



Individual coaching

Presentation of our approach

1. Our vision of individual coaching

Context

Complexity, management of uncertainty and radical ruptures are dominant elements in the lives of people and institutions.

In this unstable environment, where classic patterns of authority are being challenged, the leader needs the ability to navigate between three roles: moving from the role of order giver to the role of manager-coach who supports the relationship, becoming a "meaningful" leader (centred on vision and values) for his or her collaborators and loved ones.

Therefore, the identity of the players and the organisation's operating methods must be adapted to support this new positioning.

Need for support

Teams and leaders need support because they are locked in the following three paradoxes:

- When they have needs, they feel forced to manage on their own,
- Those who are willing to help them, their relatives, are too closely involved to help them with sufficient objectivity,
- The leader as well as the team become the least competent regarding those with whom they face difficulties.

For those reasons, the manager or the team need someone neutral and competent who can:

- listen to them,
- advise them,
- help them find their own solutions.

Coaching in 30 seconds

Coaching is the term used to describe the guidance of a manager or a team in their professional life. It is similar than the way a sport coach gazes at his or her champion or team.

The manager is trapped in an irreducible ambiguity. While he holds a function that must be relatively interchangeable and therefore neutral, he or she remains a human being in potential evolution.

In this context, his motivation is strongly influenced by the perception of others, and he must at the same time:

- be understood and respected,
- be supported and provided with the means he needs,
- see himself as the object of the trust he aspires to,
- be able to give the best of himself,
- feel that he belongs to a group and can fulfil his potential.

The role of the coach is to walk along this evolution in a relationship of trust and confidentiality with his client. He will help the manager to develop his potential and acquire the new practices and skills necessary for his evolution.

Under what circumstances?

In addition to individual problems (improving performance, supporting an important project, managing a crisis, succeeding in a new position), three circumstances should particularly encourage companies to offer coaching to well-defined populations:

- When the company wishes to support change, it can offer coaching to key people in the logic of change,
- When the company wishes to retain the best people: by offering coaching to its so-called "high potential" executives, it also offers them an instrument of recognition and development,
- When it seeks to professionalise its managers, it may offer coaching to different managerial lines, making sure to start at the top.

The dynamics employed

A coaching approach will be based on:

- Defining the issues,
- Developing autonomy,
- Developing managerial identities,
- Broadening skills,
- Supporting change,
- The need for meaning

Two prejudices

The first is the belief that using coaching is being **weak**: "a self-respecting manager doesn't need help", we hear from managers. Among employees, if the company offers coaching, we hear: "if the company offers me coaching, it means I am bad".

The second is to consider that coaching techniques, like management techniques, belong to the **"soft" sciences** (as opposed to the "hard" sciences) and are therefore not that credible. This belief stems from a lack of information about the number and relevance of theoretical models developed over the last thirty years in the field of individual and group psychology.

Three suspicions

The first is that the coach becomes a **"guru"**. This fear corresponds to a real risk. The strong relationship between the coach and the coachee create the conditions for a transfer where the coachee gives extra credibility to the views of his coach. The antidote is to clarify the "relational contract" with the coach, to ask for his deontology and to remind both of them there ever was a drift (a good professional knows how to manage this type of confrontation between coach and coachee).

The second is that the intervention causes **psychological damage**. The fear is well-founded, because the subtle relationship that is established during coaching inevitably leads to a transference effect, with the "coachee" giving weight to what the coach says about him. The antidote is to make sure beforehand of the methods the coach uses, of his experience and references.

The third is that coaching may become a **therapy in disguise**, i.e. that it treats exclusively personal problems by reducing all professional difficulties to their psychological aspects. Here again, the fear is well-founded: some coaches, for protecting the coachee, demand confidentiality on the intervention which in fact turns into opacity: "They tell the company, pay for the coaching but don't demand anything in return". However, the company that pays is entitled, even obliged, to have its say. The solution is therefore to draw up a "triangular contract" at the beginning of the coaching process. It specifies the expectations and responsibilities of the company, the coach and the coachee, while spelling out the conditions and limits of confidentiality. This contract involves the management, avoiding his tendency to unload its own responsibilities on the coach.

