

# Successful coaching; the main conditions

**Annet E. Andringa • Jim Lindhout**

## **Abstract:**

Though coaching is used by several different organizations these days, little is known about how successful it is. This article explores the conditions that contribute to a successful coaching process. Literature proved to be exhaustive and mentioned just five conditions; *safe climate, alignment, key skills of a coach, results oriented coaching process, and feedback*. Interviews with two coaches identified the other eight conditions; *client, coachee, open culture, making it visual, time, financial resources, honesty, and triple loop learning*. Moreover, the interviews allowed us to identify the relationship between these conditions. This model shows that a distinction can be made between hard and soft conditions.

**Key words:** *coaching success, coaching culture, safe climate, alignment, key skills, results oriented coaching process, feedback*

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## **Introduction**

Today's competitive environment requires organizations to maximize their performances in order to remain viable. Coaching of employees at all kinds of organizational levels should contribute to reach potentials, achieve better results or improve skills to deal with specific situations. But what is exactly coaching? Coaching is an open-ended process that analyses the present situation, defines the performance goal, combines personal, organizational and external resources and then implements a plan for achieving that goal (King & Eaton 1999, p.145).

A study in 1998 by the International Coaching Federation (Waddell 2005, p.20) reported a wide range of benefits from those who received coaching including increased self-awareness, enhanced communication skills, increased confidence, improved productivity and lower stress levels.

It is difficult to recognise whether a coaching process is successful, as there are no formal criteria and everybody can claim to be a coach as coaching is not a protected area of professionalism. The main question of this article will therefore be: *what are the main conditions determining the success of a coaching process?* The purpose of this article will be to provide a basis of important conditions to keep in mind for the coach, coachee and client, to achieve a successful coaching process.

### **Methods and data collection**

We began this research by exploring the available literature in several databases (EBSCO, Picarta, Emerald), which is presented in the domain of coaching and its main conditions. Concerning the American literature about coaching, we noticed that a number of authors distinguish between two different schools for coaching; the *behavioural* and the *adult development* school (Hunt 2004).

The *behavioural approach* relies on feedback from stakeholders, regarding the behaviour of an executive whilst the *adult development* school holds that practitioners should encourage executive clients to explore the meanings of how they view themselves and how they view others (Hunt 2004, p.168). Where the *adult development* school is closely associated with the developmental psychology, the *behavioural approach* is more concrete (Hunt 2004, p.168).

As the purpose of this article is to provide insight in the main conditions for successful coaching, the focus will be on the *behavioural approach*. In this view, the coach helps the executive to set specific goals and establishes a strict plan for pursuing those goals. (Hunt 2004, p.168). This results oriented coaching process must result in the achievement of goals, which actually counts as one of the main conditions this article is concerned with.

The second method for data collection is gathered from one-to-one interviews. These interviews were held with two skilled coaches, who gave specific insight in their experiences regarding the success factors of their coaching assignments. To be specific, one of the coaches is a part-time coach whereas the other is a full-time coach. In advance, we drew up a list of interview questions each focused on the main conditions for successful coaching we have found in literature (see appendices). The purpose of each question was either to validate or

confirm the outcomes of the literature study or to get new insights. Besides, these open ended questions offered the possibility for the coach to validate the constraints of literature. The results and conclusions based on these interviews and literature will be explained further on in this article. This article will first continue by gaining insights into the domain of coaching and its main conditions, followed by the results of the interviews. Combining these two results in a conceptual model regarding the conditions for successful coaching. This article will finish with conclusions and recommendations for future research.

We refer to coachee as the person that will be coached and to client as the supervisor or boss of the coachee. Probably superfluously to say, where he is stated it also refers to the female gender, and reverse.

### **Domain of coaching and its main conditions**

Much work has been written about coaching and specifically about general tips for managers who coach their employees, of what to keep in mind to prevent a failure (Burdett 1998, Eggers & Clark 2000, Hunt 2004, Jarvis 2005). In the business context, coaching has been used to help the coachee set measurable performance goals to think through major decisions, handle career decisions, solve problems, manage relationships, communicate to and motivate others, tackle stalemates, deal with problem employee, handle stress, and improve presentations and negotiations (King & Eaton 1999, p.145).

According to King and Eaton (1999, p.146), coaching is not counselling, where the focus is on working through the causes of personal crises and problems, and it does not require the coachee to discuss anything related to their private life. Nor is it restricted to mentoring, where knowledge gained from one person's experience is passed on to another. Rather it is a mix of all these, plus skills from management consulting.

The next paragraphs will present the main conditions that determine the success of a coaching process. As a result five key concepts emerge:

#### **A climate for safety in a coaching culture**

One important condition where several authors (Burdett 1998, Hunt 2004, Clutterbuck & Megginson 2006, Ennis et al. 2000) agree upon, is the need for a climate of safety in a coaching culture. The importance of it is, that a safe environment for coaching ensures confidentiality during the coaching sessions (Hunt 2004, p.180). Ennis et al. (2000, p.47) state

that most often this will be laid down into a written contract in which the coach ensures that private and sensitive information will not be available to other people, including the boss.

