



FALL 2015

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 3

*A refereed, online journal  
published thrice yearly by  
Thomas Edison State College*

INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP JOURNAL  
*Special Issue on Coaching for Workplace Leadership*

## IN THIS ISSUE

### INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

*Joseph C. Santora and Gil Bozer*

### ARTICLES

#### **A Novice Entrepreneur's Experiences with the Coach-Protégé Relationship: A Narrative Case Study**

*Daphne Halkias and Joshua Wayne Denton*

#### **Wearing Multiple Hats? Challenges for Managers-as-Coaches and Their Organizations**

*Pauline Fatien and Ken Otter*

#### **The Effects of Coachee Characteristics and Coaching Relationships on Feedback Receptivity and Self-Awareness in Executive Coaching**

*Gil Bozer and Baek-Kyoo Joo*

#### **The Rise of "Neo-Individualism" in the Workplace: A Critical Approach on Coaching for Workplace Leadership**

*Jessica F. Tabarovsky*

### VIEWPOINT

#### **Mentoring and Coaching for Leadership Development**

*Stanley J. Smits and Dawn E. Bowden*



101 W. State St., Trenton, NJ 08608

[www.tesc.edu/ilj](http://www.tesc.edu/ilj)

# International Leadership Journal

## Contents

### Volume 7, Issue 3, Fall 2015

#### FROM THE EDITOR

*Joseph C. Santora* ..... 2

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

*Joseph C. Santora and Gil Bozer* ..... 3

#### ARTICLES

A Novice Entrepreneur's Experiences with the Coach-Protégé Relationship:  
A Narrative Case Study  
*Daphne Halkias and Joshua Wayne Denton* ..... 6

Wearing Multiple Hats? Challenges for Managers-as-Coaches and Their Organizations  
*Pauline Fatien and Ken Otter* ..... 24

The Effects of Coachee Characteristics and Coaching Relationships on  
Feedback Receptivity and Self-Awareness in Executive Coaching  
*Gil Bozer and Baek-Kyoo Joo* ..... 36

The Rise of "Neo-Individualism" in the Workplace:  
A Critical Approach on Coaching for Workplace Leadership  
*Jessica F. Tabarovsky* ..... 59

#### VIEWPOINT

Mentoring and Coaching for Leadership Development  
*Stanley J. Smits and Dawn E. Bowden* ..... 83

## **From the Editor**

October 2015

Welcome to this special issue of the *International Leadership Journal*, an online, peer-reviewed journal. I am pleased to announce that *ILJ* is listed in the Cabell Directory and articles are now included in Google Scholar and EBSCO.

This special issue contains introductory remarks, four articles, and a viewpoint piece, all devoted to the latest thinking, research, and practices on coaching for workplace leadership.

In the introduction to this special issue, Gil Bozer and I provide an overview of the special issue, which contains articles that range from the specific coaching needs of entrepreneurs to the challenges faced by managers when adding coaching to their work responsibilities. I hope this issue and its contents spurs researchers to explore new avenues of research and practical applications of coaching and mentoring for workplace leadership development.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Baek-Kyoo Joo, PhD, assistant professor of human resources management at Winona State University, to this journal's editorial board. Dr. Joo also has an article featured in this issue.

Please let us know your thoughts and feel free to submit articles for review. Enjoy!

Joseph C. Santora, EdD  
Editor

## **Introduction to the Special Issue on Coaching for Workplace Leadership\***

**Joseph C. Santora**  
**International Leadership Journal**

**Gil Bozer**  
**Sapir Academic College**

Research has suggested that workplace coaching is a means of increasing productivity, learning, job satisfaction, and behavior change (e.g., Bozer, Sarros, & Santora, 2013; Mackie, 2014; Sue-Chan, Wood, & Latham, 2012). Given the extant research into coaching outcomes and the wide agreement on general coaching effectiveness, the time is ripe to understand the unique and precise nature of coaching for workplace leadership. This special issue is devoted to the latest thinking, research, and practices on coaching for workplace leadership. It is our sincerest hope that it will inform researchers, practitioners, and organizational leaders about the importance of coaching.

Halkias and Denton approach coaching from a unique perspective in the lead article. The authors were interested in gaining a better understanding of a new entrepreneur's experiences with the coach–protégé relationship at the business startup stage. The authors used a narrative case study method to gain this understanding. They found that business coaches, especially when working with young and novice entrepreneurs, help entrepreneurs simplify and narrow the focus of solving business problems to achieve business startup outcomes. Their study contributes to Audet and Couteret's (2012) conceptual framework of the coaching–protégé relationship.

The second article, by Fatien and Otter, explores the challenges individuals and organizations face by adding coaching to managers' activities. The figure of manager-as-coach has emerged in organizations as a result of management

---

\*To cite this article: Santora, J. C., & Bozer, G. (2015). Introduction to the special issue on coaching for workplace leadership. *International Leadership Journal*, 7(3), 3–6.

trends such as an increased focus on continuous learning, a shift of HR responsibilities to managers' jobs, and an increased need to develop an organization's leadership culture. Adding managerial coaching to a manager's activities is an important challenge for organizations to empower employees and to develop their human capital in complex and dynamic environments. The authors suggest that coaching education for managers should extend beyond coach training to a more transformative learning approach and a growing organizational culture of leadership to support shifts in mindsets, values, and behaviors.

In the third article, Bozer and Joo investigate the influence of coachee characteristics (i.e., learning goal orientation and developmental self-efficacy) and coaching relationship (i.e., coach credibility and perceived similarity) on coachees' feedback receptivity and self-awareness. Data were drawn from the client bases of four Israeli consulting firms. The authors found that when a coachee had a higher learning goal orientation and a stronger perception of his or her coach's credibility, the coachee perceived higher feedback receptivity. The authors also discovered that when a coachee had a higher developmental self-efficacy and perceived similarity with the coach, the coachee had a higher degree of self-awareness.

The fourth article, by Tabarovsky, investigates the instrumental role that coaching methods may play as a mechanism that serves the status quo of neoliberalism ideology through an ethnographic exploration of an Israeli nonprofit organization. The author provides new insights on the practice of coaching that may contain the potential for enhanced coaching interventions as a managerial tool and a recommended research agenda.

Finally, in their viewpoint article, Smits and Bowden encourage readers to become more involved in mentoring and in peer coaching. The authors suggest that leadership development is much more effective, beneficial, and even enjoyable when experienced in partnerships such as mentoring and coaching. By capitalizing on their extensive experience in designing and facilitating leadership development programs and providing support through organizational and

industry findings, they suggest that successful coaching serves as a way for career advancement and mentoring for career objectives to serve as a motivational force for the core functions of coaching.

Coaching remains a subject of considerable interest. The range of articles in this special issue is a step in the right direction for coaching researchers and practitioners to continue to explore new avenues of research and to bring research on coaching into the academic mainstream.

## References

- Audet, J., & Couteret, P. (2012). Coaching the entrepreneur: Features and success factors. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 19(3), 515–531. doi:10.1108/14626001211250207
- Bozer, G., Sarros, J. C., & Santora, J. C. (2013). The role of coachee characteristics in executive coaching for effective sustainability. *Journal of Management Development*, 32(3), 277–294. doi:10.1108/02621711311318319
- Mackie, D. (2014). The effectiveness of strength-based executive coaching in enhancing full range leadership development: A controlled study. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 66(2), 118–137. doi:10.1037/cpb0000005
- Sue-Chan, C., Wood, R. E., & Latham, G. P. (2012). Effect of a coach's regulatory focus and an individual's implicit person theory on individual performance. *Journal of Management*, 38(3), 809–835. doi:10.1177/0149206310375465

Joseph C. Santora, EdD, is the founder and editor of the *International Leadership Journal*. His work focuses on leadership, nonprofit executive succession, and executive transition. He has published more than two dozen articles on nonprofit succession in academic journals and professional magazines. He received his EdD from Fordham University. He can be reached at [jcsantora1@gmail.com](mailto:jcsantora1@gmail.com).

Gil Bozer, PhD, is a lecturer in the Management Human Resources Department at Sapir Academic College, Israel. His current research interests include executive coaching, executive succession planning, and leadership development. He has published in professional and research-based literature on executive coaching, succession planning, and executive development. Dr. Bozer earned his PhD in Management from Monash University. Prior to his academic career, he served as a human resource officer in the Israeli Defense Force. He can be reached at [gilbotzer@gmail.com](mailto:gilbotzer@gmail.com).

## ARTICLES

### **A Novice Entrepreneur's Experiences with the Coach–Protégé Relationship: A Narrative Case Study\***

**Daphne Halkias**  
International School of Management

**Joshua Wayne Denton**  
Organizational Psychology Consulting

More than half a million new businesses or entrepreneurial ventures are created annually, and almost all are recorded as failed ventures within the same year. Although previous research has shown that coaching can be helpful for novices in entrepreneurship, precisely how the actual coach–protégé relationship can help novice entrepreneurs develop business knowledge during the creation of their own new ventures in entrepreneurship remains a gap in the extant literature. The purpose of this research is to understand a novice entrepreneur's overall experiences with the coach–protégé relationship at the business startup stage, using a narrative case study. Results indicate how business coaches help entrepreneurs, especially those who are young and novice, simplify and narrow the focus of solving business problems in order to achieve business startup outcomes. While the small sample size does limit the study, its significance lies in its contribution to Audet and Couteret's (2012) conceptual framework of the coach–protégé relationship. Further research is recommended to investigate the under-researched phenomenon of the coach–protégé relationship.

