

VIEWPOINT



WATCH AND LEARN PETER HAWKINS

Supervision needs to be part-and-parcel of coaching if it is to reach its full potential. But who should foot the bill?

Coaching supervision might be a new practice in a young profession, but there is impressive evidence that it is best practice. However, as with many new developments, it is easy for concerns to be voiced – and one of these is who should pay for coaching supervision.

While it is easy for me to say that coaching supervision should not be viewed as a cost but as an intrinsic part of best coaching practice, it might not allay these concerns. Therefore, I will draw on research that Gil Schwenk and I conducted on behalf of the CIPD into coaching supervision.

While 88 per cent of organisations and 86 per cent of coaches believe coaching supervision should be implemented, only 23 per cent of organisations provide it and less than half (44 per cent) of coaches receive any form of coaching supervision. When specifically asked about the cost, the findings show that 17 per cent of coaches and 19 per cent of organisations do not provide supervision as it is too expensive.

So, whose responsibility is it to ensure that coaching supervision becomes mandatory, and is cost the real issue? I believe purchasers, professional bodies and coaches need to work together and have an open and honest discussion about all aspects of coaching – including the cost of supervision.

At times it may be easier to shy away from this dialogue. Our research with HR departments shows that the majority of organisations expect their external coaches to maintain their own supervisory arrangements as part of their professional standards. This highlights an inherent danger that many organisations might simply assume supervision is provided by their external coaches.

So is it the coaches or the organisations that ought to pay? In the main, external coaches tend to pay for their own supervision.

Organisations generally provide supervision for internal coaches, with 84 per cent paying for face-to-face supervision and 100 per cent covering the cost of group supervision.

There is a huge variance in cost and, during our research with focus groups, coaching supervisors raised the concern that the price of coaching supervision was lower than the typical hourly rate for external coaches. This indicates the infancy of coaching supervision, and the industry should be aware that the price is likely to increase and become at least equal to the cost of coaching as more and more coaches and organisations implement supervision and recognise its value.

Cost is only part of the discussion, though. There are also different views on how often supervision should be conducted. Perhaps it is easier to highlight some examples of best practice that I hope will set a benchmark for the industry.

The Oxford School of Coaching and Mentoring requires trainee coaches to have one hour of supervision for every 20 hours of coaching, and fully trained coaches one hour for every 35 hours of coaching. Leading organisations such as the BBC and PricewaterhouseCoopers have monthly sessions.

Through transparency in terms of costing combined with an open and honest dialogue, coaches, organisations and professional bodies can begin to offer, request and recommend coaching supervision. By working together, we can achieve the best for all parties and help to create a much-desired coaching culture in organisations across the globe.

Peter Hawkins is chairman of Bath Consultancy Group. *Coaching, Mentoring and Organizational Consultancy: Supervision and Development*, written by Hawkins and Nick Smith of Bath Consultancy Group, is published by McGraw-Hill/Open University Press. The CIPD research can be accessed at www.cipd.co.uk/changeagendas

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