A climate of safety can be established if there exists a strong coaching culture. Here, it is essential that the coach works with tools like: trust, mutual respect, a sense of common purpose, integrity, openness, and honesty (Burdett 1998, p.144). A coaching culture is one where coaching is the predominant style of managing and working together, and where commitment to improving the organization is embedded in a parallel commitment to improving the people (Clutterbuck & Megginson 2006, p.232). According to Clutterbuck and Megginson (2006, p.233), organizations can create a coaching culture by the following steps:

- Realize which benefits a coaching culture will bring;
- Ensure that coaching is linked to business drivers, strategies and processes;
- Being a coachee must be supported and encouraged;
- Coaching must be recognised and rewarded;
- Make coaching a long-term orientation, in which experimentation of coaching practices is stimulated.

It may be obvious that creating a safe climate within a coaching culture contributes to the success of a coaching process. Provided there exists mutual trust and respect in the relationship between a coach and coachee, a coaching process can be successful.

### **Key skills of a coach**

The second condition for a successful coaching process, concerns the skills of a coach. The creation of a coaching culture within an organization is of importance, at which the actual coach can contribute with several personal key skills. These skills include: listening skills, effective questioning, building and maintaining rapport, reframing, reading non-verbal behaviour, establishing commitment, and goal setting (King & Eaton 1999, p.146).

Being a good coach requires discipline and it involves taking real responsibility for the coachee's felt problems (Browning 2004, p.98). The basic skill for a coach is the ability to listen; it involves concentrating purely on the other person. Besides, good coaches themselves say very little. Instead, they rely on their insight to ask a few well-chosen questions that guide the coachee towards their own solutions (Browning 2004, p.98). Indeed, the role of a coach is not to help the coachee directly, rather to help people help themselves. Main responsibility of a coach is to help people make more independent, not making them dependent on coaching.

Finally, the coach needs to be open and must have the best possible intentions towards the coachee (Browning 2004, p. 98).

### **Results oriented coaching process**

In a results oriented coaching process, the coach explores the individual's results, looking for the skills and knowledge that serve the employee well and that can be leveraged in additional ways to achieve the established goals (Berard 2005, p.34). Successful coaching is a partnership between coach and coachee; it helps individuals to break free of self-imposed limits, become clearer about their goals, willing to experiment with new approaches and thus more likely to make things happen (King & Eaton 1999, p.145). Organizations that received outstanding performances with this result-oriented coaching process, adapted the following systematic coaching model (Berard 2005, p.34):

- *Be clear on the business results and the plan to achieve them:* before any coaching session occurs, make clear agreements about goals, expectations and the process by which the goals will be obtained. To increase clarity, the goals must be made SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time bounded).
- *Set a coaching agenda:* the key issues that need to have attention must be agreed on in a coaching agenda. The coach identifies key issues that need to have the department's or unit's attention and communicates them to the coachee, this alignment will be further explained in the next paragraph.
- *Guide the coaching session in a controlled, disciplined manner:* the coach breaks each coaching session down into three components: examine what the employee is doing well and how to continue doing it, look at performance gaps or opportunities and ways to address them, and develop a realistic action plan for the employee to execute.
- *Encourage self-discovery:* rather than telling the employee how to be successful, the coach helps the employee discover how to be successful, which is key to a productive coaching session.
- *Develop realistic actions plans:* it links the activities an employee can perform, to the results the coach and coachee want to achieve.
- *Continue coaching on a regular basis:* coaching has to be continued on a regular basis, to support the development of the coachee.

This process helps to clarify the goals to be reached and the expectations that coach and coachee may have. It also helps to make the coaching process “more tangible” since a specific plan is formulated.

### **Alignment with business processes**

From the start, coaching has been seen as a developmental tool for a small group of senior managers or even as ad hoc solutions (Ennis *et al.* 2000, p.4). Recently, coaching is seen as a process available for all levels of management and it needs to be aligned with overall Human Resources (HR) and performance management processes within an organization (Chidiac 2006, p.13). Ennis *et al.* (2000, p.2) go even further by stating that coaching needs to be integrated and strategically aligned with organizational activities. This alignment between coaching, HR and performance management process, counts as a fourth condition for a successful coaching process. According to Chidiac (2006, p.13) it is very important for organizations and coaches to keep this in mind, as coaching interventions are more focused and seen as a cost-efficient way of achieving personal learning when they are aligned with the organization’s processes.

### **Feedback**

It may be obvious that continuous coaching on regular basis is heavily based on feedback. A study by Hunt (2004, p.183) shows that feedback should not only be limited to the feedback sessions between the coach and coachee. A number of persons found feedback from colleagues’ very help full, whereas others preferred to use self-assessment tools.

Hunt (2004, p.183) found that receiving feedback from colleagues proves to be very powerful in challenging the coachee. This provides them with an assessment on their performance and setting a basis to receive feedback from their own system, instead of receiving feedback from external stakeholders or a coach.

