

## Management Summaries

Occasional synopses of modern management writings

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### On training to be a coach

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Someone wrote to me today asking for my advice on the training options for coaching. It's a lovely topic and one that I have strong views about too, so this is a purely personal perspective!

The starting point, I feel, should always be the safety of the client (though I accept that the safety of the coach is also paramount). This means that whatever the interventions of the coach, they should be made in a way that will do no harm to the client and ideally should help them. The coach's personal goals, wishes, desires, beliefs etc (their 'stuff') should be suspended and not allowed to influence what the client wants and needs at that time. For the coach to do this, they need to have a sound understanding of themselves, good skills in understanding their client as well as good coaching skills.

I don't think we can achieve an understanding of ourselves without help, so I strongly believe that all coaches should have personal counselling (or psychotherapy) themselves.

To have a sound understanding of their clients, they need some theoretical models on which to hang their observations of the client; and to achieve this I feel they need to get some training in human development.

Coaching skills are developed experientially, and over time. So, not only do I think that a coach should be formally taught them in an experiential manner, but I think that they should have their work supervised, at least until they are appropriately confident that their work is untainted by their own 'stuff'.

Even then, I feel that coaches have a responsibility to their clients to work to a clear code of ethics with a well-defined mechanism for clients who are unhappy to have their concerns professionally explored and addressed, and for the coach to be adequately insured should the client need compensation.

Yes, this is a strongly therapeutic focus. I feel justified in having it because, at the end of the day, people turn to coaches because there is something in their lives that they have been unable to change alone and it is therefore more deeply rooted than can be addressed with a bit of positive thinking, a little reframing, some goal setting and a rah-rah, gung-ho, attitude on the part of the coach!

So, where do you start? If I were training over again, I would get in touch with the UKCP (United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy) and the BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) and get their lists of recognised training centres. Most people will do a two-year Certificate in Counselling and then a two-year Diploma in Psychotherapy. Some training bodies expect students to do a Foundation Year, or similar course, before enrolling on the Certificate, and

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some encourage people to do a final year after their diploma completing a Masters degree. The different centres usually have a particular theoretical framework (for example, CCPE in Little Venice is transpersonal, Re.Vision in Queens Park is integrative, Regent's College is primarily existential, the University of Surrey is psychodynamic and so on). While it can help to have an idea of what these are, it is usual for the counselling programme to be focused on skills development and most places will allow you to transfer between institutions at the end of the foundation year or certificate course when you are better able to make an informed choice.

So, again, this is a therapeutic approach, but to me coaching is a specialist application of those skills to a particular set of clients who require all the same protection as a counselling or therapy client does. In fact, it could be argued that since coaching clients are usually economically functional (whereas some counselling and therapy ones may not be) there is a bigger risk associated with coaching than with counselling.

Why anyone should waste time doing quick coaching training courses is beyond me. There's nothing stopping them enrolling on the more substantial psychotherapy route, while choosing to practice in a coaching environment from day one, and in the long run they will be better equipped. That said, we are all different!

By way of validating my own personal views (!), there is a good book "*Therapist as Life Coach: Transforming Your Practice*" by Patrick Williams and Deborah C. Davis that explores the relationship between counselling/therapy and coaching - it might be worth borrowing a library copy.

These are just my views, but they are also how I aim to be for my clients. If you are interested in my coaching work, visit my coaching website: [www.businesscoaching.org.uk](http://www.businesscoaching.org.uk).