**Key words:** coach–protégé relationship, coaching, entrepreneurship, novice entrepreneurs

A novice entrepreneur's decision to create a new business venture without first seeking assistance from an experienced entrepreneur may negatively impact the performance of the new venture at the startup phase (Bozer, Sarros, & Santora, 2014; Hulsink & Koek, 2014; St-Jean & Mathieu, 2015). More than half a million new businesses or entrepreneurial ventures are created annually, and almost the same number is recorded as failed ventures within the same year (Carroll, 2014). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010), 24% of new businesses fail within the first year, and approximately 77% of new ventures are prematurely

---

\*To cite this article: Halkias, D., & Denton, J. W. (2015). A novice entrepreneur's experiences with the coach–protégé relationship: A narrative case study. *International Leadership Journal*, 7(3), 6–23.

abandoned within the first three years of their creation. Of those that survive for the first two years, 44% will fail within the next four years (Amash, 2011). Those that survive continue to face formidable challenges (Stuetzer, Obschonka, & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2012).

Many novice entrepreneurs do not seem to understand the business processes needed to be successful during the creation of new ventures (Chandler, DeTienne, McKelvie, & Mumford, 2011; Harkiolakis, 2014). Although previous research has shown that coaching can be helpful for novices in entrepreneurship (Cull, 2006; St-Jean & Audet, 2013), precisely how the actual coach-protégé relationship can help novice entrepreneurs develop business knowledge during the creation of new ventures remains a gap in the extant literature (Boyce, Jackson, & Neal, 2010; Hulsink & Koek, 2014; St-Jean & Audet, 2013; St-Jean & Mathieu, 2015).

*Novice entrepreneurs*, by definition, are starting a new business or new division within an existing company (Cox & Jennings, 1995). In addition, novice entrepreneurs are new to the business startup phase. Research on novice entrepreneurs has primarily focused on the mentor-mentee relationship (Lefebvre & Redien-Collot, 2013; Terjesen & Sullivan, 2011), coaching techniques leading to success for both the coach and entrepreneur (Audet & Couteret, 2012; Cox & Jennings, 1995; Cull, 2006), factors leading to success for the entrepreneur within the context of a government business incubator (Audet & Couteret, 2012), and the transformation of the mentor (Bozer et al., 2014; Sarri, 2011). Research has revealed that factors leading to success for novice entrepreneurs include family support (Cox & Jennings, 1995), guidance and knowledge passed from mentors (Cull, 2006; St-Jean, 2011b), and demographic similarities between entrepreneur and mentor (Kyrgidou & Petridou, 2013).

As such, little is known about the actual, day-to-day experiences of coaching for novice entrepreneurs at the start of building their business enterprises (Kyrgidou & Petridou, 2013; St-Jean, 2011a). Although these previous studies conclude that entrepreneurial coaching may be a sufficiently customized way to help novice entrepreneurs develop their managerial skills, their common

limitation is that the researchers took into account either the coach's or the protégé's perspective on their own functions, but not coaching as a dyadic relationship (St-Jean & Mathieu, 2015). This aforementioned limitation across studies indicates a gap in the literature documenting the experiences of novice entrepreneurs with the coach–protégé relationship at the business startup phase (Audet & Couteret, 2012; St-Jean & Mathieu, 2015). The central research question guiding this study is the following:

*What are the overall experiences of novice entrepreneurs with the coach–protégé relationship in the business startup phase?*

## **Literature Review**

In the startup phase of a business, novice entrepreneurs are expected to fulfill many organizational and leadership roles, including those in which they have little to no experience (St-Jean & Audet, 2013; St-Jean & Mathieu, 2015). During the startup phase, entrepreneurs lead the daily operation of their businesses. However, many entrepreneurs lack the education or experience to handle day-to-day challenges (Bozer et al., 2014; Grant, 2014). One method of learning to run a new business is to use a business coach (Grant, 2014). Business coaches help entrepreneurs, especially young and novice ones, simplify and narrow their focus to achieve positive leadership and startup outcomes. Yet, the extant literature has indicated that researchers have yet to study the impact the coach–protégé relationship has at the time of the business startup (Theeboom, Beersma, & van Vianen, 2014).

Starting a new business enterprise without assistance from an experienced entrepreneur has proven disastrous for novice entrepreneurs (Grant, 2014; St-Jean & Mathieu, 2015). Half of all young enterprises in the United States are reported to survive for about four years, and about 38% succeed within the first ten years of their business life cycle (Stuetzer et al., 2012). According to the World Bank, small and medium business enterprises with 250 or less employees generate 86% of new jobs (Memon et al., 2014). Hence, it is significant that new business ventures led by novice entrepreneurs survive and prosper so that they

can create more new businesses and contribute to new job creation and economic recovery (Memon et al., 2014; van der Sijde & Weijmans, 2013).

Positive social change can be accomplished as a result of this study by educating novice entrepreneurs on how the coach–protégé relationship may contribute successful entrepreneurship in economically depressed communities (Fortunato, Alter, Frumento, & Klos, 2015; Volkman et al., 2009). Coaching can play a pivotal role in the entrepreneurial process by addressing regional revitalization in the wake of the recent economic recession. Egan and Hamlin (2014) assert that understanding the overall experiences of novice entrepreneurs who have received coaching during their startup phase will provide information to both entrepreneurs and coaches about the ways in which the coach–protégé relationship is beneficial and whether or not that coaching needs to be revised for novice entrepreneurs starting their first business.

The theoretical framework for this study is Fredrickson's (2001, 2005, 2013) broaden-and-build theory and Audet and Couteret's (2012) conceptual framework of the coach–protégé relationship. This study is expected to add to this growing body of evidence by exploring the collective experience of those coached through their business startup and discovering whether or not coaching was beneficial in identifying and developing strengths. Fredrickson's theory is of particular interest because the coaching relationship is designed to open up a client to larger thinking and building upon existing strengths. This study adds to this theory by offering evidence of the ways coaching broadens a client's knowledge base and helps them move forward as they start a business.

In Audet and Couteret's (2012) conceptual framework of the coach–protégé relationship (see Figure 1), the success of the coaching initiative is judged by the perceptions of the parties, rather than by attempting to make a direct link between coaching and economic performance. Accordingly, three variables are used to evaluate success in the coaching–protégé relationship: (a) the extent of the change in the entrepreneur's behavior, attitude, or knowledge; (b) the level to which the objectives set by the parties were achieved; and (c) the parties' level of satisfaction with the initiative.

According to Audet and Couteret’s (2012), for coaching to be successful, four aspects of their conceptual framework must be positive: the characteristics of the coach, the characteristics of the protégé, the coach/protégé relationship, and the support structure (e.g., frequency of meetings, role of manager). By answering the research question of this study, an original contribution will be made to Audet and Couteret’s conceptual framework from the protégé’s (novice entrepreneur’s) perspective through the collection of narratives and data from novice entrepreneurs’ experiences with the framework’s four aspects of coaching during their business startup phase. This research strategy aligns with Audet and Couteret’s recommendations for future research from the perspective of the novice entrepreneurs’ experience with coaching:

There are a number of winning conditions that must be met if a coaching initiative is to be successful. . . . The protégé’s commitment to the relationship and readiness to change attitudes and behavior would seem, however, to have a considerable impact on the outcome of the relationship. Entrepreneurs therefore hold the key to success themselves. . . . This key result confirms Peterson and Millier (2005)’s position on entrepreneurial coaching, i.e. that the protégé’s position and initial commitment are crucial and must be taken into account when studying any coaching relationship. . . . This research has provided additional information on the coaching initiative by means of real-life examples. It also identifies some promising avenues for future research into the key success factors for entrepreneurial coaching. (527–528)



Figure 1. Audet and Couteret’s (2012) conceptual framework of the coach-protégé relationship. Reproduced from “Coaching the Entrepreneur: Features and Success Factors” by J. Audet and P. Couteret, 2012, *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 19(3) p. 519. Copyright 2012 by Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Entrepreneurial coaching appears to be a sufficiently customized way to help novice entrepreneurs develop their managerial skills. However, the novice entrepreneurs' overall experiences with the coach–protégé relationship in the business startup phase remain a gap in the literature that should be explored (Audet & Couteret, 2012; St-Jean & Audet, 2013; St-Jean & Mathieu, 2015). Therefore, the purpose of this research is to understand novice entrepreneurs' overall experiences with the coach–protégé relationship in the business startup phase. This study uses qualitative data, including diary studies, as recommended by Uy, Foo, and Song (2013), on novice entrepreneurs' overall experiences with the coach–protégé relationship and presents implications and recommendations for future research and practice.

## **Method**

The process of entrepreneurship is dynamic, and other factors, such as changing personal and family circumstances and the economic environment, need to be factored in as with business practices (Halkias, Thurman, Harkiolakas, & Caracatsanis, 2011). Therefore, studying a novice entrepreneur's ability to create new businesses and to sustain his or her entrepreneurial activities requires a longitudinal or retrospective approach to include business life-cycle issues (Bernard & Slaughter, 2004) as well as biographical narration. Research recommendations on entrepreneurship state the need to study the entrepreneur's capacity to build businesses over time, including looking at the number, size, type, and location of businesses through the prism of the entrepreneur's biographical data.

