A new coaching tool to help coachees decide what roles their coach should play

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Tim Bright

The slides for this conference presentation are available from this link and this paper is designed to be read in conjunction with them http://www.oneworldconsulting.com/owc-news.php

The different versions of the tool and the full research paper are available from the Resources section of www.oneworldconsulting.com

This session is based on the research I completed as part of my MA Degree in Professional Development (Executive Coaching) with the Professional Development Foundation at Middlesex University.

Introduction

Executive coaching is growing significantly as a practice around the world, and many organisations invest large resources in it as a development tool. Coaching is still an emergent profession and there is great diversity in ways that coaches work, and how they understand the coaching relationship. As well as diversity between practitioners in the same country, internationally there are great differences of opinion on what role a coach should play when working with a coachee. This diversity can be a good thing, in terms of allowing many different approaches, however it can also lead to confusion and misunderstandings, particularly when people with experience of working in different cultures come together on coaching projects. In my work I have seen that many people who are considering working with a coach, either as a coachee or a sponsor of coaching, do not have clear ideas about what coaching is. Or, they have a clear idea, but it is not clearly expressed. Also ideas about coaching can vary significantly between the coach, coachee and coaching sponsor. A tool that can help participants gain clarity about the role a coach will play should be of benefit for the different stakeholders involved.

Literature Review

There is strong evidence both from studies on counselling and on coaching, that the most important factor in the success of an engagement is the quality of the relationship between coach (or therapist) and client (Machin, 2010, Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011). In the coaching literature there is a lot of discussion about different types of coaching, and different techniques the coach can use, however there is relatively little about the different roles a coach can play in the coaching relationship.

There is also a lot of work going back at least to Dewey (1933) on the importance of reflection in learning, including some empirical evidence that reflecting on the process of learning improves the quality of learning (Kolb and Fry, 1975, Webster-Wright, 2009, Di Stefano et al., 2014). Because of the importance of the relationship within a coaching engagement, it is reasonable to believe that increasing the amount of reflection about the relationship itself will increase the learning that occurs.

A lot of valuable research work is done in the field of mentoring programmes, and this seems to be a more transparent and collegial profession than executive coaching. I believe there is much to be gained from applying insights from mentoring practice and research to coaching. This project is an example of this approach, taking a tool developed for mentoring and applying it to executive coaching. I hope that the tool may be further researched, developed and adapted, in order to serve the project purpose of helping to improve the effectiveness of coaching engagements.

The Role of Reflection in Learning
One of the assumptions underlying my research project is that reflection plays a valuable part in learning, and that if coachees reflect more on the process of coaching this will be of benefit to them.

This is a very common assumption in thinking about learning. The first part of my literature search aims to explore this idea and to understand if there is empirical evidence for the benefits of reflection.

Argyris and Schön (Argyris and Schön 1978, Argyris 1977) discuss the concepts of single and double loop learning, in which double loop learning involves reflection on and learning from an ongoing process, to make improvements. Schön (1983, 1987) developed the concept of the Reflective Practitioner and introduced the terms 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action'. We 'reflect-in-action' while we are doing something and it may well be spontaneous. We 'reflect-on-action' after the event, and think over what happened and evaluate it. For Schön, reflective practitioners are those who use reflective skills to analyse actions both during and after the event.

For Kolb and Fry (1975) reflection is a key part of learning. Kolb and Fry see learning as going through four stages - having a concrete experience; reflecting on the experience; building generalisations and conclusions from the reflection and then finally testing these conclusions with new actions.

As Webster-Wright (2009, p. 716) points out the work of Kolb, Schön and others have been critiqued "as simplistic in their conception of reflection as separate from action and their lack of attention to context" by authors such as Usher et al. (1997).

Webster-Wright (2009) provides a valuable overview of the role of reflection in professional learning. She refers to several research findings that 'reflection has a valuable role in learning that requires change' (p.720) which is relevant to coaching as a process that often focuses on change.

