typical sales meeting.

How can you ensure that the presence of supervision does not distract the coach? Also, how do you ensure that the cachet of coaching does not distract? Coaching is full of paradox: the coaches need to understand themselves, their own weaknesses and approach and to be self-aware. Coaches need to balance, simultaneously, issues relating to

their own effectiveness at the same time as they consider their clients’.

Ensuring that the cachet does not distract requires the coach to set the right boundaries at the start, to understand the priorities and, most of all, to benefit the client.

Tales from the top

In the popular book ‘Tales from the top’, Graham Alexander highlights questions for reflection by senior executives:

- What gets me up in the morning?
- What aspect of my job do I most enjoy? How much of my time do I spend doing that?
- What aspect of my job do I least enjoy? How much of my time do I spend doing that?
- What keeps me awake at night?
- How do I have fun?
- How much time am I spending “taking care of me”?
- What would I do if I didn’t have to go to work tomorrow?
- Am I enjoying the money I earn?
- How much money is “enough”?
- What do I see in the mirror?
- Am I healthy enough?
- If the next year was the best year of my life, what would I achieve? How would I feel? What would be my principal theme? What would be my motto?
- What miracle would I like to occur?
- If ‘Graham’ met me in five years’ time, what would I like to tell him I was doing? How did I achieve it?
- What did I used to do that I loved and should do again?



Coaching Supervision: the Key to Successful Continuing Personal and Professional Development

Peter Hawkins, Chairman and
Founder, Bath Consultancy Group

“Supervision, like coaching,
starts with questions, not
answers.” Peter Hawkins

Coaching supervision is widely advocated but poorly or rarely implemented. This is highlighted by recent research from the CIPD (2006) showing that 88% of organisers of coaching and 86% of coaches believe they should have regular ongoing supervision. However, only 44% of coaches receive regular supervision and only 23% of organisations provide regular coaching supervision. This may be changing, however: 58% of the coaches receiving supervision only started within the last 2 years.

The employer's perspective

Supervision means understanding what is happening with the coach but also valuing and understanding the position of the business. Supervision ensures the quality of coaching; for this reason, it matters to employers.

Best practice coaching supervision...

- Opens the coach's work up to professional scrutiny.
- Helps encourage and facilitate the coach's personal professional development.
- Assures and enhances the quality of coaching.
- Makes the coach aware of their personal limits and keeps their thoughts and feelings remaining in the service of the client.
- Helps the coach become a better reflective practitioner.
- Keeps the coach open, focused and energised.

- Manages ethical and confidential boundaries.

Supervision benefits the coach and the client. Supervision is best if it takes place every 6-8 weeks, or a ratio of supervision to coaching of 1:20 (or 1:30). The best supervisors are typically experienced coaches with supervisory training.

“At the heart of all coaching we are helping people enhance their potential to make a real difference in the world.” Peter Hawkins

CLEAR – a model for coaching and supervision

Peter Hawkins highlighted the five elements of the CLEAR model:

Contract – achieve clarity and agree on the goals of the session. Ask: what would success look like from this session?

Listen and help develop their understanding of the situation. Reflect with comments such as “what I'm sensing from your story is...”

Explore the individual's feelings, as well as the facts of the situation, and explore what they have already done and what else they might try. Seek options, ask “what is the wildest thing you could do?”

Action – decide the best way forward and rehearse the first steps. An emotional shift is very important, if progress is to be achieved. The supervisor needs to achieve this with the coach, who then does the same with the organisation.

Review actions and obtain feedback. This also involves appreciation and encouragement.



How Coaching Works for Pearson

Alison Young, Management Development Director, Pearson plc

“There’s no such thing as a career path – it’s crazy paving and you lay it yourself.”

Pearson is one of the world’s leading publishers, with five main businesses and it includes a diverse range of cultures. Businesses include: higher education, school companies, Penguin Books, The Financial Times and assessment and testing.

Pearson faces some specific challenges. We are a business that is fast-becoming global, not simply international; digital skills are an important area of change and development, with the result that we need to look much more at different sectors for a range of skills; our employees and customers encompass a broad range of cultures.

Pearson’s priorities

Priorities within Pearson are highlighted by David Bell, Pearson’s Director for People:

“At Pearson, everything we create – ideas, stories, newspapers, images, books, websites – is only as good as our people’s minds and imaginations. We have brains, brands and not much else. We have a simple but ambitious goal: to be the best company to work for in the world so our people have the skills to leave but choose to stay.”

The most significant challenges are to help people realise their potential and to provide people with a stimulating environment that means they choose to stay. This means focusing on four priorities:

- Finding and nurturing talent.
- Mentoring.
- Performance management.
- Training and development.

Management development and coaching at Pearson

A small central team is responsible for management development, working closely with external partners and local teams in each of the operating companies. The requirement is to support the operating companies, ensuring that support and guidance is available.

Coaching is integrated with learning and development activities and is valuable in sharing experience, ideas and expertise across borders.

Pearson’s experience of coaching has several interesting aspects:

- ‘How much?’ – There are still concerns about the cost of coaching but the real issue has moved on to one of value. People now understand much more about the benefits and advantages of coaching. Senior colleagues’ analysis and buy-in is vital for success.
- Challenges facing coaching at Pearson include: geographic spread, the size of business, HR knowledge, expertise and time, senior executives’ understanding, and senior executives’ commitment to their own development – overcoming the attitude of “they” need the help, and not me.
- The talent development process within Pearson comprises a range of options, including coaching.
- Coaching is not a substitute for management responsibility. Managers know they need to proactively manage performance; coaching may support them, but it is no substitute for personal responsibility.
- Coaching is no longer an isolated activity but part of an on-going process. This involves the company’s talent review, which may identify someone with specific needs, as well as a leadership programme and development initiatives specific to each operating company.
- Choosing a coach at Pearson means balancing a deep experience of “human behaviour” with experience of working at a senior level. Chemistry, an ability to act as a role model and specific expertise are all significant.