The success or failure of entrepreneurship will increasingly drive the success or failure of economies in local communities of developing countries and the national economies of developed countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States (Adendorff & Halkias, 2014). Analysis of the problems and potential of entrepreneurial startups requires a comprehensive framework that follows enterprise activity from beginning to end. This has been previously done in research using the concept of the *life-cycle approach*, which divides a firm's

existence into four phases: birth, adolescence, maturity, and death (Bernard & Slaughter, 2004). Research methods and assessment tools to study the life cycle of entrepreneurial startups must be developed around each element in order to address and formulate into an integrated understanding the factors affecting the success or failure of entrepreneurs. Many of the existing questions about novice entrepreneurs can be answered only by research that is able to follow individual enterprises over time, while a new method would require us to follow the path of an individual firm over the course of its existence in parallel with the entrepreneur's biographical data (Bernard & Slaughter, 2004).

The biographical data of novice entrepreneurs can be collected through the qualitative method of *biographical narration* (Fillis, 2015). This method follows a swiftly increasing interest in the study of lives by the social sciences. Among others, methods of oral history, ethnography, narrative, and autobiography are relaying how individuals give meaning to their life experiences. Methodological and theoretical developments in this kind of research within the social sciences have given rise to an increase in literature addressing issues regarding the collection of materials and the use and interpretation of oral and written biographical accounts, audience, and reflexivity. Biographical narrations draw out common themes and emerging concerns between the subject and the researcher on the subject's environment, past history, present moment, and future life path (Lund, 2006).

If one is to understand how a novice entrepreneur navigates through the *birth* or startup phase of business's life cycle, it is methodologically prudent to gather data on the entrepreneurs' personal history (Bernard & Slaughter, 2004). Such a mode of investigation further allows the researcher a more in-depth study of the entrepreneurial strategy and business practices linked to personal value systems and exogenous factors relating to political and/or social movements and how interplay in these areas influences identity construction of a novice entrepreneur (Stevenson & Lundstrom, 2001). These research methods cannot be ignored in studying one of the fastest growing social and economic groups in the global

community, novice entrepreneurs (Audet & Couteret, 2012; St-Jean & Audet, 2013; St-Jean & Mathieu, 2015).

### **Case Study**

Matthew and Adam Toren are the founders of YoungEntrepreneur.com, a website dedicated to helping young entrepreneurs get ahead. Both Matthew and Adam have been in coaching and mentoring relationships. For the purpose of this narrative case study, *coach* and *mentor* will be used interchangeably due to the overlapping usage of the word in the scholarly literature. Being successful entrepreneurs themselves, they explore their relationships with business coaches and mentors since childhood, beginning with their grandfather Joe, their coach through their early entrepreneurial ventures. Consistent with the purpose of this study and Audet and Couteret's (2012) conceptual framework of the coach–protégé relationship (see Figure 1), in which the success of the coaching initiative is judged by the perceptions of the parties, the researchers asked Adam to reflect on the brothers' time as novice entrepreneurs and answer the following questions through biographical narration:

- What were your overall experiences as novice entrepreneurs with the coach–protégé relationship in the business startup phase?
- What were your experiences as novice entrepreneurs upon entering the coaching–protégé relationship in the business startup phase?
- What were your experiences of novice entrepreneurs throughout the coaching–protégé relationship in the business startup phase?
- Being successful entrepreneurs over three decades and having received “mentoring” and “coaching” from several channels throughout your professional life, what “lessons learned” can you share with other novice entrepreneurs?

A good mentor helps you think through a business idea, suggests ways to generate that startup capital, and provides the experience and savvy you're missing. You'll get praise when you deserve it and a heads-up when trouble comes—probably long before you would have noticed it yourself. We grew up learning the “entrepreneurial lifestyle” from our grandfather Joe. My grandfather, who owned a memorabilia and antique shop in Vancouver, British

Columbia, was a natural entrepreneur. He helped my brother Matthew and I launch our first successful venture: selling toy airplanes at a local festival when we were just seven and eight years old. With his coaching, we developed just the right marketing strategy—putting on a show with the planes that created excitement and a “wow” impact. We sold out of planes in . . . two hours. And [we learned] a valuable lesson . . . early on: “Procrastination is the thief of fortune.”

We then went from mini-venture to mini-venture throughout our schooling years. From importing stereo equipment to magic kits from Hong Kong, we learned a lot and made some money along the way! Then, as soon as we graduated from high school, we took the money we [had] earned and bought a struggling billiard hall in an up-and-coming part of our town. This is where we learned the saying that you hear so often from entrepreneurs: “poured our blood, sweat, and tears in that business.” Lots of long hours, huge rebranding, creative promotion for the venue, and [we] expanded the venue into a place where you can enjoy a game of pool/billiards [and] a nice glass of wine while listening to a live jazz band on stage.

With the guidance of our coach and mentors, we quickly realized what it would take to earn the title of “entrepreneurs” in the adult world: hard work, dedication, and creative marketing ideas. Our billiard hall soon became the place to be on a Thursday, Friday, or Saturday night, with lineups every night. The buzz continued building, and we then started doing some private parties for the movie industry, as we had the ideal location and the space was big enough to accommodate large groups! Before we ended our 12<sup>th</sup> month in business, we had received an offer to sell. It didn’t take long for us to realize that the long nights of sleeping on the couches of our venue had paid off.

We took the deal and then moved on to our next “adventure.” This time it was a totally different industry that we knew nothing about: printing and graphics. We found this struggling downtown printing/graphics company, and we used the same philosophies and ethics from our original coach and mentor, our grandfather, to overhaul and brand this small printing and graphics company. We sold it on our 11<sup>th</sup> month in business for a nice profit. We realize that some things we learned from our coach have definitely stayed the same since our first business venture: dedication; work ethic; determination; and our passion to help others start, manage, and grow successful business ventures.

I do not want to make it sound [like] we did not encounter problems and challenges along the way. We are what [are] termed *serial entrepreneurs*—opening new ventures across industries. Each time we entered a new industry, we were essentially novice entrepreneurs within that particular industry. During one difficult time, when we were deciding [to shut] down our fashion company after losing our largest client . . . that . . . had become 90% of our focus and revenue . . . we remembered a valuable note from one of our unexpected mentors, Richard Branson. He has always thought really big and has said that he has lost count of the times he heard that his new ideas would not succeed. This is something that has never stopped him, since he truly believes that making mistakes is an essential part of an entrepreneur’s life. “My mother

taught me that I should not focus on past regrets, so with regards to business I don't. My teams and I do not allow mistakes or failures to deter us. In fact, even when something goes wrong, we continue to search for new opportunities," he was quoted as saying on the American Express Open Forum blog. One of his more famous thoughts on the topic of entrepreneurial failure [is that] "businesses are like buses: there is always one after the other."

Our first mentor/coach was someone whom we trusted and who cared about our success. He had the knowledge and skills to keep us focused, and he knew a small early success would spur us on to more entrepreneurial attempts. Looking back, I realize he really engineered our first foray into business to build our confidence and help us understand what it's like to work for ourselves. Even now, nearly 30 years later, Matthew and I find ourselves remembering his advice when we're planning or making decisions.

Although few entrepreneurs are fortunate enough to have a keen mentor in the family, it is possible to find one or two. So, what were the lessons we heard over and over again with our business coaches through years of conversation and dialogue that supported us through the past three decades of our entrepreneurial journey?

**Determine your needs.** Keeping in mind that your mentoring needs will shift as you start and build your business, take the time to determine exactly what kind of mentor you want now. Are you having trouble with the numbers [or] understanding your market or operations? Are you ready to ramp up production or still playing with concepts? Build a wish list for your mentor, laying out what skills and support you need to get to the next step.

**Take time to network.** Networking isn't just important for finding customers. It's also vital for finding a mentor. Who do you want helping you? Someone who sits in an office and thinks connecting with the business community means reading a couple of magazines a month? No, you want someone who's out there, knows the market, and can point you in the right direction.

**Listen more, talk less.** Given your youthful enthusiasm for entrepreneurship, it may be hard to stay silent. But to find a mentor, you need to listen—a lot. Pay attention, and you'll be able to separate the smart potential mentors from those who just use all the right words.

**Be "mentorable."** If you come off as someone who knows everything—or thinks you do—many people will back away. If you want to learn, be willing to consider ideas that may not match your expectations or opinions. Above all, don't fall victim to your own hype. Your business may or may not have serious problems, but another viewpoint will help you sort things out.

**Seek out knowledge from "unexpected mentors."** Both Matthew and I have always been inspired by Sir Richard Branson and his entrepreneurial story. He has truly overcome several trials and tribulations, some typical of being an entrepreneur and some that are not so typical. His unorthodox marketing and promotion style speaks very confidently and yields some outstanding results. This unexpected mentoring led us to "unexpected" places since we were open to "the unusual." That's when serendipity can strike.

**Remain flexible.** You may have mentors who stay with you over the long haul, but you will also benefit from people who provide just an afternoon of insightful ideas. If you are fortunate enough to get time with someone who is rarely available, absorb all you can and take notes. Your mentor may be skilled only in one specific area, but that's okay. All help is good help.