A method that becomes increasingly popular is the use of 360 degree feedback sessions. The underlying reason for its popularity, is that self awareness is a good criterion for leadership (Morgan *et al.*. 2005, p.664). 360 Degree feedback is best described by the definition of Atwater and Brett (2006, p.578) “the process in which subordinates, peers, bosses, and/or customers provide anonymous feedback to recipients”. The most important condition for 360 degree feedback to be effective is, that the coachee (most often a manager or CEO) must be prepared to put aside the established hierarchy, power bases and prerogatives and accept feedback from peers and subordinates (Morgan *et al.*. 2005, p.666 ).

DeNisi and Kluger (2000 cited Morgan *et al.*. 2005, p.666) proposed that if feedback focuses on task level criteria, and the individual is able to envisage improvement, 360 degree feedback will have a positive impact. However, if the feedback focuses on personal qualities of the individual it may lead to negative reactions and adversely affect performance.

Burdett (1998, p.149) pays attention to the same issue, but goes even further by relating it to negative feedback. Negative feedback is most valuable when delivered with honesty, sensitivity and if it is reflective. Negative feedback should never question the personal qualities of the individual, but focus on the result, process, tactic, or strategy. Negative feedback should always be followed by an opportunity to correct the behaviour in question. When these guidelines are not followed, the employee will dwell on the criticism and imprint this failure into its mind, which makes it more likely that this behaviour is repeated and the problem will reoccur (Burdett 1998, p.149). During the feedback session the coach can avoid these pitfalls by following the guidelines of Burdett (1998, p.150):

- Making the feedback future focused;
- Criticizing the performance and not the individual;
- Building the coaching tactics such that they complement the coachee's strength
- Remaining open and honest.

## **Results from practice**

So far, we have identified the conditions based on available articles and research: *a climate for safety in a coaching culture, alignment with business processes, key skills of a coach, results oriented coaching process, and feedback*. To look deeper into the conditions that make a coaching process successful, we held interviews with two coaches. These two interviews were of interest, because of the possibility to compare the main conditions for successful coaching derived from literature, with the main conditions experienced by coaches direct from the field of coaching. The first interview was held with Wallage from Pensioen Vizier, where as the second interview was held with Twijnstra from Peta Twijnstra Coaching. The full interviews can be found in the appendices.

### **Pensioen Vizier**

Several conditions are important regarding the success of a coaching process, according to Wallage. First of all, a safe environment in which the coachee can trust the coach. The best way to do this for a coach, is to be confronting and direct. Most of the time, the first reaction

of the coachee is; “*Why do I need coaching, I can make good business phone calls?*” Wallage will react by saying; “*Yes you can, but there is room for improvement, I just want you to help you to excel*”.

#### *Unsuccessful coaching*

Naturally, there are situations where coaching does not work out. For example, there was this coaching session between a coach of 30 (male) and a 50 year old coachee (female). The coachee did not want the coach’s help in anyway. How can someone of 30 help someone of 50? She was working for many years and had a lot of experience. She was the best and was way more intelligent than the coach was. The coach was gob smacked, never experienced this before. The session was over and a couple of days later the coach gave her a book called “Management like Ben Hur” which was a simplification of how she reacted to the coach. The book is basically all about the relationship between people based on respect. The Roman general had his raised by the tribe of Ben Hur and Ben Hur did the reverse with his son. This is the optimum solution for integration. Two days later the coachee threw it back at the coach and said that she knew the story and had nothing to learn from it. The whole story ended by an early retirement of this person at the age of 53.

A second condition for successful coaching is time, which is actually an essential element. The coach and coachee need to spend enough time together to reach consensus about which goals to achieve. Another condition which is easily overlooked, is that financial resources need to be available; a coaching process is very expensive. As coaching is a service and not a product, it is not tangible and it is hard to show progress. In order to make coaching more specific, it is important to make achievements visual. This can be done by, e.g. printing the output of the past month and compare it to the month before.

Fifth condition is that it is very important for coaching processes to be aligned with the needs of the organization. It all starts with a business plan; the organization needs to know where it wants to go. Coaching is very helpful to support those employees that temporarily are not able to develop in the appropriate manner. When the coach focuses purely on the needs of the coachee, this will harm organizational effectiveness. Coaching helps the coachee to learn new things, which in turn helps to improve the organizational performances. Thus, coaching is not completely about the coachee; it does concerns the client. The needs of the client and the coachee need to be in balance.

The final condition for successful coaching is feedback, which needs to take place regularly. Wallage strongly beliefs in 360 degree feedback. It is a useful tool as it is not just one sided,

it is an eye opener. These feedback sessions show people that things are possible and as a result output increases. Sometimes it may even be needed to give negative feedback, though one needs to be very careful with it. *“I can give feedback with a serious face, which will probably result in a disagreement and quarrel, but when I say it with a “smile” on my face and say that we can do something about it, it limits the injure”* (Wallage 2007).