Two illusions

The first is to believe that **the coach will provide answers and say what to do** to solve the problem. In fact, the coach's know-how consists in asking the right questions and, in a powerful way and adapted to the context, to give the coachee the "push" that will help him/her to change according to his/her wishes. Actually, it is the coachee who "works" on himself, by accepting to question oneself based on the questions asked, by reconsidering his points of view on self, others or the situation based on new insights proposed by the coach.

The second is to believe that **coaching will automatically and quickly lead to a concrete result**. This is sometimes the case, but it may not be, for two reasons: firstly, the decision to change ultimately belongs to the coachee him-/herself (all professionals have encountered cases in which a person, despite excellent coaching work, preferred not to change). Secondly, some types of coaching require more time than others and it is up to the coach to define, at the time of the initial relational contract, the modalities of the duration.

2. Our methodology

- We establish a **climate of security and alliance** with the person being accompanied.
- We intervene by giving **expert feedback** and allow the person to get to know themselves better.
- We teach **theoretical models** and **simple techniques**.
- We pass on our knowledge of communication logics and human psychology and **accompany the person** in their learning process.

Structure of the coaching sessions

Definition of the contract (1st session)

1. If this has not been done beforehand, the coach informs the coachee about his coaching practice, the methodology and reference tools as well as the deontology he respects (in this respect, we encourage the client to meet several coaches so that he can choose the one who suits him best),
2. The coachee describes his professional reality and presents the problem(s) he/she is facing as well as their degree of importance,
3. The coachee specifies his/her request for support,
4. A meeting with the line manager is organized to define the triangular contract. Together, they define the overall coaching contract with the objectives of change to be achieved. We define the observable indicators (behavioural or other) on which the coachee is able to measure his/her change and the effectiveness of the coaching.

Next sessions

The session begins with a review of the situation on what the coachee has noted from the previous session, what he/she has been able to put into practice, what has happened that is important for him/her since then. This analysis allows us to review the changes that have been implemented, to measure the effectiveness of the coaching and ensure that the overall contract is achieved.

The coachee then defines his/her request for the session and after acceptance by the coach, the session starts. At the end of the session, time is set aside to give feedback and to define together areas for improvement if necessary.

If, after 4 coaching sessions, the results are not visible in the client's professional reality, we analyse root causes together and, if necessary, we review the elements of the initial contract.

The coaching agreement

During the triangular contract, with the guidance of the coach, **the coached defines with his line manager:**

- the objectives of his coaching (specific, measurable, ambitious, and achievable. Max.3),
- the indicators of success (how I will see that I have achieved my objectives),
- the demands on the coach,
- the demands on the line manager to help him achieve his objectives, the potential sabotages ("banana peels" that I will unconsciously put in my way, the traps I could fall into. Examples: wanting too much, never being satisfied, not asking for help, etc),
- the resources (time, people, training, books, ...),
- and the timing (deadline, frequency, and duration of sessions).

3. Our specificity: integral coaching

Afin d'accompagner notre coaché dans sa complexité, nous avons une vue globale de la situation. Nous l'accompagnons à travers 4 quadrants :

4. Our deontology

The practice of coaching

The coach exercises coaching in conscience based on his training and experience. He has a place at his disposal for supervision and uses it whenever required. He is committed to ongoing professional and personal development.

Confidentiality

The coach is bound by professional secrecy.

Obligation of means

The coach takes all the appropriate means to allow, within the framework of the client's request, the professional and personal development of the coachee. He commits himself to inform the client when the problems raised are outside his field of competence and if necessary, recommends the use of a colleague or other professionals.

Responsibility for decisions

Coaching is a professional and personal development technique. The coach therefore leaves all responsibility for his decisions to the coachee.

Protection of the person

The coach adapts his intervention in respect of the developmental stages of the coachee. He strives to develop his client's awareness of dignity, autonomy, and personal responsibility.

Protection of organisations




The coach properly considers the business, habits, culture, context, and constraints of the organisation for which he works.

Balance of the whole system

Coaching is carried out in the interests of the coachee and his organisation. It does not undertake or maintain a professional contract where other existing activities or relationships with the client might compromise the professional contract.

Aiming for autonomy

The coach invites the client to terminate the professional relationship, defined by the contract as soon as the contract has been fulfilled. However, certain responsibilities continue beyond the termination of the contract:

-  The maintenance of the agreed professional secrecy,
-  The prohibition of any exploitation of the previous relationship,
-  The assurance to provide follow-up if necessary.