**Don't overlook nontraditional mentors.** Some mentors may help you without their knowledge through books, seminars, speeches, videos on Ted, TV programs and the Internet. My brother and I always looked to Richard Branson as one of our mentors. We don't have to meet him in person to appreciate all [that] he provides to entrepreneurs and others all over the world.

**Thank your mentors.** When people help you, intentionally or unintentionally, let them know. Mentors are not in it for the money; they just want to help others grow. Think about what you can do to let them know how much you appreciate them and their help.

**Pay it forward.** You may never be able to pay your mentors back, but you can recognize what they've done for you by becoming a mentor to others. Give to the next generation of entrepreneurs. When you have enough experience, success, and confidence as an entrepreneur, it's now your turn to become a business coach. Through our coaching/mentoring relationships, we were inspired to write a book called *Kidpreneurs* as my brother's daughter turned seven years old and she started asking "What do you and Daddy do as an entrepreneur?" I set off to the local bookstores to try and find a "kid-friendly" book on entrepreneurship and the basics of starting and growing a business. After searching both in the stores and online, I hadn't found anything [that] we thought was accurate [or] fun for the kids to read and learn from. After a year of writing, tweaks, and design, we [published] this book (which we wished we had as kids!).

In the final analysis, my brother and I took away a few enduring business lessons for entrepreneurs from our coaching experience. You need a good idea. Startup cash can make a real difference. Keep your overhead low and don't try [to] micromanage your business as you grow. No matter how successful you have been and no matter how old you are, be open to learning from quality people. Business experience and savvy also help, of course. But to take advantage of the most powerful weapon an entrepreneur can have, find a mentor/coach as a lifelong member of your team.

## Discussion and Conclusions

Business coaches help entrepreneurs, especially young and novice ones, simplify and narrow the focus of how to solve business problems in order to achieve positive leadership and business startup outcomes. Coaching, as an industry and profession, however, does not require certification. The extant literature indicates that researchers have yet to study the impact coaching has at the time of the startup (Theeboom et al., 2014). Psychological researchers and

experts have argued that coaches need education and experience in facilitating psychological and therapeutic principles (Bozer et al., 2014; Grant, Cavanagh, Parker, & Passmore, 2010; Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011). Similarly, coaching outcomes tend to focus on abstract concepts (e.g., leadership skills and satisfaction) and not on traditional measures, such as return on investment or behavioral measures (Chun, Sosik, & Yun, 2012).

Implications of this research for practice can be numerous. Displaying commitment and support of novice entrepreneurs can be achieved through the development of coaching programs. Such programs can spread the experience of senior managers by developing novice entrepreneurs into venture champions. These coaching activities can complement traditional roles of managers in entrepreneurial behavior, such as ratifying, recognizing, and directing. Acting as part-time coaches, business executives can also provide access to their network of relations for novice entrepreneurs. In addition, coaching will allow entrepreneurs to control and balance the involvement of employees in exploitation and exploration activities without neglecting one over the other while making sure they address any organization needs and emergencies that might arise (Harkiolakis, 2014).

Entrepreneurial coaching can play a pivotal role in the entrepreneurial process for addressing regional revitalization in the wake of the recent economic recession that saw 24% of new businesses fail within the first year of operation (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). Whether a business failure is due to financing, management issues, product development, or other factors, failure is expensive and can have negative well-being factors for the entrepreneur (Ucbasaran, Westhead, Wright, & Flores, 2010). The learning methods seen in successful coaching relationships through the results of this study can help future coaches better prepare novice entrepreneurs to learn about entrepreneurship as an interaction between the subject (i.e., the entrepreneur) and the environment i.e., the company, coach, and market) and not just mere assimilation of textbook knowledge. The results of this study can help coaches mentor the novice entrepreneur to think differently about growing a business venture rather than

simply absorbing advice on the basis of past cognitive schemes. In this sense, the study makes a positive social contribution to entrepreneurial education. This qualitative narrative case study of novice entrepreneurs' overall experiences with the coach–protégé relationship in the business startup phase contributes to Audet and Couteret's (2012) conceptual framework of the coaching–protégé relationship (see Figure 1).

As in many qualitative studies, the primary limitation of this study is the small sample size. In the case of a single subject case study, the sample size of one should be mitigated by other validity strategies. Webster and Mertova (2007) argue that in the narrative inquiry research process, limitations may arise due to the collection of too much data, which may lead to a narrow view of the data, inhibiting the story's ability to evolve or critical events to be identified. In this study, encouraging and concentrating on the participant's critical events, stories, and experiences alleviated the collection of too much data. To assist with the collection data process, the researchers recorded and documented all field notes before, during, and after interviews with the participant. To improve credibility, the researcher provided an environment where the participant felt that there were no appropriate or inappropriate responses to questions and the choice to speak or not to speak was up to the participant. In addition, the weakness in credibility is lessened by identifying and bracketing assumptions, extensive reviewing of transcripts, and member checking (Moen, 2008). Nevertheless, these limitations align with the principal goal of this narrative case study, which was not to generalize findings but to gain valuable insight from the participant's life experiences with the phenomena under study (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

The significance of this study is its contribution to the field of entrepreneurship. It provides original qualitative data on how the coach–protégé relationship helps novice entrepreneurs create successful business ventures from the business startup phase. The present study's findings may also include valuable information for entrepreneurs to improve entrepreneurial knowledge in the business startup phase and on how to utilize the coaching relationship to develop the cognitive competencies needed to succeed in their new business ventures.

Furthermore, the findings from the present study may propel other researchers to investigate the under-researched phenomenon of the coach–protégé relationship.

## References

- Adendorff, C., & Halkias, D. (2014). Leveraging ethnic entrepreneurship, culture and family dynamics to enhance good governance and sustainability in the immigrant family business. *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, 19(2), 1–23. doi:10.1142/S1084946714500083
- Amash, R. (2011, December 2). What can higher education learn from the business world in terms of customer satisfaction? *The Business Review, Cambridge*, 19(1).
- Audet, J., & Couteret, P. (2012). Coaching the entrepreneur: Features and success factors. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 19(3), 515–531. doi:10.1108/14626001211250207
- Bernard, A. B., & Slaughter, M. J. (2004, September). *The life cycle of a minority-owned business: Implications for the American economy*. Paper presented at the National Minority Enterprise Week Conference Development, sponsored by the Minority Business Development Agency, Washington, DC. Available at <http://faculty.tuck.dartmouth.edu/images/uploads/faculty/andrew-bernard/mbda.pdf>
- Bolger, N., Davis, A., & Rafaeli, E. (2003). Diary methods: Capturing life as it is lived. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 54, 579–616.
- Boyce, L. A., Jackson, R. J., & Neal, L. J. (2010). Building successful leadership coaching relationships: Examining impact of matching criteria in a leadership coaching program. *Journal of Management Development*, 29(10), 914–931.
- Bozer, G., Sarros, J. C., & Santora, J. C. (2014). Academic background and credibility in executive coaching effectiveness. *Personnel Review*, 43(6), 881–897.
- Carroll, R. (2014, June 28). Silicon Valley's culture of failure and "the walking dead" it leaves behind. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/jun/28/silicon-valley-startup-failure-culture-success-myth>

- Chandler, G., DeTienne, D. R., McKelvie, A., & Mumford, T. (2011). Causation and effectuation processes: A validation study. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 26(3), 375–390.
- Chun, J. U., Sosik, J. J., & Yun, N. Y. (2012). A longitudinal study of mentor and protégé outcomes in formal mentoring relationships. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 33, 1071–1094.
- Cox, C., & Jennings, R. (1995). The foundations of success: The development and characteristics of British entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 16(7), 4–9.
- Cull, J. (2006). Mentoring young entrepreneurs: What leads to success? *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 4(2), 8–18.
- Egan, T., & Hamlin, R. G. (2014). Coaching, HRD, and relational richness putting the pieces together. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 16(2), 242–257.
- Fillis, I. (2015). Biographical research as a methodology for understanding entrepreneurial marketing. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 21(3), 429–447.
- Fortunato, M. W. P., Alter, T. R., Frumento, P. Z., & Klos, J. M. (2015). Cultivating a culture of innovative university engagement for local entrepreneurship development in rural and distressed regions. *International Journal of Social Science Studies*, 3(1), 122–138.
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 218–226. doi:10.1037/0003-066x/56.3.218
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2005). The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. In F. A. Huppert, N. Baylis, & B. Keverne (Eds.), *The science of well-being* (pp. 217–238). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2013). Positive emotions broaden and build. In P. Devine & A. Plant (Eds.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 47, pp. 1–53). Burlington, MA: Academic Press.
- Grant, A. M. (2014). Autonomy support, relationship satisfaction and goal focus in the coach–coachee relationship: Which best predicts coaching success?

*Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 7(1), 18–38.

Grant, A. M., Cavanagh, M. J., Parker, H. M., & Passmore, J. (2010). The state of play in coaching today: A comprehensive review of the field. *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 25, 124–167.

Halkias, D., Thurman, P. W., Harkiolakas, N., & Caracatsanis, S. M. (Eds.) (2011). *Female immigrant entrepreneurs: The economic and social impact of a global phenomenon*. Surrey, United Kingdom: Gower.

Harkiolakis, N. (2014). *Multipreneurship: Diversification in times of crisis*. Surrey, United Kingdom: Gower.

Hulsink, W., & Koek, D. (2014). The young, the fast and the furious: A study about the triggers and impediments of youth entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management*, 18(2), 182–209.