Summarizing this information gives the next additional conditions for successful coaching that we have not seen in the literature so far. Coaching is about; *the coachee and the client as well, time, financial resources, and visualizing things.*

## **Peta Twijnstra coaching**

According to Twijnstra, coaching is all about trying to move some one. The main goal of coaching should be to support the development of the coachee. It is absolutely required that the coachee is willing to learn. As a result it is important to be open and honest to the coach. Without this, the coach will not be able to identify the underlying causes of why the coachee is acting like he does. Therefore, a safe coaching climate is needed. This certainly means a coach cannot leak information about the coachees' development, without consultation of the coachee. Twijnstra also emphasizes the need for a coach to be unselfish in such a manner, that the coach does not put personal interests in a coaching trajectory. It is all about the development of the coachee. In addition, as a coach you simply do not judge your coachee. Twijnstra supports the coachee to make its own decisions.

Another condition for successful coaching, is the ability of a coach to investigate whether or not underlying convictions are present. This has to do with the several stages of learning; single, double and triple loop learning. Single loop is about learning something; almost everyone can teach somebody else to do something simple, for example to eat with cutlery. Double loop learning is about knowing why someone eats with cutlery; it is about the assumption that is linked to it. Triple loop learning is about changing the assumption in order to learn new things; like eating with chop sticks. This triple loop learning basically entails transformational learning of the individual. The coachee should search for his underlying assumptions influencing his behaviours and the actual awareness of this causal relationship helps the coachee to improve his situation.

The fourth condition for successful coaching is to make things visual. Coaching is a process that is not tangible, it does not produce any clear products as outcomes. Visualizing things

helps the coachee to look at issues from another perspective. Or to put in another way, to make the coachee aware of his actions.

*Family-on-the table*

Once, a coachee was asked to draw the table setting from his family. With this, both the coach and coachee tried to get to know the deeper lying convictions, norms and values of the coachee. The coachee took a huge size of paper, pencils and started to draft. Meanwhile, Twijnstra decided to leave the room. After a few minutes, the draft was finished. And the results? The coachee did not think of everyone's faces and by asking questions about this striking characteristic of the picture, Twijnstra and the coachee concluded that none of the family possessed a unique identity. Naturally, this influenced the way the coachee behaves.

Although the use of feedback is helpful to conclude an intensive coaching relationship and to stabilize the booked results, Twijnstra is still searching for the best method to be used. Actually, she does recognize the pro's of feedback sessions, evaluation forms and 360 degree feedback. Nevertheless, 360 degree feedback is very time consuming.

Summarizing this information gives the next additional conditions for successful coaching that we have not seen in the literature so far. Coaching is about; *the coachee, honesty, triple loop learning, and visualizing things.*

### Discussion and analysis

Combining the information from literature and the interviews, we identified a total of thirteen conditions that make a coaching process successful, which are presented in table 1.

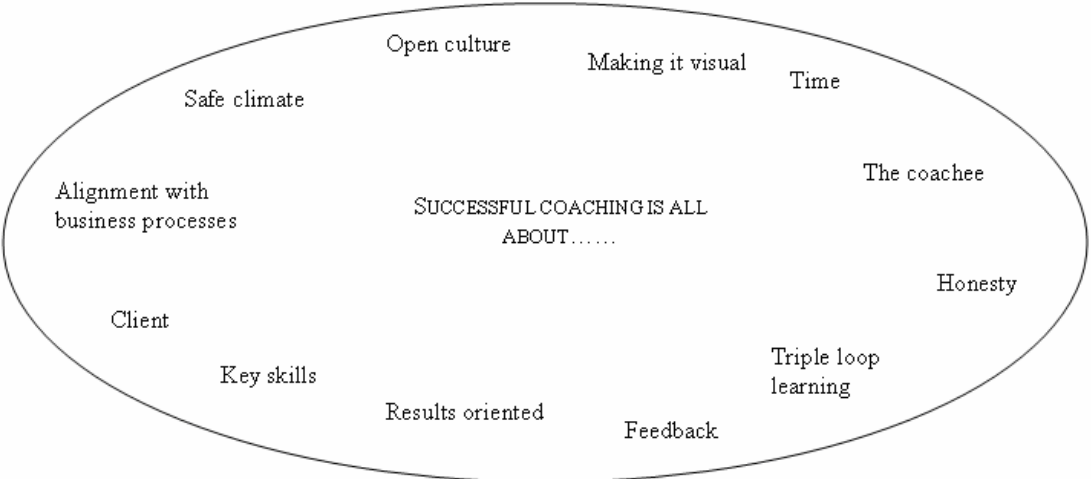
<b>Literature</b>	<b>Interviews</b>
Safe climate	Safe climate
Alignment	Alignment with business processes
Key skills of a coach	Key skills of a coach
Results oriented coaching process	Results oriented coaching process
Feedback	Feedback
	Client
	Coachee
	Open culture
	Making it visual
	Time
	Financial resources
	Honesty
	Triple loop learning

**Table 1 conditions successful coaching**

Striking is that the used literature sources presented in this article, only mention five conditions for successful coaching out of the thirteen that we have identified in total. Possible reason for this, may be the restricted time available investigating literature. Another reason may be that the presented literature all focuses on executive coaching, whereas the coaches of the interviews do not necessarily focus on executive coaching.