- The coaching process has a necessary element of rigor and professionalism, with contracting, confidentiality and closure important characteristics.

Coaching has achieved significant success, particularly when part of a leadership programme. One key element in this success has been the personal credibility of the coaches, which ensures momentum.

Choices, Dilemmas and Paradoxes: Coaching at Fujitsu Services

Ian Williams, Head of Organisation and People Development, Fujitsu Services

“Our aim was to provide intensive coaching skills training to the leaders of our business and continuously improve the growing ethos of coaching in Fujitsu Services, for increased performance and productivity.”
Ian Williams

Fujitsu Services is a \$41bn leader in IT systems and services. The firm designs, builds and manages clients' IT systems, including applications, data centres, networks and workgroups. This is achieved through a choice of relationships: consultancy, IT projects, managed services and outsourcing. The firm's chosen markets are central government and defence, local government and health and the private sector.

Why introduce professional coaching?

Fujitsu Services introduced coaching as a way of meeting several significant market challenges. These include the need:

- To win larger contracts.
- To retain existing profitable accounts.

- To enhance Fujitsu's range of services in line with the brand, through the skills and expertise of our people.
- To support Fujitsu's sale of professional excellence.

Building the case for professional coaching

Fujitsu's business context made the case for coaching a complicated one. First, investment in people is a scarce resource and subject to close business scrutiny; it remains a discretionary spend and there are many alternatives within training and development. Also, coaching can create tension, with some senior executives concerned that the firm would be coaching people to leave the organisation.

These challenges were addressed with a strong business case emphasising:

- Return on investment.
- The fact that coaching complements other skills being developed within Fujitsu.
- The impact of coaching on developing a culture of continuous professional development.
- The fact that executive coaching was becoming accepted and that the programme is a significant way to value people.
- The link between coaching and the new Investors in People standard.

Fujitsu's experience, challenges and benefits of the programme

A pilot scheme was launched in March 2005, with 25 delegates chosen from the alumni of the Leading Performance programme. There are now four active cohorts regularly exchanging ideas, plus a three module programme, that also involves supervision groups and use of the intranet.

Choosing a partner raised issues of internal versus external expertise. Fujitsu opted for an external partner, Henley Management College (HMC) who provided needed expertise and professionalism to execute the programme. HMC's involvement also leads to a professional accreditation and ensures that assessment is rigorous and



practical. Henley coaches have become sponsors and change agents.

The results include sustaining a coaching culture within the firm. This has been accomplished with senior sponsorship, adequate financing and the involvement of evangelical pioneers. Coaching has been positioned as generative rather than remedial, and the benefits have been widely publicised.

In addition, coaching within Fujitsu Services has also had an impact on day-to-day job performance, in several ways:

- People are proactively looking for symptoms rather than causes.
- There is greater confidence, demonstrated by new priorities being established and by behaviour improving in front of customers and colleagues – there is, for example, a tendency to listen more and talk less.
- People possess a greater understanding of the business.
- Areas of development and career progression are clearer for each individual.
- People are improving their work-life balance.

In particular, there is a renewed energy and focus on action with the recognition that, in the words of Gandhi, “You must become the change you want to see in the world.”

Question Time

Panel discussion chaired by Jeff Jones, Principal – Talent Management, HSBC, with comments from Patti Stevens, Joint Co-founder, APECS and Director of Coaching Supervision Consultancy, together with Graham Alexander, Alison Young and Ian Williams

How do we measure a return on investment in coaching for the business?

It can help to start by discussing the planned results and outcomes and by asking what would be the value to the business? Once quantified, this puts the fee in perspective for the results that can

be achieved – the assignment would not be taken on if the work could not be accomplished.

Also, through a pre- and post-260 degree evaluation, it is possible to simply assess how the business has developed. This approach works particularly well, of course, with cultures that value data.

It is also worth remembering that assessment can be qualitative as well as quantitative – with results being understood through discussions and rich descriptions.

Perhaps a key issue is: do you currently measure your executive’s performance? If so, you will see the results and benefits; if not, why be concerned?

Finally, there may simply be too much time and work to gain an accurate figure and the effort is simply not worth the benefit.

How can you develop a coaching culture?

This depends on the situation and culture of the business. Sometimes it can help to have external coaches around the organisation. What matters most, of course, is to find a hook – a way of making coaching relevant and connecting with people.

Also, the benefits of coaching come from understanding who you need to focus on, and then targeting them. These are typically members of the talent pool. Recognise that people want conversations about their personal, professional and career development with their managers and then build on this need.

Why don’t coaches simply provide each other with mutual support, acting as a meta-coach?

This is possible but many coaches simply prefer and value a more expert, formalised approach. Coaching is, after all, unwitnessed. Also, an element of fear and anxiety may exist. This can be effectively addressed by a supervision relationship.

How can supervision be made more affordable?

Because it is so important, it is the case that supervision really is becoming much less of an optional extra. Increased



demand is likely to stimulate greater supply (although there may be a short transition period where prices are high).

Also, a typical supervision contract provides 90 minutes of supervision every six weeks or so, varying according to the coach's needs and their number of clients. It may also be the case that the issue is one of value: only relatively recently are people coming to understand the benefits of professional, expert supervision.

Further Information

To find out more about:

- Accreditation
- Professional standards for executive coaching and supervision
- Future events and membership of APECS

Contact Pam Atkinson, Membership Secretary (pam.atkinson@apecs.org).