Webster-Wright notes that - "In the research literature, reflection is used to describe a range of activities, from individual contemplation to vigorous critical dialogue between people … for reflection to have a critical function, questioning and challenging of assumptions need to occur (e.g., about self, others, work, or ethical issues). Indeed, Dewey maintained that genuine thinking begins 'only when there is a tendency to doubt' (Garrison, 2006, p. 3)." (Webster-Wright, 2009, p.722)

I find this work insightful and relevant to this project. The idea of reflection as an active process, which can include dialogue between people is useful and would include the type of reflection that the coaching tool I am working towards should encourage between the coachee and others. When I have used early versions of this tool they have led to discussion and doubt which has been useful in challenging assumptions about the role of the coach. As Webster-Wright argues - "Challenging assumptions involves conscious awareness of them, however, as they are usually taken for granted. In fact Stephen Brookfield (1995) maintains reflection begins by 'hunting assumptions.'" (p.722)

There have been some empirical studies that provide evidence that reflection improves learning. Edmondson's research "suggests that one difference between teams that change course and those that resist change is the quality of team reflection" (2002, p.138) and that "team learning breaks down when teams fail to reflect on their own actions" (p.130).

Di Stefano et al. (2014) carried out a number of experiments on reflection, achieving broadly similar results in all of them. This study provides some empirical evidence for the positive impact of reflection on learning, and also suggests that sharing that reflection with others can increase its effectiveness. In terms of the coaching tool I am looking at, this suggests that completing the tool, and then

discussing it with someone else (e.g. a colleague from HR or a coach) could be of benefit in increasing learning.

In mentoring and coaching contexts, the work of Alred et al. (2006) and Stokes (2007) suggests that a *skilled coachee* takes ownership of their learning, explores different ways of learning and gives feedback to the coach. Clutterbuck's view (2010, p.2), based on extensive observation of many coaching sessions is that making the client more aware of the coaching method increases the quality of coaching. These insights suggest that the tool under discussion should support effective coaching.

Based on this brief survey of the literature it seems reasonable to believe that reflection on the process of learning by the coachee is likely to improve the quality of their learning.

The Importance of the Relationship in Coaching Effectiveness
The tool under discussion in this project encourages coaches and their clients to spend time reviewing the relationship itself. The next part of this literature search aims to examine the importance of the relationship in coaching effectiveness, in order to see whether spending time on this in a coaching engagement is justified.

As Machin points out, "There appears to be virtually universal agreement on the importance of the relationship within coaching" (Machin, 2010, p.37). Also -

"It is now recognised that the most consistently identified factor seen as contributing to the success of a coaching engagement, of those within the influence of the coach, is the quality of the relationship between the coach and individual client (De Haan, 2008a, b; Passmore, 2008)" (Passmore and Fillery-Travis 2011, p.78).

Similarly O'Broin and Palmer note that De Haan (2008c) and De Haan et al. (2011) "found in a study on the helpfulness of coaching with executive coachees that the crucial predictor of the outcome of coaching was the coaching relationship as perceived by the *coachee*, rather than specific coach behaviours." (O'Broin and Palmer, 2010a, p. 13) "Our results do seem to indicate that coaches may profitably shift their focus from specific behaviours or interventions towards the quality of the unfolding relationship with their clients" (De Haan et al. 2011, p. 41).

Gyllensten and Palmer have conducted qualitative research into the client experience and perception of coaching. Their evidence showed the coaching "relationship was dependent on trust and improved by transparency" (Gyllensten and Palmer, 2007, p.168). "Transparency … lead the coachee to feel fully included in the coaching process. It could, therefore, be suggested that an understanding of the steps taken in coaching, and a feeling of being included in the process, could have a positive effect on the subsequent commitment to the coaching. … It could be suggested that when the coach is completely open about the process the client is in a better position to evaluate the coaching and take decisions based on a full knowledge of what the coaching entails." (Gyllensten and Palmer 2007, p.175). This echoes Clutterbuck's observation above. Trust and transparency is likely to be increased by discussing the role the coach should play in the relationship and this tool should encourage the client to feel more included in the process in the way Gyllensten and Palmer suggest.

O'Broin and Palmer (2009) emphasize that collaboration between coach and coachee goes beyond specific processes and is a principle or spirit. The authors build upon the concept of The Working Alliance (from Bordin, 1979) which looks at the quality and strength of the collaborative relationship "a relationship factor repeatedly linked to positive outcome." (O'Broin and Palmer 2009, p.186). O'Broin and Palmer (2010c, p.4) suggest the 'coaching alliance' is "jointly negotiated, and renegotiated

throughout the coaching process". Stober and Grant (2006, p.361) note: "it is important that the coach and client spend some time discussing the nature of their relationship, and that they jointly design the dynamics of their working alliance. Most problems in coaching can be circumvented by having a clearly articulated and shared understanding of the coach-client relationship."