Even though we have identified only five conditions for successful coaching in literature, the literature is not clear on how these are related to each other. Is one condition dependent on another or is it a sequence? These are questions on which we did not discover specific answers.

However, the flaw with coaching is that it is a service and context dependent. The coaching process differs in every situation, since the characteristics of the coaching assignment are variable. This may also be the reason why it is hard to identify or build a universal model of the conditions for successful coaching. Nevertheless, this does not prevent us from attempting to design a conceptual model.

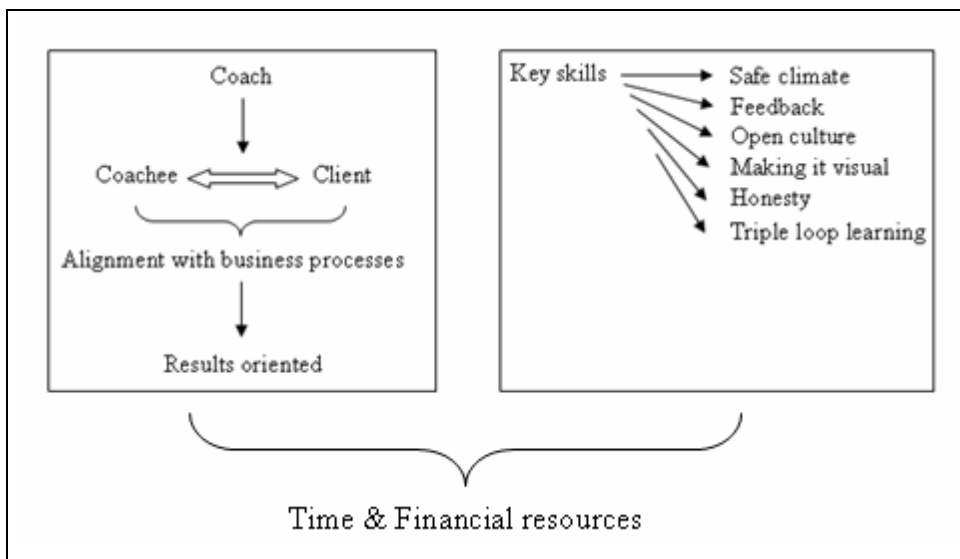


**Figure 1 conditions for successful coaching**

The way the model is presented right now, does not give us a good picture of the connections between the conditions. The coach needs to possess key skills which are not just about being able to listen and ask the right questions, it also concerns triple loop learning, feedback, honesty, making it visual, creating a safe climate, and stimulating an open culture. Especially triple loop learning is important in this context, since coaching is most useful when the coachee knows why he is moving. Without this knowledge, it is easy to fall back into old habits.

Coaching is about a fit between the coachee and the client. When the coach focuses solely on the coachee, there is a possibility that the process deviates from the strategy of the

organization. Neither the coachee, nor the client would be helped by such a development. According to Wallage, coaching is supposed to help the coachee to develop skills that help the organization to improve. From this, we can state that the coaching process needs to be aligned with business processes. This alignment on its own is not enough, how does one measure progress of the coaching process without goals? This is where result oriented coaching comes in. Defining goals and focusing on results oriented coaching does not only create a fit between the coachee and client but also makes it more tangible. Applying this to the conceptual model gives the next idea:



**Figure 2 connections between the conditions for successful coaching**

Although this model is based on only two interviews, it indicates that literature has shortcomings towards the relationship between the several conditions for successful conditions. The model presented helps us to show and understand the connections and relationships between the several conditions of a successful coaching process.

### **Conclusions, limitations and recommendations for future research**

In this article we have identified several conditions for successful coaching, not only by literature but also with the help of two coaches. This showed that the conditions mentioned in the literature are exhaustive. As these conditions were detached we developed a model to show the connections between the several conditions. This model shows that coaching cannot be seen as a separate or independent process; it needs to be aligned with the organization. We hope that this article reminds coaches and managers to think about the conditions to keep in mind in order to assure a successful coaching process.

However, we do need to recognize that further research is needed to validate the connections and conclusions about the presented model as we had the limitation of using only two interviews. Nevertheless, we claim that the interviews were useful to compare the main conditions written down in literature, with the experiences right out of the field of coaching. Another limitation of this research is, that the time available for the research and the size of this article restrained the possibility to mention more or even all relevant conditions. Interesting to see are the differences between the two interviewed coaches. Wallage is much more result oriented and takes a harder approach as Twijnstra does. It looks like Twijnstra takes a people friendly approach, with a lot of attention for the individual. We cannot state if this has to do with the difference of full-time versus part-time coaching as it was not the goal of this paper to research this. Perhaps this may be valuable for future research.

