

## Guide to Coaching Supervision

### Introduction

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In a coaching market intent on increasing professionalism, *coaching supervision* is a powerful tool to protect quality and to ensure results for individual clients and for the sponsoring organisation. Typically *supervision* has been associated with psychotherapeutic professional services. *Coaching supervision* is used within a different context and with significant differences in intent and scope. This guide is intended to be a practical tool for HR Directors / Heads of Learning and Development and others considering coaching programmes. It aims to clarify the emerging nature of coaching supervision, as well as providing a range of questions about coaching supervision.

The focus of coaching supervision is the quality of the coaching experience for the client and the organisation (eg in contracting, delivery, nature of support, confidentiality, maintenance of objectivity). The beneficiaries are therefore the coaching client and organisation as well as the coach. To be successful, coaching supervision needs to acknowledge the complexity of coaching relationships. The coaching relationship between coach and client is unique, reflecting the overt and hidden natures of two individuals and their life histories, emotions and patterns. The relationships of both client and coach with the organisation are also unique and reflect both the business itself (its values, culture, strategy, systems and expectations of its people) and the individuals' lives within the organisation and their business histories. Coaching supervision protects quality by focusing on these multiple relationships and illuminating areas that otherwise might remain unchallenged or hidden.

Working from an objective, one-step-removed perspective, and maintaining client confidentiality, the coaching supervisor provides a safe, supportive place for the coach to:

- reflect and raise awareness of the content of the coaching and the coach's support for the client
- explore the impact of the organisation's culture, values, strategy and politics, and the immediate and future business challenges
- reveal, explore and reframe patterns and systemic issues within the multiple relationships
- build skills and develop flexibility by exploring alternative viewpoints and approaches
- review the coaching process itself, including contracting and assessing coaching effectiveness.

Coaching supervision brings benefits for any coaching work. It is particularly valuable for an organisation that has engaged several coaches for multiple clients. Here coaching supervision across coaches may reveal challenges and issues in aligning coaching goals with organisation goals and in the organisation's support for change. Coaching supervision may also reveal cultural, systemic and behavioural norms and patterns which enable or hinder organisation success.

Coaching supervision also builds coaches' understanding of their personal issues and how these affect their work with clients. However, most coaches will address these in detail in coaching they receive themselves or at a deeper personal level in therapy. This allows the focus of the coaching supervision to remain on achieving the best for the client and client's organisation.

The questions below may help to determine an organisation's own position on and requirements for coaching supervision (including for internal coaches), as well as identifying views held by a potential coaching provider.

### Philosophy and Value

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#### *Coaching supervision*

- What do we (the organisation) / you (the coaching provider) mean by coaching supervision?
- Why is coaching supervision important (for this coaching programme or for any coaching practice)?
- What should / will be the focus of coaching supervision?
- What should / will be excluded from coaching supervision discussions?
- How does coaching supervision differ from coaching or therapy for the coach?
- What are typical themes / issues in coaching supervision?

#### *Supervision in organisation contexts*

- What is coaching supervision in a business context?
- What value can coaching supervision bring to individual or team clients and to the organisation?
- What might be learned from coaching supervision?
- What are examples of value?

## Approach

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### *Coaching supervision approach*

- What approach will be taken to coaching supervision (for this project / for your coaching practice)?
- What is the format of coaching supervision?
- What are the components that make coaching supervision successful?

*Coaching supervision may be done one to one with a qualified coaching supervisor, in a group of coaches with a qualified coaching supervisor, or with an individual or group of peer coaches who may have additional supervision skills. Coaches may also complete reflective notes on their own performance in coaching sessions to prepare for coaching supervision as well as to maintain self-awareness.*

### *Feedback to the organisation*

- How is feedback and learning provided to the organisation?
- How do we ensure that personal confidentiality is protected?

*Where multiple clients are being coached in a single organisation, group or peer coaching supervision may identify systemic issues and other learning for the organisation overall. This provides additional value for an organisation committed to coaching as both an individual and organisation development activity. Protection of confidentiality is supported if feedback to the organisation is delivered by the client relationship manager or the coaching supervisor rather than directly by coaches.*

## Practicalities

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### *Timing*

- How often will coaching supervision take place?
- When within an individual coaching assignment or coaching project does coaching supervision take place?
- On what basis is the extent / level of coaching supervision determined?

### *Pricing and programme*

- In what circumstances is coaching supervision provided as part of a contract?
- In what circumstances should coaching supervision be provided independently?
- What is the fee structure for coaching supervision and feedback of learning?

*The frequency and regularity of coaching supervision (in person and supported by telephone conversations) may be determined in many ways: on the basis of the number of hours or sessions coached, at regular intervals during a single assignment or a multiple client project, at specific times (eg following the 'chemistry' meeting and first coaching session, at the mid-point, and before the closing session in a six month assignment). The intensity and frequency will differ for new / experienced coaches.*

## Quality

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### *Coaching supervision*

- Who will be used as coaching supervisors?
- What are the qualifications and backgrounds of the coaching supervisor(s)?
- Why are these of particular value to the coach / in this assignment?
- What do these add to the coach / coaches' qualifications and background?

*High levels of experience in coaching may not be enough for coaching supervision. There are training programmes for coaching supervision, and a basic understanding of certain psychological concepts (eg transference / counter transference) is important.*

This guide has been produced by The Alliance, a group of experienced coaches. All Alliance coaches are graduates of The Business Coach™ programme from Meyler Campbell, accredited by the Worldwide Association of Business Coaches, and the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

Additional guides are available: *Guide to Being Coached; Guide to Selecting a Coach; Guide to Coaching Supervision*. For further information contact [info@alliancecoaching.co.uk](mailto:info@alliancecoaching.co.uk) or call 020 7794 5841 ([www.alliancecoaching.co.uk](http://www.alliancecoaching.co.uk)).