Kyrgidou, L. P., & Petridou, E. (2013). Developing women entrepreneurs' knowledge, skills, and attitudes through e-mentoring support. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 20(3), 548–566.

Lefebvre, M. R., & Redien-Collot, R. (2013). “How to do things with words”: The discursive dimension of experiential learning in entrepreneurial mentoring dyads. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 51(3), 370–393.  
doi:10.1111/jsbm.12022

Memon, J., Rozan, M. Z. A., Ismail, K., Uddin, M., Balaid, A., & Daud, D. (2014). A theoretical framework for mentor–protégé matchmaking: the role of mentoring in entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Green Economics*, 8(3–4), 252–272.

Moen, T. (2008). Reflections on the narrative research approach. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(4), 56–69.

Passmore, J., & Fillery-Travis, A. (2011). A critical review of executive coaching research: A decade of progress and what's to come. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice*, 4(2), 70–88.  
doi:10.1080/17521882.2011.596484

- Sarri, K. K. (2011). Mentoring female entrepreneurs: A mentors' training intervention evaluation. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 35(7), 721–741. doi:10.1108/03090591111160814
- St-Jean, E. (2011a). Mentor functions for novice entrepreneurs. *Academy of Entrepreneurship Journal*, 17(1), 65–84.
- St-Jean, E. (2011b). Opportunity recognition for novice entrepreneurs: The benefits of learning with a mentor. *Academy of Entrepreneurship Journal*, 17(2), 37–48.
- St-Jean, E., & Audet, J. (2013). The effect of mentor intervention style in novice entrepreneurship mentoring relationships. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 21(1), 96–119. doi:10.1080/13611267.2013.784061
- St-Jean, E., & Mathieu, C. (2015). Developing attitudes toward an entrepreneurial career through mentoring: The mediating role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy. *Journal of Career Development*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1177/0894845314568190
- Stevenson, L., & Lundstrom, A. (2001). *Patterns and trends in entrepreneurship/SME policy and practice in ten economies. Entrepreneurship policy for the future* (Vol. 3). Stockholm: Swedish Foundation for Small Business Research.
- Stuetzer, M., Obschonka, M., & Schmitt-Rodermund, E. (2012). Balanced skills among nascent entrepreneurs. *Small Business Economics*, 41(1), 93–114.
- Terjesen, S., & Sullivan, S. E. (2011). The role of developmental relationships in the transition to entrepreneurship: A qualitative study and agenda for future research. *Career Development International*, 16(5), 482–506. doi:10.1108/13620431111168895
- Theeboom, T., Beersma, B., & van Vianen, A. E. (2014). Does coaching work? A meta-analysis on the effects of coaching on individual level outcomes in an organizational context. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 9(1), 1–18.
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2010). *Business employment dynamics*. Retrieved from [http://www.bls.gov/bdm/entrepreneurship/bdm\\_chart3.htm](http://www.bls.gov/bdm/entrepreneurship/bdm_chart3.htm)

- Ucbasaran, D., Westhead, P., Wright, M., & Flores, M. (2010). The nature of entrepreneurial experience, business failure and comparative optimism. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 25(6), 541–555.
- Uy, M. A., Foo, M. D., & Song, Z. (2013). Joint effects of prior start-up experience and coping strategies on entrepreneurs' psychological well-being. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 28(5), 583–597.
- van der Sijde, P., & Weijmans, G. (2013). Benefits and impact of mentoring for entrepreneurs: The entrepreneur's perspective. *International Journal of Human Resource Studies*, 3(4), 194–204.
- Volkman, C., Wilson, K. E., Mariotti, S., Rabuzzi, D., Vyakarnam, S., & Sepulveda, A. (2009, April). *Educating the next wave of entrepreneurs: Unlocking entrepreneurial capabilities to meet the global challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: A report of the Global Education Initiative*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum. Retrieved from [http://www.weforum.org/pdf/GEI/2009/Entrepreneurship\\_Education\\_Report.pdf](http://www.weforum.org/pdf/GEI/2009/Entrepreneurship_Education_Report.pdf)
- Webster, L., & Mertova, P. (2007). *Using narrative inquiry as a research method: Using critical event narrative analysis*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Daphne Halkias, PhD, is a distinguished academic, researcher, published author, and consultant in the areas of family business, executive coaching, leadership, entrepreneurship, organizational/industrial psychology, and higher education. She is a founding fellow of the Institute of Coaching, a Harvard Medical School Affiliate; a research affiliate at the Institute for Social Sciences, Cornell University; a senior research fellow at the Center for Youth and Family Enterprise, University of Bergamo; and a past research associate at the Centre for Migration Policy and Society at The University of Oxford. Dr. Halkias is the CEO of Executive Coaching Consultants and editor of the *International Journal of Technology-Enhanced Learning*, *International Journal of Teaching and Case Study*, and *International Journal of Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation*. She supervises dissertation research at American and European universities and is a member of the Family Firm Institute, American Psychological Association, Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, and Business Fights Poverty. Dr. Halkias is on the faculty at the University of Liverpool, United Kingdom; New England College, New Hampshire; and the International School of Management, Paris, France. She can be reached at [daphne\\_halkias@yahoo.com](mailto:daphne_halkias@yahoo.com).

Josh Denton, MS, is a consultant and business coach with Organizational Psychology Consulting. In addition, he is currently completing his PhD in Organizational Psychology in the areas of coaching and entrepreneurship. He has helped businesses and nonprofits with improving workplace structure to help all employees find purpose in their work. His work and research interests are positive psychology coaching, entrepreneurship, leadership development, and increasing positivity within the workplace. He can be reached at [josh@opiconsult.com](mailto:josh@opiconsult.com).

## **Wearing Multiple Hats? Challenges for Managers-as-Coaches and Their Organizations<sup>\*</sup>**

**Pauline Fatien  
Menlo College**

**Ken Otter  
Saint Mary's College of California**

**This article explores the challenges for individuals and organizations of adding coaching to the repertoire of managers. In complex and dynamic environments, a manager becomes responsible for developing people for continuous learning, which transforms him or her into a manager-as-coach. However, the resulting expanded capacities and skills require a manager's ability to navigate a new ambiguity in roles and identity; this article uses the metaphor of “wearing multiple hats” to represent the challenges that managers face when they add coaching to their repertoire. To prepare them to do so, the development of a manager-as-coach should go beyond an instrumental approach to embrace a transformation learning approach that includes not only skill acquisition, but shifts in values and mindsets. Additionally, organizations should be supportive by promoting a more distributed and horizontal culture of leadership.**

**Key words: coaching education, executive coaching, manager coach, role ambiguity, transformative learning**

Organizations are increasingly turning to coaching as one key strategy in responding to the growing uncertainty, change, and complexity in today's world. The use of specialized external and internal coaching to support the learning and development of executives, managers, and employees has been on the rise over the past 10 years on a global scale (Bresser, 2013). Also on the rise is the development of more coaching capability in managers (Beattie et al., 2014).

We use the metaphor of *wearing multiple hats* to represent those challenges that managers face when they add coaching to their repertoire. By broadening the range of responsibilities to include facilitator of learning and development, the manager-as-coach must be able to navigate multiple roles and increased complexity.

---

<sup>\*</sup>To cite this article: Fatien, P., & Otter, K. (2015). Wearing multiple hats? Challenges for managers-as-coaches and their organizations. *International Leadership Journal*, 7(3), 24–35.

This article first outlines three major trends leading to the current emergence of the manager-as-coach figure in organizations. Second, it discusses the challenges that managers-as-coaches experience, as well as the kinds of capacities and skills managers need to be effective. Finally, the article focuses on the role of transformational learning and organizational culture in effective practice and development of managers-as-coaches.

## **Context**

The move to add coaching to managers' repertoires of responsibilities is an adaptive response that shows up as three major trends in organizations. The first major trend is that continuous learning and development is becoming a core function in organizations (McComb, 2012), and in that context, managers are expanding their repertoires of responsibilities to include facilitating learning in staff. This focus on learning and development in organizations is intended to better equip employees with skills that will allow them to be responsive to the growing complexity, plurality, and uncertainty in the workplace (Mcguire, Stoner, & Mylona, 2008; Senge, 1990). Additionally, this focus also aids recruiting by making organizations more attractive and thus helping them address the fierce competition for attracting and retaining talent (Gibb, 2003; Hagel, 2012). Finally, the quick ascension of younger and less experienced employees into management roles as a result of rapid scaling in many business enterprises, or sudden waves of retirements in public agencies, requires that organizations intensify their efforts to develop their less experienced managers so they have the requisite competencies for their new roles (Gibb, 2003).

The second major trend explaining the rise of the manager as coach is in the shift of the locus of responsibility for people development from the human resources department to managers (Ladyshevsky, 2010), who become responsible for identifying developmental gaps and creating learning opportunities for their employees. Indeed, managers throughout the organization, because they work closely with their staff, are viewed as being more cognizant of, and thus more responsive to, the context-specific needs of their staff and

department (Gibb, 2003). While workplace learning programs designed and delivered by a centralized human resources department certainly seem useful for acquiring standardized and generalized knowledge, they appear limited in their ability to respond to the unique and varied learning needs of people in the organization (Mezirow, 2000).