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## **Appendix I**

### **Interview M.Ph Wallage MBA (internal coach) 19-03-2007**

Approved on 22-03-2007

Pensioen Vizier  
Marcel Ph. Wallage MBA

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#### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:**

##### **1. How would you define coaching? What are its main characteristics?**

Coaching is basically/essentially listening to the coachee. The coach needs to find out what the need of the coachee is. It is basically a process that can be narrowed down into three steps. First the coach needs to find out how willing the client is to learn, second where the coachee stands and third is where the coachee wants to go.

It does not only involve listening but also observing. There is an essential difference between saying something and doing it.

##### **2. How would you define a coaching culture? In what extent should a coaching culture exist?**

A coaching culture is very important for organizations. Without such a process the ability to learn is limited while learning is essential for organizations to survive. Furthermore it gives some kind of calmness for organizations as every one can learn from another.

For example, by using coaching and feedback sessions it stimulates employees to work harder. I measure performance weekly and can note a difference when I have not provided coaching in a while. This performance measuring shows an increased output and higher level of quality.

##### **3. Which personal characteristics should a good coach possess? How important are these characteristics for the coaching process?**

A good coach needs to be able to listen very well to the coachee and stimulate the coachee to reach the set targets. Very important for coaches is to distinguish between satisfiers and dissatisfiers. Herzberg performed research about this and identified a number of factors that have a different impact on the coachee.

Satisfiers	Dissatisfiers
1. development	1. financial reward
2. recognition and appreciation	2. employment conditions
3. success and creativity	3. employment relations
4. deliver performance and realizing goals	4. organization policy

What I want to say with this is that a coach needs to recognize the satisfiers and use them to create an environment where the coachee can excel.

During my time at SFB (Sociaal Fonds Bouwnijverheid) I noticed that the use of an external coach is very powerful. Wages did not have to be increased, business cars could be taken away, it did not really matter as long as the coach was not taken away the employees were satisfied.

#### **4. What makes your coaching style special?**

I really want people to grow, to stimulate them to get better results. But I need something in return. I have the rule of 3, first time I will say that someone has to change its behaviour. The second time I tell it again and do this in another way. The third time is the last time. When the coachee does not show progress and the non verbal signals show no need to learn, I will not put any more effort in it. It may sound harsh but it is needed and most of the time works very well. At this moment I am coaching a lot of younger people, just out of school, and they tend to be very self-willed. They only have the theory and need to learn how the real world is. In this way I show them that they do not know everything and there is room for improvement.

Of course there is a difference between gender and culture. For women I place myself more at the background and take a softer approach. The best thing to do with cultural differences is to speak them out immediately, this will leave no room for miss judgement. It brings the coachee back to the point of showing that not everything works the same as in my culture.

Another way that describes my style is that I am a visual person. I like to make things “visible”. Like; you can not turn a Skoda into a Mercedes, or the wall of fame and shame. When employees are in a competitive market it is useful to show direct progress and create a sense of competition. Fame is obviously for the best result and shame for the biggest mistake.

#### **5. Which conditions are important for a successful coaching process, according to you?**

First of all a safe environment, where the coachee can trust the coach. Time is also essential; coach and coachee need to spend enough time together to consensus. Another factor which is easily overlooked is that financial resources need to be available. A coaching process is very expensive.

Furthermore it is important for the coach to have sight on the competences that the coach and coachee want to reach. This alone is not enough, the coach also needs to recognize which competences are available within the organization or possessed by the coachee. It is essential to create a good balance between these two and last but not least feedback. Feedback needs to take place monthly, at least. At the end of the coaching session an evaluation needs to take place.

#### **6. How do you start a coaching process?**

It all starts with a business plan. The organization needs to know where it wants to go, without this knowledge it is not possible to effectively and successfully coach. It is like cars, one can not make a transfer a Skoda into a Mercedes.

When the business needs are identified, the coach needs to identify the needs of the coachee and create a good balance between those.

#### **7. How do you create a safe climate for coaching?**

The first reaction of the coachee is almost always; why do I need coaching I can make good business phone calls. My reaction is; yes you can, but there is room for improvement, I just want you to help you to excel.

There are of course situations where it does not work out. For example there was this coaching session I had when I was 30 years old and my coachee (and employee) was a 50

year old female. The coachee did not want my help in any way. How can someone of 30 help someone of 50, was her reaction. She was working for many years and had a lot of experience. She was the best and was way more intelligent than I was. I was gob smacked, never had this before. We ended the conversation and a couple of days later I gave her a book called management like Ben Hur which was a simplification of how she reacted to me. She threw it back at me and said that she knew the story and had nothing to learn from it. The whole story ended by an early retirement of this person at the age of 53.

#### **8. What happens after the initial contact?**

When the needs have been identified I look for ways to satisfy these. It depends on the situation. If a company and its employees want to receive coaching on teambuilding I can organize activities like playing volleyball to observe what happens.