Based on this literature review it is reasonable to believe that increasing the coachee's reflection on the relationship in coaching is likely to improve the impact of coaching. This supports the usefulness of the tool studied in this project.

Work on the Roles of the Coach

I have searched on a number of databases (JSTOR, APA PsycNet, Taylor and Francis, Sage, Google Scholar, and also in Douglas and Morley's (2000) bibliography of executive coaching) for articles and books which discuss the different roles a coach can play. Although the search terms (such as 'role of the coach', 'coaching roles') return many hits, few of the articles actually discuss this topic.

There are a number of articles which suggest the different roles a coach can play. These are not designed as tools and are directed at coaches rather than coachees. Altier (1989) lists several purposes of the executive coach role: to act as an executive's sounding board, a catalyst, a facilitator, and a productivity booster. McCauley and Hughes-James (1994) came up with a similar list of roles for facilitators including experience provider, sounding board, reflection encourager, role model, feedback provider, friend and encourager.

Witherspoon and White (1996, 2003) write about four 'roles' that coaches play, however these are better characterised as types of coaching, rather than roles of the coach. These are - coaching for skills, coaching for performance, coaching for development and coaching for the executive's own agenda. In the way that I am using the terms, a coach may use a number of different roles while delivering coaching of each of these types. For example while delivering development coaching, the coach may take on the role of a sounding board or a counsellor. However Witherspoon and White's thoughts on using these classifications to increase clarity and consensus around the coaching engagement (to build "a common language about executive coaching and to foster informed choice and internal commitment by everyone involved" Witherspoon 2000, p.183) are valuable and highly relevant for the tool under discussion.

Within practitioner writing about coaching there is some talk about coaching roles, and these tend to be directed at coachees. The Executive Coaching Roundtable (2005) suggest the following "roles an executive coach can play" - Sounding Board, Tough Questioner, Witness ('your coach can observe you with neutrality and curiosity as you go about your work'), Advisor, Teacher, Resource Broker and Cheerleader.

There is much debate about the differences between coaching and mentoring and we do not need to engage with this here (for an excellent overview see Garvey et al. 2009). There is a wide range of different definitions. In my experience the only consistent difference between mentoring and coaching across different contexts is that mentors are more experienced than mentees in a relevant field, whereas coaches may not be. Coaching and mentoring are very similar, and insights from mentoring are useful for this project. There are a number of discussions about different roles played by mentors in the mentoring literature, such as in Kram (1985). Poulsen (n.d.) presents a set of roles that a mentor can play, similar to the ones in the tool I am using. These are - Storyteller, Discussion Partner, Advisor, Knowledge Sharer, Coach, Critic, Networker, Door Opener, Sponsor and Friend. Poulsen's roles are designed for use in preparation for mentoring programmes, and they embody certain beliefs about the mentoring relationship that are a matter of opinion. For example some

mentoring programme managers would not want mentors to take on the role of sponsor or door opener, so they need to adjust the roles depending on their views. These roles do a good job of raising awareness and highlighting the types of roles mentors can play. They are similar in scope to the roles suggested in the tool for coaching under discussion.

All these descriptions of different roles are helpful. These lists embody the writers' own views about coaching or mentoring, and no list of roles can be value free or universally accepted. I believe that some of the roles in the coaching lists above are more relevant for mentoring than coaching, such as Experience Provider, Role Model and Resource Broker. Others I see as inappropriate for a client-centred coaching approach, such as Trainer and Teacher. I think the current version of the tool under development captures the key meanings of all the other coaching roles suggested above except for Witness, which I believe is unlikely to be relevant in most external executive coaching contexts, unless shadow coaching is being used. (Witness can be a relevant role for internal coaches.)