The third major trend, which encompasses the two trends above, is the increased attention to developing a leadership culture in organizations. Many view conscious and systemic attention to developing people and distributing learning throughout the organization as a defining characteristic of leadership, which while complementary, is distinct from management (Anderson, 2013; Dunoon, 2008; Rost, 1993). Therefore, a leadership culture is one that couples learning and leadership and fosters this pairing as an intrinsic part of organizational life (Anderson, 2013). In that context, managers need to expand their perspective to not only include learning but also leadership as a distributed function in the organization, of which they are expected to be a model. By practicing coaching, the manager exemplifies and promotes both leadership and learning (McCarthy & Milner, 2013; McComb, 2012).

Table 1 summarizes the three trends and outlines the consequences for the role of managers.

**Table 1: Three Trends to Understand the Emergence of the Manager-as-Coach Figure**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Consequences for the Role of Managers</b>
Continuous learning and development as a core function in organizations	Managers need to expand their repertoire of responsibilities to include facilitating learning in staff.
Shift in the locus of responsibility for people development from HR to managers	Managers will become responsible for identifying developmental gaps and aspirations and for creating learning opportunities for their employees to acquire new skills and capacities.
Increased attention to developing a leadership culture in organizations	Managers need to expand their perspective to include not only learning but also leadership as a distributed function in the organization, of which they are expected to be a model.

## **The Complexity of Developing Manager as Coach**

Developing the manager-as-coach as a primary strategy in response to these three major trends is no simple matter. Adding coaching skills to the repertoires of managers' responsibilities goes far beyond the issue of increased workloads or added skills. It requires the ability to wear a multiple range of hats, some of which can feel contradictory.

First, what are the requisite skills and behaviors managers need to be effective coaches? According to a meta-analysis of managerial coaching studies, Hamlin, Ellinger, and Beattie (2006) identified the following attributes of effective managerial coaching: the ability to create a learning environment, being caring and supportive, providing regular feedback, and demonstrating skillful communication. These behaviors reflect two sets of skills: interpersonal and cognitive. Interpersonal skills include empathy, support, encouragement, reassurance, and genuine concern for people and their development (Beattie, 2002; Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999; Hamlin, 2004). Cognitive skills include broadening employees' perspectives, reflective thinking (Beattie, 2002), and delegation (Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999).

Managers then need to "coach," which means endorsing a non-directive posture based on more positive, humanistic, and motivating communication styles (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2006) to empower people to make their own decisions. The demonstration of such skills means that managers need to expand their role from a supervisory orientation, which is more directive, evaluative, and task focused, to a facilitative orientation, which is more supportive, enabling, and relationally focused (Elliott & Reynolds, 2002; Joo, Sushko, & McLean, 2012). This means that managerial coaching requires a different mindset, competencies, and skills for managers (Ladyshevsky, 2010). As Ellinger and Bostrom (1999) note, managers "must learn to 'unfreeze' or let go of old behaviors associated with the 'command and control' paradigm" to transition to the "empowering and facilitating paradigm" (767).

As well as developing an awareness of the need to add skills to one's repertoire, managers need to be willing and motivated to do so. However,

according to Ellinger and Bostrom (1999), it is far from simple. Indeed, despite the longstanding view that employee development is an important managerial responsibility, from a practical perspective, few managers regard themselves as facilitators of learning. They “perceive it to be a distraction from work, are not rewarded or recognized, or assume it is the responsibility of the training and human resource departments” (766).

Finally, some researchers (Anderson, 2013; McCarthy & Milner, 2013) suggest that managerial coaching should become its own coaching specialty: coaching for a manager means something different than coaching for an internal or external coach. Indeed, by adding coaching to a manager’s repertoire of responsibilities, managerial coaching is something other than a “‘limited’ or ‘cut-down’ version of specialized coaching” (Anderson, 2013). Managerial coaching entails specific challenges, such as navigating multiple roles and identities and being able to move back and forth between a supervisory and facilitative orientation (McCarthy & Milner, 2013), acceptance of becoming a learner (Hamlin et al., 2006; Ladyshevsky, 2010), and seeing a shift in power dynamics between managers and employees. Indeed, when managers empower employees to take a more active part in their work, they share some power previously attached to the figure of the expert. In short, managers-as-coaches should, first and foremost, be able to effectively respond to added complexity in organizations. This has implications for developing coaching skills in managers. Instead of the same coach training programs designed for specialized coaches, education programs that are designed for the unique needs of the manager as coach are necessary (McCarthy & Milner, 2013). These findings are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2: What It Takes to Develop Managers-as-Coaches**

Awareness and coaching skills acquisition	Managers should be aware that specific interpersonal and cognitive skills are needed to adopt a facilitative posture and then acquire these skills.
Motivation to perform the job	Managers should view coaching as relevant and part of the manager’s job.
Ability to navigate increased complexity	Managers should be able to wear multiple hats.

## **Educating Managers-as-Coaches: The Role of Transformative Learning**

The move to coaching for managers involves awareness, skill acquisition, the motivation to do the job, and the ability to navigate increased complexity in organizations. This increased repertoire of skills and responsibilities requires more than the acquisition of specific coaching skills. The literature has identified several key factors: increased self-awareness (McLean, Yang, Kuo, Tolbert, & Larkin, 2005), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), and shifts in values and mindsets, all of which reflect more complex “orders of consciousness” (Hall, 1994; Kegan, 2000; McCauley, Kanaga, & Lafferty, 2010).

With the above in mind, the development of a manager as coach capable of wearing multiple hats calls for learning programs that go beyond coach *training* to coach *education*. We refer to coach training programs as ones that feature instrumental learning, which emphasize theory, methods, and skills. The emphasis is on developing capabilities and practical application, with the objective for the learner to acquire abilities, related attitudes, and dispositions to promote confident action (i.e., description, observation, and feedback; Bennett, 2012). In addition to the components involved in coach training, coach education features transformative learning that includes attention to shifts in development, mindset, values, and intelligences (Mezirow, 2000) that address the complexity and sophistication that McCarthy and Milner (2013) describe. Indeed, the emphasis of coaching education is on critical thinking and knowledge exploration, to allow people to push existing boundaries, reconfigure the intellectual architecture of a problem, and identify challenges or opportunities (Bennett, 2012). Coach education that promotes transformative learning should not only include immersive learning programs, but also everyday in-the-midst-of-action learning as well (Allen & Roberts, 2011; Otter, 2012). Again, the sophistication and complexity needed to develop coaching capabilities in managers and the ability to wear multiple hats requires some individualization and ongoing attention that is best achieved through coaching, mentoring, and communities of practice,

to support the learning that immersive learning events provide (Allen & Roberts, 2011; Hawkins & Smith, 2006).

**Table 3: Manager-as-Coach Training Versus Manager-as-Coach Education**

	<b>Manager-as-Coach Training</b>	<b>Manager-as-Coach Education</b>
<b>Type of learning</b>	Instrumental	Transformative
<b>Format of learning</b>	Immersive only	Immersive and in-the-midst-of-action
<b>Emphasis</b>	Practical application/capability	Critical thinking, knowledge, and self-exploration
<b>Outcomes</b>	New knowledge, skills, and methods	New knowledge, skills, and methods and shifts in behaviors, attitudes, values, and mindset

### **The Centrality of Culture**

In addition to focusing on the acquisition of skills at an individual level, organizations must also ensure that their culture supports the actions and development of managers-as-coaches. Necessary shifts in the organizational culture are recognized as having a positive influence on the development of manager as coach. Ellinger and Bostrom (1999) identify the importance of incorporating assessment of coach capability as part a manager's performance appraisal. Megginson and Clutterbuck (2006) go further by coming up with the concept of *coaching culture*. Far from being a quick-fix process, coaching gets embedded in the DNA of the organization. According to Anderson (2013), incorporating managerial coaching into the organizational life and attending to the developmental and cultural shifts required for its effectiveness, one is indirectly cultivating more leadership capacity, particularly leadership that is more relational and plural, which she refers to as the "Trojan horse effect" (17). She writes that "organizations that decide to pursue . . . managerial coaching . . . may get more than they expect. To be effective managerial coaching requires a fundamental reconsideration of models of leadership and a corresponding review of leadership development" (18). Thus for Anderson, the coaching shift is better apprehended through the lens of and for its consequences on leadership. When managers add coaching into their repertoires of responsibilities to attend to the

learning and development needs of people, incorporating into the everyday work activity of the organization, it is also distributed throughout the organization. In this way, a more distributed and horizontal orientation of leadership begins to complement prevailing leader-centric and vertical orientations of leadership (Anderson, 2013; Dunoon, 2008; Otter, 2012).

## Conclusion

The figure of manager-as-coach has emerged in organizations as a result of combined trends, such as an increased focus on continuous learning, a shift of HR responsibilities on managers' shoulders and an increased attention to developing a leadership culture in the organization. In this article, we have used the metaphor of wearing multiple hats to represent the challenges that managers face when they add coaching to their repertoire. This shift requires not only a broadened range of responsibilities but also an ability to navigate multiple roles and increased complexity. To successfully embrace this change, managers need to develop specific skills, behaviors, attitudes, and mindsets. To that effect, we suggest that mere coaching skills acquisition, characteristic of coaching training, is insufficient and that a transformative learning approach through coaching education is needed. Coaching education not only attends to the acquisition of new behaviors, values, and mindsets; it also attends to the challenge posed by the requirement for managers to wear multiple hats. Lastly, we emphasize the role of organizational culture in responding to the challenges presented by developing the manager as coach. Paradoxically, growing a culture of leadership is seen as key to the effective practice and development of manager as coach, while also being one of the outcomes of developing managerial coaching. Navigating this paradox by incorporating transformative learning into the culture is suggested as one effective strategy.

## References

- Allen, S. J., & Roberts, D. C. (2011). Our response to the question: Next steps in clarifying language of leadership learning. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 5(2), 65–70. doi:10.1002/jls.20220

- Anderson, V. (2013). A Trojan horse? The implications of managerial coaching for leadership theory, *Human Resource Development International*, 16(3), 251–266. doi:10.1080/13678868.2013.771868
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Beattie, R. S. (2002). *Developmental managers: Line managers as facilitators of workplace learning in voluntary organizations* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Glasgow, Scotland.
- Beattie, R. S., Kim, S., Hagen, M. S., Egan, T. M., Ellinger, A. D., & Hamlin, R. G. (2014). Managerial coaching: A review of the empirical literature and development of a model to guide future practice. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 16(2), 184–201.
- Bennett, J. (2012, August). Forming a nation. Paper presented at the Academy of Management Conference, Boston, MA.
- Bresser, F. (2013). *Coaching across the globe: Benchmark results of the Bresser Consulting global coaching survey with a supplementary update highlighting the latest coaching developments to 2013*. Norderstedt, Germany: Books on Demand.
- Dunoon, D. (2008). *In the leadership mode: Concepts, practices, and tools for a different leadership*. Bloomington, IN: Trafford.
- Ellinger, A. D., & Bostrom, R. P. (1999). Managerial coaching behaviors in learning organizations. *Journal of Management Development*, 18(9), 752–771.
- Elliott, C., & Reynolds, M. (2002). Manager-educator relations from a critical perspective. *Journal of Management Education*, 26(5): 512-526.
- Gibb, S. (2003). Line manager involvement in learning and development. *Employee Relations*, 25(3), 281–293. doi:10.1108/01425450310475865
- Hagel, J., III. (2012, December 20). Talent development: A key to attracting and retaining highly skilled people in your industry. *Deloitte University Press*. Retrieved from <http://dupress.com/articles/talent-development-a-key-to-attracting-and-retaining-highly-skilled-people-in-your-industry/>

- Hall, B. (1994). *Values shift: A guide to personal and organizational transformation*. Rockport, MA: Twilight.
- Hamlin, R. G. (2004). In support of universalistic models of managerial and leadership effectiveness. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 15: 189-215.
- Hamlin, R. G., Ellinger, A. D., & Beattie, R. S. (2006). Coaching at the heart of managerial effectiveness: A cross-cultural study of managerial behaviors. *Human Resource Development International*, 9(3), 305–331.
- Hawkins, P., & Smith, N. (2006). *Coaching, mentoring and organizational consultancy: Supervision and development*. Maidenhead, United Kingdom: Open University Press.
- Joo, B.-K., Sushko, J. S., & McLean, G. N. (2012). Multiple faces of coaching: Manager-as-coach, executive coaching, and formal mentoring. *Organization Development Journal*, 30(1), 19–38.
- Kegan, R. (2000). What “form” transforms? A constructive development approach to transformative learning. In J. Mezirow & Associates (Eds.), *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress* (pp. 53–70). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Ladyshevsky, R. K. (2010). The manager as coach as a driver of organizational development. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 31(4), 292–306.
- McCarthy, G., & Milner, J. (2013). Managerial coaching: Challenges, opportunities and training. *Journal of Management Development*, 32(7), 768–779.
- McCauley, C. D., Kanaga, K., & Lafferty, K. (2010). Leader development systems. In E. Van Velsor, C. D. McCauley, & M. N. Ruderman (Eds.), *The Center for Creative Leadership handbook of leadership development* (pp. 29–62, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- McComb, C. (2012). Developing coaching culture: Are your managers motivated coaches? (Part 1), *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 44(2), 90–93, doi:10.1108/00197851211202920
- Mcguire, D., Stoner, L., & Mylona, S. (2008). The role of line managers as human

resource agents in fostering organizational change in public services. *Journal of Change Management*, 8(1), 73–84. doi:10.1080/14697010801937580

McLean, G. N., Yang, B., Kuo, M. H. C., Tolbert, A. S., & Larkin, C. (2005). Development and initial validation of an instrument measuring managerial coaching skill. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 16(2), 157–178.

Meggison, D., & Clutterbuck, D. (2006). Creating a coaching culture. *Industrial & Commercial Training*, 38(5), 232–237.

Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to think like an adult: Core concepts of transformation theory. In Mezirow & Associates (Eds.), *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress* (pp. 3–34). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Otter, K. (2012). *What difference does it make? A qualitative inquiry into the longer-term outcomes of a transformative education in relational leadership*. (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (Order No. 3539799)

Rost, J. C. (1993). Leadership development in the new millennium. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 1(1). 91–110. doi:10.1177/107179199300100109

Senge, P. M. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York, NY: Doubleday/Currency.

Pauline Fatien Diochon, PhD, is an educator and researcher in management who has developed an expertise in leadership development through the critical analysis of the use of executive coaching in organizations. Her latest publications focus on power dynamics and ethics in coaching. She is an associate professor of management at Menlo College, California, and an associate researcher at the University of Lyon's Magellan Research Center. She is also a board member of the Graduate School Alliance for Education in Coaching (GSAEC) and was recently appointed to the editorial board of the *Journal of Psychological Issues in Organizational Culture* and *Frontiers in Psychology*. Dr. Fatien holds a PhD in Management and a Master of Science in Management from HEC School of Management, Paris, France, as well as a Master in Sociology of Power from the University of Paris Diderot, France. She can be reached at [pauline.fatien@gmail.com](mailto:pauline.fatien@gmail.com).

Ken Otter, PhD, has 30 years of professional experience in human and organizational development as an educator, coach, and consultant, in the United States and internationally. Dr. Otter is an associate professor of leadership studies and co-director of the Leadership Center at Saint Mary's College of California. His areas of scholarship include global leadership development, leadership coaching education, multi-stakeholder collaboration, collective creativity, and the application of lifespan and wisdom development in organizational life. He holds a PhD in Humanities with a concentration in Transformative Learning and Change from the California Institute of Integral Studies, as

well as certificates in the Art and Practice of Leadership Development from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, and in Executive and Organizational Coaching from Columbia University's Teacher's College. He can be reached at [kotter@stmarys-ca.edu](mailto:kotter@stmarys-ca.edu).

## The Effects of Coachee Characteristics and Coaching Relationships on Feedback Receptivity and Self-Awareness in Executive Coaching\*

Gil Bozer  
Sapir Academic College

Baek-Kyoo Joo  
Winona State University

Executive coaching has become a newly established practice for management development within two decades. Despite its increasing popularity, there is limited empirical evidence on the effectiveness of executive coaching. Drawing on data from a larger research project, the purpose of this study was to investigate the influences of coachee characteristics (i.e., learning goal orientation and developmental self-efficacy) and coaching relationships (i.e., coach credibility and perceived similarity) on coachee's feedback receptivity and self-awareness. Based on the results of hierarchical multiple regression analyses, when a coachee had a higher learning goal orientation and stronger perceived coach credibility, the coachee perceived higher feedback receptivity. Additionally, when a coachee had a higher developmental self-efficacy and perceived similarity with the coach, the coachee felt a higher self-awareness. Implications and limitations of the study are discussed, and recommendations for future research are provided.

**Key words:** coach credibility, developmental self-efficacy, executive coaching, feedback receptivity, learning goal orientation, perceived similarity, self-awareness

†*Authors' Note: This study is a part of a larger research project focused on systematically designing and examining a model of executive coaching effectiveness within an organizational context.*

Executives in today's organizations have a major influence on the viability and, ultimately, the success of the organizations in which they operate (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Strum, & McKee, 2014). Their influence is increasingly relevant given the changing nature of work (O'Connell, 2014) and the high velocity environment (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright, 2012). Thus, executive coaching has emerged as a new management tool to respond to the rapidly changing global economy in which continuous improvement is required to adapt to the volatility

---

\*To cite this article: Bozer, G., & Joo, B.-K. (2015). The effects of coachee characteristics and coaching relationships on feedback receptivity and self-awareness in executive coaching. *International Leadership Journal*, 7(3), 36–58.

and complexity of change (Ozkan, 2008).

The use of executive coaching has become increasingly popular in the corporate world over the last two decades, and it is seen as a key developmental intervention by which organizations build executives' capabilities (Bozer, Joo, & Santora, 2015; Joo, Sushko, & McLean, 2012). Executive coaching provides an opportunity for executives to gain a deeper understanding of themselves and their work (Moen & Kralsund, 2008). Executive coaching as a person-centered, action-learning, process-personalized on-the-job approach that focuses on real-life challenges is aligned with corporate settings that emphasize constant retraining that is versatile, pragmatic, and fragmented. The evidence that executive coaching positively contributes not only to individual performance but also to organizational success is growing (e.g., Bozer & Sarros, 2012; Bozer, Sarros, & Santora, 2013; De Haan et al., 2014; Theeboom, Beersma, & Van Viansen, 2014). However, linking executive coaching practice with the existing scientific evidence is an essential step toward enhancing credibility in and sustainability of executive coaching.

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to examine the influences of coachee characteristics and coaching relationships on coachees' feedback receptivity and self-awareness, using 68 dyadic data drawn from the client bases of Israeli-based professional services firms focusing on executive coaching. Specifically, this quasi-experimental study investigated the proximal outcomes of executive coaching, such as feedback receptivity and self-awareness. As for the antecedents, this study investigated the effects of coachees' personal characteristics, such as learning goal orientation and developmental self-efficacy on executive coaching effectiveness, as well as the effects of the coaching relationship, such as coach credibility and perceived similarity.

## **Literature Review and Conceptual Framework**

We define *executive coaching* as a one-on-one relationship between a professional coach and an executive (coachee) for the purpose of enhancing coachee behavioral change through self-awareness and learning, and thus,

ultimately, contributing to individual and organizational success (Joo, 2005). Joo (2005) proposed a conceptual framework for executive coaching that includes coaching antecedents, coaching process, and proximal and distal outcomes of executive coaching. In line with this conceptual model, we investigated *coachee characteristics* (i.e., learning goal orientation and developmental self-efficacy) and *coaching relationships* (i.e., coach credibility and perceived similarity) as the antecedents of the proximal outcomes of executive coaching: *coachees' feedback receptivity and self-awareness*.

### **Proximal Outcomes of Executive Coaching**

Outcome research in executive coaching is only beginning to build a wider evidence base for the impact of executive coaching on organizational and individual outcomes (De Haan et al., 2014). Research suggests that executive coaching can lead to improvements at the individual and unit levels, with the majority of studies measuring individual outcomes (Ely et al., 2010). Overall, studies have consistently found a positive relationship between executive coaching and both executive effectiveness and job performance, based on multiple perspectives, including self, supervisor, subordinate, human resource managers, and other stakeholders (Theeboom et al., 2014). Specifically, executive coaching has been suggested as a means for increasing productivity, learning, job satisfaction, and behavior change (e.g., Bozer & Sarros, 2012; Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas, & Kucine, 2003; Sue-Chan & Latham, 2004).

We believe the purpose of executive coaching is to accomplish attitudinal and behavioral changes via self-awareness and learning in the short term and eventually to promote the success of an individual, a unit, and an organization in the long term (Joo, 2005). The proximal outcomes assessed in this study capture the immediate individual, behavioral, and attitudinal changes experienced by the coachee, including increased levels of feedback receptivity and self-awareness. In this study, we focused on the proximal outcomes, excluding distal outcomes such as improvement in supervisory-rated coachee job performance (Luthans & Peterson, 2003).

**Feedback receptivity.** In Judge and Cowell's (1997) study, 360-degree assessments were used for the majority of the executive coaches in their sample by interviewing people close to the executives. The most common requests for coaching were to help (a) modify the coachee's interaction style, (b) deal more effectively with change, and (c) build trusting relationships. Therefore, another important area of investigation is individual differences in receptivity to coaching and feedback. A well-managed 360-degree assessment can identify particular behaviors with great precision and link them to corporate goals, values, and leadership models (Luthans & Peterson, 2003; Thach, 2002). As a result of interviews with 75 executives and 15 coaches, Hall, Otazo, and Hollenbeck (1999) concluded that honesty, challenging feedback, and helpful suggestions were factors contributing to coaching effectiveness. Brett and Atwater (2001) found that self-other rating discrepancy was negatively related with perceived accuracy of feedback and perceived usefulness of feedback, while favorability of the rating was positively related with reaction to feedback and with perceived usefulness of feedback. Luthans and Peterson (2003) found that 360-degree feedback, combined with coaching aimed at enhancing self-awareness, may lead to improved self and employee attitudes, and eventually, even improved organizational performance. In short, how receptive a coachee is to feedback is critical to proximal and distal outcome variables.

**Self-awareness.** Sherman and Freas (2004) demonstrated the importance of self-awareness, explaining why executive coaching has received the spotlight in the business arena. A considerable number of smart and highly motivated leaders rarely take the time to contemplate their own behaviors. Executive coaching enables them to "slow down, gain awareness, and notice the effects of their words and actions" (Sherman & Freas, 2004, 85). *Self-awareness* refers to the extent to which a leader is aware of his or her strengths and limitations, how others perceive the leader, and the ways in which he or she makes an impact on others (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Those who have more positive self-images and higher emotional intelligence are more likely to exhibit higher self-awareness, which has positive implications for leadership effectiveness and for the leaders'

psychological well-being (Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005). The leaders with higher self-awareness better understand their strengths and weaknesses, their emotions, personality, values, motives, feelings, cognitions, actions, and behaviors (Ilies et al., 2005).

### **Coachee Characteristics**

Colquitt, LePine, and Noe (2000) found that individual characteristics had direct and indirect relationships with training motivation, learning levels, transfer of learning, and job performance. Since it is important to qualify the executive to be coached, a more systematic approach to evaluating the candidate's readiness and suitability for coaching is necessary. Regardless of the situation, clients and coaches should make sure that coaching is something the executive really wants—and that the executive's efforts to change and grow will be appreciated. Important coachee characteristics include personality factors and motivation factors. In this study, we examined the effects of learning goal orientation and developmental self-efficacy as the proxy of personal characteristics.

***Learning goal orientation.*** Goal orientation is a motivational variable expected to affect the allocation of effort during learning and development (Fisher & Ford, 1998). *Learning goal orientation* refers to a desire to increase one's competence by developing new skills and mastering new situations. Individuals with high learning goal orientation focus on increasing their learning and/or task competence, seeking challenges, and persisting in the case of failure (Dweck & Legget, 1988). Those with learning goal orientation have adaptive response patterns, thus leading to positive outcomes. Although Joo (2005) proposed a potential relationship between proactive personality and coaching outcomes, no empirical study has been conducted to examine the role of learning goal orientation. We believed that high learning goal-oriented employees would exhibit higher feedback receptivity and self-awareness. Thus, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H1a: The learning goal orientation of a coachee (executive) will be positively related to the coachee's feedback receptivity.

H1b: The learning goal orientation of a coachee (executive) will be positively related to the coachee's self-awareness.

**Developmental self-efficacy.** In order to experience the transformative effects of executive coaching, a coachee must be developmentally ready to experience behavioral and attitudinal changes (Laske, 1999). *Self-efficacy*, in general, refers to the confidence in one's abilities to use cognitive resources, motivation, and courses of action in order to effectively complete various tasks in a job context (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Specifically in this study, *developmental self-efficacy* refers to personal beliefs about one's capabilities to learn (Bandura, 1986). Few researchers have examined developmental self-efficacy, let alone investigated its effect on coaching effectiveness. We believed that those with high developmental self-efficacy are more ready to receive feedback and reflect on their strengths and weaknesses. Accordingly, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H2a: The developmental self-efficacy of a coachee (executive) will be positively related to the coachee's feedback receptivity.

H2b: The developmental self-efficacy of a coachee (executive) will be positively related to the coachee's self-awareness.

### **Coaching Relationship**

The role of the coach in successful executive coaching cannot be overemphasized. However, there is no universal credential for identifying competent coaches. Thus, it is critical to look into a coach's experience and academic background to find out if he or she is credible. Moreover, very little is known about the key determinants that promote or hinder a successful coaching relationship, and that should also be taken into account when pairing a coach with a coachee (e.g., Baron & Morin, 2009; Gray & Goregaokar, 2010). Selecting executive coaches and matching them to individuals is critical in coaching effectiveness (Bacon & Spear, 2003; Bozer, Joo, & Santora, 2015; Kilburg, 1996, 2001). Hodgetts (2002) argued that personal chemistry between coaches and coachees and such factors as gender, socioeconomic background, and life experiences are also important considerations in making effective coaching

matches. Therefore, a good match and relationship between a coachee and coach is a critical factor for enhancing feedback receptivity and self-awareness.

**Coach credibility.** It is believed that the most important qualifications for a coach are character and insight, distilled as much from the coach's personal experience as from formal training. Those characteristics are integrity, confidence, experience, and a high developmental level. As Sherman and Freas (2004) note, coaching is best practiced by coaches who have acute perception, sound judgment, and the ability to resolve conflicts effectively with integrity. In addition, when the coach has knowledge and credibility, coachees will have confidence in the coaching (Bacon & Spear, 2003). The richer and deeper a coach's experience, the more likely he or she is to have seen similar issues before and to remember how he or she helped previous coachees with those issues (Bacon & Spear, 2003). Lastly, effective coaching requires the right attitudes about coaching and the right temperament. Coaching may have a transformative effect, but the developmental level of the coach must also be such that it allows the coach to co-generate these effects in the coaching relationship (Laske, 1999). Accordingly, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H3a: A coachee's (executive) perception of coach credibility will be positively related to the coachee's feedback receptivity.

H3b: A coachee's (executive) perception of coach credibility will be positively related to the coachee's self-awareness.

**Perceived similarity.** According to the similarity attraction paradigm (Berscheid, 1994; Byrne & Griffitt, 1973; Lincoln & Miller, 1979; Sprecher, 1998), people experience feelings of comfort and perceived rewards when developing relationships with similar others. Perceived similarity based on attitudes, values, beliefs, and work styles is another factor related to the similarity attraction paradigm associated with higher levels of both career and psychological mentoring outcomes (Ensher, Grant-Vallone, & