

Skills audit: coaching clients



In the first introductory seminar, I filled out several self-assessment questionnaires regarding my coaching skills and effective coaching (Appendix D). I really enjoyed doing these questionnaires as I feel that by questioning oneself, I learnt several things about myself that I was formerly unaware of. By taking the questionnaire and looking at the results, I was able to see what skills I had started off with regarding coaching. I used this questionnaire to look back to at the end of week 12 to identify the changes I have made regarding my performance as a coach after having actually learnt about it.

A skill area that I believe I have developed greatly since the start of the module is my communication skills. This is a skill that I have always had some sort of problem with due to my lack of confidence. It is for this reason that I felt very apprehensive in doing this module, yet was determined to overcome my apprehension. I have attempted many times in the past both outside of university and over my three years at university to work on my skill of communication. On many instances through group work and several presentations in front of my class, I have noticed an evident but gradual change in my confidence in communication. However, it is because of the immense importance of this skill to me for my future that I felt that I had not attained the level of confidence in my communication skills that I desire and need.

My skill in communicating, I feel was a weakness of mine, which now has become one of my strengths. Engaging in this module, coaching and being coached by peers I did not know before, really challenged me and I took as the perfect opportunity to finally attain my desired level of confidence to

communicate. Another way I feel as though I have really been able to challenge myself is through the very interactive seminar classes.

It was interesting to acknowledge through the seminar workshops that certain skills I already had and was confidence in having, being presented to me in diverse ways. What I mean by this specifically with my skills in listening, is that although I believe my listening skills are proficient, as I am more of a listener than a speaker, there was still much more room for development as I had learnt from several exercises. The active listener exercise we engaged in week 2 was a great learning exercise of something I previously thought to be simple.

Reflection on Working as a Coach

My thoughts prior to beginning coaching differed greatly after my experience as a coach. To begin with, I felt that coaching would be relatively straightforward and not very difficult. After actually learning about coaching and the many diverse coaching tools used throughout the coaching process, By coaching several clients, I learnt that there is not one set way of acting with each client. Rather I noticed that for all three clients I coached over the semester, I had to take a diverse approach in terms of communication and in order to adapt to their character and different behaviours.

I will base my reflections of working as a coach with two different clients I coached. As I had prior experience of coaching from the previous client I coached for the first case study, this time over I was more prepared and had a better understanding of what I had to do. For both clients, I kept a coaching diary of my thoughts and findings. My first client was a girl called Rawia.

Rawia is 24 years old and she is from Eritrea. Rawia was born in Kuwait and moved to London with her family 21 years ago. My client is studying BSc Business management. My second client was a girl called Nazia who is 21 one years old and is of British nationality. Her parents are from Bangladesh and she lives in south London. My client has two older sisters and two younger brothers, making her the middle child. Nazia is studying BSc in Business Management.

Reflecting back on –action of my time as a coach it is clear that my coaching skills improved gradually from my first client to my last client. This is evident in the reflective logs I kept nearly each week of my performance. I was sort of expecting this as I find from past experiences outside of this module, the more I do the same thing, practising my skills, the better my understanding and performance is. I found my coaching experience very rewarding. This is since although I was helping my clients achieve their aims, I felt positive at the fact that I played a great part in helping them with their achievement.

In week 8, we were introduced to an addition model of coaching known as Space, a psychological model for use within cognitive behavioural coaching. Learning about this model was extremely interesting and I was beginning to think of another approach I could take towards coaching my clients following a different model. Although at first I understood the concept of the model and what each step of the acronym Space stood for and its significance, I found that I preferred the Grow model to a large extent more. I felt more confident with the Grow theoretical standpoint as

I utilised the coaching tools to the best of my ability as I found that filling them in for myself really helped me and so I ensured to utilise them in my

coaching sessions with my clients to prepare for my coaching sessions. I found that by using the coaching tools in the coaching diary, really saved time as I would set certain coaching tools as homework for both my clients to fill out which also kept us very engaged between sessions. Both Rawia and Nazia did this really well as they ensured that each session they would bring the correct completed tools. This allowed us more time for my client and I to discuss what they have filled out in each specific tool and use them as.