Search for Similar Tools

Stein (2008 and 2009) has done significant relevant work in this area. Through interviewing coaches and analysing session transcripts she identified sixteen *'conversational identities'*. The typology is designed for coaches' own self-reflection and learning, rather than to be used by the coachee. Stein usefully categorises the identities into three *frames*, a Process Frame, a Content Frame, and a Relationship Frame. Discursive identities in the Process Frame are Agenda Facilitator, Business Administrator, Learner and Orchestrator. Eight discursive identities in the Content Frame are divided into three *categories*: the "Coach Elicits" category includes Exploration Facilitator, Action Facilitator, and Narrative Listener; the "Coach Informs" category includes Expert, Guide, and Reflector; and the "Coach & Client Co-contribute" category includes Practice Player and Problem Solver. The four discursive identities in the Relationship Frame are Supporter, Challenger, Believer, and Colleague/Friend.

This is the only research work I have found that applies similar role types that I am working on to coaching. It is comprehensive, having been developed from transcripts, although this also increases the number of types and brings in non-central roles such as agenda facilitator and business administrator ("takes care of scheduling appointments, invoicing…"). To be used from a coachee perspective, a tool would need to be simpler and more readily understandable. Stein also includes interesting roles such as practice player (debating or role playing with the client) which are not included in the first version of the tool I am examining. I would suggest 'supporter' and 'challenger' are styles of coaching that can be used across identities rather than identities themselves. Stein's work is a typology rather than a tool, and is clearly aimed at coaches rather than coachees. It is therefore different from the tool I am proposing, though very valuable and in many ways complementary.

Conclusion

Within the limits of this review, I have shown that there is strong evidence for the importance of reflection in learning and the key role of the coaching relationship in coaching outcomes. I have identified that there are a limited number of contributions on the theme of different roles an executive coach can play. There are similar tools in use in mentoring, but not in executive coaching. Stein's work is highly relevant but is designed for coach reflection and learning, not for the coachee's use. This leads me to conclude that the tool under discussion is worth developing as it appears to be original in this context, and it will prompt and support useful reflection and discussion around the coaching relationship which should contribute to more effective coaching outcomes.

Project Findings

Overall the results of the survey questionnaire support the view that this is a valuable tool, and provide some useful insights on how to develop the tool further. I will review the answers to the questions in turn, and then offer an overview.

Responses on the Tool
For the question 'How useful do you think the tool is in its current form?' 99% of participants said 'very useful' (31%) or 'useful' (68%), only one participant said 'somewhat useful'. Asked if this tool would have improved the effectiveness of their coaching, 90% said 'very much' or 'to some extent' and nobody said 'no'. All participants said they would recommend others to use the tool, with 73% saying 'very much'. 92% of participants said it would be very or quite useful for coachees to discuss the tool with their potential or actual coach. 87% said it would be useful to discuss their scores on this tool with an HR colleague, a lower score than recommend it to be shared with a coach, with the 'very much' score dropping from 60% to 45%. There is thus strong but slightly less enthusiasm for coachees to discuss this tool with HR people compared to with coaches. Interestingly HR professionals and coachees have a similar view on this. On the item asking if coachees should share their scores on the tool with an HR colleague, HR professionals answered 44% 'very much' and 44% 'to some extent', while coachees answered 46% 'very much' and 38% 'to some extent'. The only noticeable difference is that two of the executives answered 'no' to this item, whereas none of the HR professionals did. This was a different outcome from my expectation that HR professionals would be much keener for coachees to discuss their scores with HR people than coachees are themselves.

There was a strong response to using this tool in the matching process with 53% of participants supporting that 'very much' and 35% 'to some extent'.

These scores may be overstated based on people wanting to be positive to me based on our relationship, but even allowing for this factor they show strong support for the usefulness of the tool.

For the question 'If you see this as a useful tool, could you briefly explain why you see it as valuable?' 68 of the 75 participants responded. These answers fall into three categories (with some answers falling into more than one category). 46 of the answers saw the benefit of the tool in clarifying expectations and supporting the preparation and contracting process for coach and coachee. For example:

The coaching contract is very important and the tool really helps to differentiate the expectations of all the parties from the coaching relationship. Hence, the tool can really help the effectiveness of coaching by putting the necessary clarity on expectations at the very beginning phases.

Forces the discussion on role, stops misunderstandings, helps clarify why the coaching is happening and what both the content and style of the output needs to be for both parties to be successful. Also helps HR ensure the coachee is focused, the coach is aligned, and the cause is worthwhile.

14 of the answers comment that the tool is useful in terms of raising the awareness of the coachee, and supporting the coachee in reflecting on and taking ownership of the process. For example:

Most of the coachees are not aware of what to expect from a coach, and what coaching is about. Using this tool would help people understand how a coach can support them.

Effectiveness of coaching pretty much depends on coachee. Whether you consciously choose to work with a coach or not, this [tool] gives a pressure on how to manage the whole process. Such a tool can

give coachee certain amount of comfort and confidence on roles, what's in it for him and how to manage it.

13 respondents commented that the tool can play a useful role in the matching process. For example:

I see it very useful since it may help HR to find the right coach for the specific need. It may also help coach & coachee contract between each other.

The question 'If you see this as a useful tool, could you briefly explain how you think it could be best used?' was answered by 59 of the 75 participants. There were diverse answers and some overlap with the previous question. 13 of the responses recommended using the tool before the start of coaching, particularly in coordination with HR. 24 responses suggested using the tool in the chemistry meeting and to help in coach selection. There were 10 miscellaneous answers including referring to their previous answer. Interestingly 12 of the participants stated the tool should be used at a number of stages during the coaching engagement, for example:

1) before the start of the coaching relationship 2) midway, as a "reality check", i.e. where does the coaching relationship function accd [according] to expectations and 3) at the end as a final evaluation and feedback to the coach.

At the beginning of the process to set scope and then at intervals to evaluate whether process is meeting original need and/or whether need has changed, could flag when a coachee may need a different coach.

It can be used before the start of coaching sessions each time.

This echoes O'Broin and Palmer's comment above, that the coaching alliance needs to be "jointly negotiated, and renegotiated throughout the coaching process" (2010c, p.4).

Responses on the Roles
I will now look at the questions examining the roles themselves. 8% of participants suggested different roles to add to the tool. Two of the suggested roles are very similar - *"strategy supervisor/thinker/ sounding board"* and *"'Analyst' - helping the coachee apply structure and process to thinking"*. These are similar to the 'sounding board' role in the tool (in fact one of them using the same term) but are more proactive than a typical idea of a sounding board. This has some similarities with Stein's (2008) role of 'problem solver' but it is not the same because the description of that role is based around asking a series of questions. This role did not appear anywhere else in the literature review. I've added this role to the revised version of the tool, and phrased it as "Thinking partner – help the coachee apply structure and process to their thinking" as I believe that captures the proactive sense of partnership of the role (although there is a risk of confusion as it differs from Nancy Kline's use of the term 'thinking partner' (Kline, 1999)).

Another interesting role suggested was *"Corporate Political Co-navigator"*. I believe that discussing corporate politics is valuable in coaching, but this is an area of focus for the coaching, rather than a role. The same could also be said of Networking Coach however and only one participant suggested cutting this role. I have considered cutting Networking Coach and not adding Corporate Politics Coach. However, because the revised version of the tool will have roles that are easy to remove, and also I want to raise stakeholders' awareness about the range of ways a coach can work, I have decided to include both roles and have added this role as 'Corporate Politics Coach - discusses how to manage power and influence with integrity'.

I will look at the questions on rewording and cutting roles together, as the responses often overlap. 15% of participants suggested wording should be changed in the tool. 17 participants (22%) suggested cutting roles from the tool, with a total of 24 votes to cut a particular role, as people could select to cut more than one role.

It was suggested that **Motivator** be changed to 'Motivation Coach', however the role I am naming as 'Motivator' involves the coach motivating the coachee, rather than coaching them on motivation, so I have not renamed it. Another comment on this role was *"Instead of "Motivator", I would suggest to use [a] different name. Encouragement creates a misperception of pushing or advising to do something which coachee is not ready or willing yet."* I have reflected on this but have not yet been able to come up with an alternative name for this role. The Executive Coaching Roundtable (2005) use 'Cheerleader' but I don't think that title would be more acceptable and is quite culturally specific to the USA. Stein (2008) uses 'Believer' and 'Supporter' but neither of these terms carry quite the same meaning. In the survey, 3 participants from 75 recommended cutting 'Motivator'. However I have left it as it was in the original tool, because I see it as useful and have not come up with a better way of wording it yet. Also in the revised tool users will be able to cut and rename roles as they wish.

There was a lot of feedback about the **Subject Matter Expert** role. It received the highest number of votes to be cut (5 people from 75). Reasons for it being cut included that it *'might be confused with mentoring'* or that this role is better suited to training or consultancy. It can be seen as related to the 'Teacher' role of the Executive Coaching Roundtable and Poulsen's 'Knowledge Sharer' and is the same as Stein's 'Expert' role. Because it appears elsewhere in the literature I have left the role in the tool, with the proviso that it can be easily dropped by people who prefer not to include it.

Counsellor was also commented on. One respondent sees it as overlapping with other roles, another that the role could be *"misunderstood and lead the coachee to have expectations for the coach to act as a psychological counsellor. Another option could be Emotion Coach?"* Three people suggested cutting this role for reasons including that it requires psychological counselling competencies. It is similar to Stein's 'Supporter' role. For me 'emotion coach' sounds slightly more interventionist than counsellor but it is a very culturally influenced issue. I am leaving this role as it is but feel it would benefit from further research into people's reactions to it and whether a better name can be found.

As mentioned above, during the pilot I got useful feedback on the **Follow Up Partner** role and changed the wording at that stage to make it clear the goals in question are coaching goals. Two participants suggested cutting this role, one saying that this is a usual "*part of the coaching process*" implying it is unnecessary and the other that it may bring too much of an operational focus to the coaching. I have left it in the tool as I believe it is such an important role to support learning and behavioural change as argued by Goldsmith and others (Goldsmith and Morgan, 2004).

Networking Coach received one vote for cutting, on the grounds that it is an area to work on rather than a role. Two participants suggested cutting **Critical Friend**, one commenting that the role description sounds too much like a proactive consultancy role. There were also two votes to cut **Feedback Interpreter**, with the comment that it could be part of Follow Up Partner and that there are too many roles.

There were a few comments that there are too many roles and some could be combined such as development adviser and feedback interpreter and comments that some roles underlie all the others, though there was not complete agreement on what they are. (Listener, Counsellor, Motivator, Development Adviser was one suggestion, another was Critical Friend, Listener and Motivator.) **Development Adviser** was selected twice for cutting for these reasons.

In terms of people selecting roles to be cut, after Subject Matter Expert, **Listener** received the next highest score with 4 selections. All those who gave reasons for this mentioned that listening is an underlying skill in coaching and so it could be cut from the list.

I have sympathy with the comment that *"a new coachee may have difficulty in understanding the differences. So to make the choices easy, the list can be shortened"'* but I've not found a way of shortening the list that I'm comfortable with. One option is to cut the Listener role, however as a tool that is likely to influence people's views of coaching I would like to keep that role to emphasize the key role of listening in coaching (as argued by Kline, 2005).

Three roles got no votes to be cut, and we can see these as the 'stronger' roles. These are **Sounding Board** (which appears in many other lists of roles, see Chapter 2 above) **Career Coach** and **Behaviour Coach** which can all be seen as core roles in coaching.

Based on the comments it is clear that many participants have fully adopted the belief that coaching should be non-directive as most of the strongest negative comments are about roles that are seen as too directive, both from coachees and HR professionals.

I have compared the results for the HR sponsors and for the executives who have worked with coaches and on most items their answers are very similar. For the item asking for suggested different roles, it is noticeable that executives were much more likely to come up with suggestions, which is not surprising given that their experience of coaching is likely to have made them more aware of different alternatives.

It is noticeable that 31% of HR people recommended cutting roles from the tool compared to 21% of executives who have worked with a coach. In terms of the roles selected for cutting, the two groups were broadly similar although Follow Up Partner and Development Adviser received 2 votes each from the HR people for cutting and none from the coachees. This is not a representative sample so this data must be treated with caution, and the numbers are small in any case, but it may be that some HR people are not aware of the benefits of the Follow Up Partner and Development Adviser role that coaches can play. I have left both roles in the tool.

Other Comments
There was also a useful comment on removing the scoring example from the instructions as it could influence choices and I have done that in the revised tool.

One of the HR professionals wrote in the additional comments item (Question 20) that "*improvement in scoring method may be helpful*". I emailed this participant to get further input on this answer and they sent me a detailed response. They commented that when people can give points to as many roles as they want, there is a tendency to distribute points to all the roles and give similar points to all roles making it hard to differentiate the output. This is a good point which I hadn't considered previously, although it needs to be balanced against my aim of not wanting to limit how people complete the tool. An alternative method would be to ask people to assign the points amongst up to five roles, to represent the most important roles they want their coach to play; I think this would be a good option, and is worth further study.

Under the 'any other comments' question there was a useful suggestion to add space at the end of the form to be used if *"the coachee or the people organizing the coaching want to articulate further on the type of coaching selected or on expectations that were not stated."* I have added this to the tool.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this project is to help improve the effectiveness of coaching by doing preliminary work that can lead to the development of a tool to be used by coachees, sponsors and coaches. I believe that this purpose has been served, and this research includes useful work which can ultimately contribute to increasing the effectiveness of executive coaching.

The idea that the tool is useful is based on the belief that reflecting on the coaching process will improve the quality of learning for the coachee and that focusing the coachee's attention on the coaching relationship itself is of benefit for the coachee.

The literature review provided support for both these beliefs. Also the questionnaire responses supported these views, both in terms of the general high ratings given to the tool and the comments about why it is useful. There is thus some limited positive triangulation between the literature review and the questionnaire results.

The questionnaire results also support the view that raising the coachee's awareness of alternative roles that a coach can play is useful, and that by encouraging reflection and a discussion to happen, the tool can work to align expectations between sponsor, coachee and coach.

Although the tool needs further development and has not been assessed for validity or reliability it is useful in its current state and I will make it available to anyone who wants to use it. I've prepared a version with drop down menus which HR professionals can use to select only the roles they want to include in the tool, and also with the option to add alternative roles.

Revisions Made to the Tool
I received very useful feedback in the questionnaire. There was valuable feedback on the roles, with some people strongly against certain roles, mostly because they were seen as too directive or content focused (Subject Matter Expert, Critical Friend) or too close to therapeutic roles (Counsellor).

Also there was feedback that some roles overlap (Listener, Motivator and others) and that in general there are too many roles in the tool. I realised based on this feedback that it's impossible and probably undesirable to come up with one definitive version of the tool.

As a result of the input received I have made the following changes to the tool. I believe these have significantly improved the tool.

1. I have taken the example of the points distribution out of the introductory text, so as not to lead people in a certain direction when they complete the tool.

2. I have changed the wording in the Follow Up Partner role to now read – '**Follow up partner** - in agreement with the coachee holds them accountable for goals they set in the coaching engagement'. This is to make it clear that this role focuses on coaching goals, not business goals.

3. I have added the new role of – '**Thinking partner -** help the coachee apply structure and process to their thinking'.

4. I have added the new role of – '**Corporate politics coach -** discusses how to manage power and influence with integrity'

5. Based on the negative reactions to some of the roles, and the feedback that there are too many roles overall, I've prepared a version of the tool which makes it easy for HR professionals or coaches to select only the roles that they want to include in the tool using drop down menus. I've also made it easy to add new roles, or different wording for the same roles, by putting in an editable section at the end of the tool. My intention with this is for HR people or coaches to format the tool as they want it, and then share it with their coachees for them to complete. This gives them the flexibility which the research has shown is required.

6. I've also added an 'any other comments' section at the end of the tool to capture other relevant ideas or questions not covered in the tool itself.

There are other potential revisions which I have not yet implemented but am considering. One would be to use the different scoring system discussed above, asking people to give points to the five roles that are most important for them. Also there is scope to experiment with different wordings for the roles, particularly for 'Counsellor' to achieve a wider acceptability.

I am also considering putting the tool directly onto a website (not just as a Word document shared on a website). This could be done in a way that makes it easy to customise the tool by removing, adding or altering the roles. It could also offer alternative scoring systems. It would also be possible for organisations to distribute the tool via a webpage which coachees could visit to complete the tool. This would be easier to manage than using Word documents and may be more attractive for participants to complete.

Limitations
This study has limitations as a qualitative exploratory piece of research. The questionnaire was completed by a relatively small group of people that is not designed to be representative. Also almost all the participants are based in Turkey and from similar social and business environments. For all these reasons we cannot derive statistically valid inferences from the study.

Conclusion
This exploratory research project has been focused on a very practical work related subject, of working towards the development of a tool to help improve the effectiveness in coaching. After reflection on the issues, an extensive literature search and a questionnaire the tool can be seen as valuable and useful, though not yet assessed as valid or reliable. The questionnaire process also raised a number of issues which have led to the improvement of the tool. There are many avenues for potential future research, however as a piece of qualitative work with limited scope, this project has served its purpose.

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