Talking about the end of the first conversation, I will evaluate if we are on the same line. I want to give people the space and ability to learn about they do need to show commitment.

#### **9. In which way do you communicate with the coachee?**

To be open and honest. Coaching is very personal and confidential. There is no such thing as a written contract but it is laid down during the last evaluation session. This is where the coach and coachee agree upon who will get information about the coaching process. There is not such a thing as a written paper to the management team with recommendation.

Tough some clients may be suspicious about this, I always say; “can you imagine that I will talk to your boss? I will not. Just imagine what happens if I tell someone else about your sessions, people will think that I can not be trusted and I will loose my job. Do I want to loose my job, no certainly not.”

#### **10. How does your feedback process work, do you use a certain tactic for feedback?**

I strongly belief in 360 degree feedback. It is a useful tool as it is not just one sided, it is an eye opener. These feedback sessions show people that things are possible and as a result output increases. You need to be careful with negative feedback. I will try to avoid it, but sometimes it is needed. I can give feedback with a serious face, which will probably result in a disagreement and quarrel, but when I say it with a “smile” on my face and say that we can do something about it, it limits the injure.

A way to give feedback and evaluation is to look at the weekly results, what is different comparing it to other weeks and if needed what can be done to improve these results.

#### **11. What do you think about result-oriented coaching?**

As you probably noticed during this conversation the alignment between business processes and the individual needs of the client is very important. Without a result oriented coaching process it is almost impossible to reach this alignment. Goals are made specific and follow a tailor made approach, but time and money is needed.

#### **12. What are the pitfalls of coaching?**

The big pitfall is that coaching is basically a mirror of your own personality. A coaching session says more about the coach than the coachee. The way the coach looks at the world influences how the coach looks at the coachee. My coaching sessions can have a total different result than that of another coach.

## **Appendix II**

### **Interview P. Twijnstra (internal and external coach) 26-03-2007**

Approved on 27-03-2007

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#### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:**

##### **1. How would you define coaching? What are its main characteristics?**

First of all, coaching means that you are trying to move some one. The main goal of coaching should be the development of the coachee, who is actually willing to develop his own personal situation or capabilities.

##### **2. How would you define a coaching culture? In what extent should a coaching culture exist?**

Indeed, a coaching culture is important. Without a coaching culture, a coaching process can be very hard. A coachee needs to be supported. I notice many organizations strive after self-steering and self-responsible employees. Many employees have to learn this new approach of working. Therefore, a coaching process can be helpful.

##### **3. Which personal characteristics should a good coach possess? How important are these characteristics for the coaching process?**

A coach must be able to create a safe coaching climate. Second, a coach cannot leak confidential information from the coachee to the client. Third, a coach should not make promises to rapport the development of the coachee. Unless the coachee can read about his development first, this kind of reporting for a client is not appropriate. Fourth, and very important, as a coach you need to be unselfish. My goal is to support my coachee the best I can; I try to be have no interests. Of course, coaching is my source of income, but this is not relevant for the development of a coachee. Most important is the coachee! Fifth, as a coach you can not judge your coachee. Maybe you are surprised by some situations but as a coach you must be open. Do not judge your coachee, since this influences the trustful relationship.

##### **4. What makes your coaching style special?**

I strongly believe in the need for an obvious customer request. In many cases, the problem a coachee is involved with is more or less clear. It is of great importance to formulate the customer request: what is the goal to be reached? Which issue needs to be developed? If there exists consensus about this customer question, a coaching process can be started. I would like to emphasize the importance to agree upon the desired results. If the coach, coachee and client agree upon which issues should be developed, a coaching process can be successful. Here, the way goals are going to be achieved, is less important.

Other characteristics of my coaching style are for example my results oriented approach. Naturally, my aim is to support my coachee in his development. Ultimately, the coachee is the one who is responsible for his development, although I strongly focus on the results to be attained.

Besides, I confront the coachee in many ways. Mostly in a pro-active manner, I pose questions to confront my coachee. Sometimes I try to blow things up, in order to challenge my coachee or to put the situation into perspective. Indeed, humour and the ability to nuance are important during a coaching process. It relaxes both the coachee as me, by which the coaching process is influenced positively.

A final characteristic of my coaching style is my search for greater conviction I support the coachee in his awakening of convictions. Or to say, behind the coachee his actions exists a set of personal beliefs or opinions. These convictions are influencing the way a coachee behaves. Realizing this causal relationship helps the coachee to develop himself. In literature, we call this phenomena triple-loop learning, where the focus lies on a fundamental change of a coachee in order to get more insight in his personal truth. Here, I speak about transformational learning.

### **5. Which conditions are important for a successful coaching process, according to you?**

In any case, a safe coaching climate should be achieved. In my view, a coach really needs to be unselfish, since the interests of a coachee are most important. Actually, the coachee must be held responsible for his own development and is therefore leading in a sense that he determines when he needs coaching.

### **6. How do you start a coaching process?**

First, I start with an orientating conversation. It depends on the situation whether I first speak to my client, or to my coachee. I need more experience to find out which way is most successful. I realize that to speak with my client first, can influence the way I approach my coachee. Of course, as a coach you should be unprejudiced about your coachee. Therefore, I am searching for the best options to start a coaching process. Mostly, I start to communicate with my coachee first about the customer question. I try to find out what the coachee really wants and if I can be helpful in this trajectory. It is of importance that the coachee matches with my personality and my experiences and if so: we sign up a contract about the process of coaching (for example: what is the customer question, which goals need to be attained, how often does my coachee needs coaching sessions and so forth).

### **7. How do you create a safe climate for coaching?**

Mostly, to communicate honestly and in an open way. I do not judge my coachee for any reason and I do not put any personal interests in a coaching process. Besides, if I notice that I can not be successful during a coaching process, I am willing to end the coaching sessions. A coaching process must feel right, and should be based on the willingness of a coachee (and client) to achieve the goals. Really, the customer request has to be clear at any time. Only then we are able to reach what we agreed upon.

### **8. What happens after the initial contact?**

After we formulated a contract, a coachee is responsible for the coaching process. In general, this process takes 10 hours of coaching divided in one coaching session every two weeks. After 4 coaching sessions, we can adjust the coaching to one session every month. But of course this all depends on the wishes and needs of the coachee!

In the middle of the coaching process, I try to find out whether (and which) striking convictions a coachee possesses. I support my coachee to realize that these convictions

influence his behaviour. A coachee has to be aware of this relationship in order achieve the desired results. Furthermore, I try to map whether the coachee is supported by a psychologist or a social worker. An analysis of the present situation has to be made, as well as a reflection on the customer request. This makes clear which achievements still needs to be strived after. I try to visualize things and work with photographs, figures and sketches. A specific example is ‘the family at the table method’ by which the coachee is asked to sketch the table-setting of his family in the past. Remarkable signs can be derived from this sketch, resulting in more knowledge of deeper lying convictions of a coachee. The awareness of these convictions can be stimulated by a simple draft...!

**9. In which way do you communicate with the coachee?**

I try to be as open as I can. I also use humour to put the situation into perspective. More technically, I make use of several methods and models, to visualize the development of the coachee. I can imagine that many people suggest that coaching can result in more personal problems. In other words: by investigating deeper lying convictions, it is possible that the coachee memorizes more painful situations or personal characteristics which actually strengthen individual felt problems. In practice, this is not often the case. The aim of communication in this matter, is reaching the phase of ‘unconsciously-capable’, in which the coachee is capable to show new behaviour / new capabilities without being conscious of this new behaviour / new capabilities (for example: after a few years of drivers experience, you capable to drive a car without being conscious of the location of the brake).

<b>1</b>	Unconsciously	Not capable
<b>2</b>	Consciously	Not capable
<b>3</b>	Consciously	Capable
<b>4</b>	Unconsciously	Capable

**10. How does your feedback process work, do you use a certain tactic for feedback?**

I realize that my feedback can be improved. Although I find feedback very helpful, I am still searching for the best method to be used. My feedback should be more structured. Mostly the coachee remarks that the coaching process can be ended, which I respect. Actually, I would like to evaluate the process more fully, since this final part is important to conclude an intensive coaching relationship and to stabilize the booked results. I do make use of evaluation forms, so that I am able to improve my skills in a next coaching process.

I also consider the use of evaluation sessions after three-four months. With this, we are able to see if the development stabilizes and is still positive after a longer period of time. The use of 360-degree feedback is interesting, although it is quite time-consuming. The involvement of feedback from colleagues, peers, the executive contribute to the awareness of the coachee. Unfortunately, many personal qualities have to be thought of during a 360-degree feedback. Besides, I do want to remark that I find it hard to measure the success of coaching. The development of a coachee goes further and how should you measure mental progress? I keep reminding that any progress made in the coaching process, is thanks to the coachee. He is the one who is in charge and responsible.

**11. What do you think about results oriented coaching?**

My approach of coaching is characterized by the focus on results. It all depends on the customer request, which must be clear and practical. During the coaching process, the aim is to achieve the goals which were formulated in a plan. All activities and conversations contribute to the development of the coachee and must lead to the desired results. In my experience, most of the individual coaching processes were not really aligned with the

organizational goals or mission. As well as in the public as in the private sector, I did not notice a strong alignment between these organizational goals and the individual goals of a coachee.

## **12. What are the pitfalls of coaching?**

As a coach, your main task is to support your coachee in his awareness. So, do not advice your coachee but rather stimulate! Additionally, a coach may not make decisions for a coachee. Put the coachee in charge: they are able to make decisions themselves. As has been mentioned already, one great pitfall of coaching is putting your own interests as a coach central. That is not the idea of coaching. The coachee his development goes first, beyond everything.

The coachee possesses the tendency to put themselves in the role of a victim and try to make their coach their saviour. As a coach, you should not adjust on the patterns of a coachee. You must break through this vast pattern and support your coachee in his self-awareness!