I really enjoyed learning about the gestalt approach and using this method in my coaching experience. As I learned more about this method, I could really see how using the three primary perceptual positions could allow me to develop the range and depth of my understanding of my clients and the issues they choose to discuss with me. Having not known this method before, I was unable to use the three primary positions-own shoes, their shoes and observer, with my first client for the case study.

However, I defiantly ensured to use this method with my two clients, Rawia and Nazia, which highly impacted on my performance as a coach and my understanding of my clients, increasing my mental flexibility. Understanding my clients better, allowed me to help and guide them better which improved the effectiveness of our sessions and enhanced the goal of coming up with ways of achieving each clients aim. My reflective log for week 10 (Appendix E) explains further about my thoughts and feelings of the new method I had learnt.

I enjoyed reading the feedback I got from both my clients in the coaching client satisfaction form as it allowed me to know what they really thought of my performance, both the good and bad points (Appendix F). This also acts

as a great way for me to know what skill areas I am good at and what areas I am not so good at from an external perspective. Both the responses I received were, for the most part positive, however it was interesting to see that both Rawia and Nazia had similar opinions of my performance, this tells me that I gave the same performance for both my clients, making it equally fair by acting the same with both clients, not being biased in any way.

The area where I could see I was not doing so well on in terms of the feedback I received were mainly based around myself giving constructive feedback and being assertive. Thinking back to my performance as a coach I can see where I could have gone wrong at certain times, as I do recall finding it difficult to give my view on things, as I was apprehensive at the fact that my feedback would be fully relied on. Since I am not a professional in the field of coaching, I was afraid that I might give inaccurate feedback, which may in some way change my clients' thoughts and feelings about themselves.

Ethics and code of conduct have a major importance in coaching and mentoring. To maintain excellent coaching practice, sound ethical practice must be carried out. " All Clients should expect a high standard of practice from their Coach. To ensure that this is achieved coaches commit to operate in accordance with the Association's Code of Ethics and Good Coaching Practice for ethical, competent and effective practice' (www.associationforcoaching.com). When coaching, I ensured I recognised both personal and professional limitations with both my clients. Prior to even starting the sessions, I ensured that my clients were fully informed of the terms and conditions of the coaching contract. The way I did this was before

starting the official four sessions, I had a thirty minute introductory session whereby I individually went through the terms and conditions, ensuring that all the contracts located in the coaching diary were read and signed by both myself and my clients.

Reflection on Receiving Coaching

Although I had thoroughly enjoyed the experience of being a coach on several occasions discussed previously, when it came to myself being the coachee I was very reluctant and apprehensive at the thought. Initially my feelings of apprehension was mainly due to the fact that I am quite a shy person and the thought of talking about personal issues one to one with a person I did not know, worried me.

One thing I really noticed throughout the four sessions I had with my coach was that she really allowed me to open up my mind without actually guiding me in certain directions by making her own suggestions. Rather I felt as though I could truly open up to my coach allowing me to focus on the aim I wanted to succeed in by guiding my thought process, aiding me in defining ways and means that would in turn help me to achieve my overall aim.

I feel that with my coach Rawia, as she was very enthusiastic and clearly understood the correct way to help me with my decisions; I felt a great sense of motivation. With my aim of gaining enough confidence to communicate with professional employees and my future colleagues seeming somewhat impossible before having coaching, at the end of the four sessions, I really felt the sense of succession. I feel now that I have the correct mind frame and goals set out in order to continue my journey having spoken out in confidence with my coach regarding my confidence, we slowly began to

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come up with possible options which would in turn aid me in gradually meeting my final aim, will help me drastically in expressing what I have to offer to a future employer.

My coaching sessions with Rawia took place over two weeks of the semester. In both weeks, I made sure to fill out my reflective logs at the end of each week. Both reflective logs sum up what my current feelings were at the time (Appendix E&I). Using the reflective logs at the end of both weeks of this particular coaching relationship was an effective thing to do. I felt as though I was keeping a diary where I could just write down all the thoughts that were going through my head at the time. In addition, I find that if I hadn't of written in my reflective logs, I am certain that I would not be able to have remembered what I exactly learned and felt about the sessions I attended.

Now that I look back on this, I feel as though if I had kept a constant track of writing in my reflective logs each week throughout the semester, I could identify a pattern in my learning and see what worked well for me and what did not go so well and also it would act as a great tool of identifying my gradual change as a individual as a result of my new learning and development experience. Having said this, I will defiantly ensure that I will attempt to keep a reflective log for each week, using it as a personal diary and place to just write all my thoughts on what I have done and leant from my experience in each week. This is another thing that I have picked up form this module and I find will really benefit me in many ways and a perfect way to record my development in the future.

Critical Experiences

Looking back on my coaching experience, there were not many critical incidents that occurred. However, there was one particular incident, which had significant impact on both my own performance as a coach and the overall atmosphere between my coachee and myself. The main critical incident was the lack of communication present at the beginning of my coaching relationship with Nazia. This had a major impact on the start of our sessions and reflecting back on the incident I can see what would have done differently which would have changed certain aspects of our communication dramatically. This is described as a critical incident as it had a significant contribution in a negative way to the overall performance. Reflecting back, I can clearly identify an improvement in my behaviour and progression of my communication skills as a result of the incident that had occurred.

Importance of Supervisory Experience

A supervisor is there to help the coach and has nothing to do with the coachee. Supervision is vital as it means that the coach has somebody to talk to for help and guidance. In a sense, the coach has a coach. Whilst coaching my clients, I filled out the supervision preparation form in the coaching diary (Appendix G). Supervision plays a vital role in order for the coaching process to be effective as the supervisor. As a coach, there were several instances where I would have really appreciated the help of a supervisor, particularly at the time the critical incident occurred. In addition, it would make me feel that I have support in what I do and anything I may have queries about could be settled from a supervisor with additional expertise in the field.

Conclusion

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I highly value coaching and mentoring as I believe that when carried out correctly and well thought through, the coach or mentor can have a large advantageous benefit to the individual whom they are coaching, which is also very satisfying. In addition, I think that the coach or mentor can gain a lot from the clients they work with; it is a constant learning curve. This is what I felt my experience of this module was, a constant learning curve. This is shown by looking at my reflective logs from the start of the semester in comparison to the reflective logs towards the end of the module.

I have gained new transferable skills, most importantly to me the skill of communicating my ideas confidently and enhancing my confidence with future employers that was my ultimate aim I wanted to achieve by coaching. It is a real sense of succession and am truly surprised that something that I have wanted to achieve for a very long time and will change my behaviour and future life immensely, has been fulfilled and achieved through this module. The way I see it is that since it was my last semester of my entire time at university, I saw it as my last chance and the best opportunity to finally overcome and tackle this skill.

I can truly say that this interactive experience has taught me many things that I was not before aware of regarding discussing ideas, opinions and experiences. From this I have attained core points I need to reflect on in the future to be able to express myself and build better relationships with others. I do not think there is any better way of doing this other than deep self-reflection in-action and on-action (Schön, 1987) and so I am very fortunate to have been able to fully evaluate myself and see the changes I have made and the new person I have become.

The person I am now is a drastic improvement from the person I was at the start of this module. The main reason for this is the transformation of understanding in a module and topic I had no prior knowledge of before. Learning something new from the very beginning, and being able to fully understand and enjoy every bit of the learning curve is, for me, great succession. I have realised now that I should attempt to discuss more in classes and similar situation as I really do sense as though I understand and comprehend additional information more so than when I just take a step back and just listen. This is something I have definitely noticed and willing to change to enhance my experience as a whole, as having self-confidence in my ability and opinions, will have profound impacts on both the professional and social aspects of my life.

Furthermore, I just feel as though I have really given this module everything I could in order to make my experience as useful and worthwhile to me. The reflective logs I filled out at the end of almost each session throughout the semester are great evidence of my progression of skills, particularly the comparison of the reflective log I had written in week one (Appendix H) and week 11 (Appendix I).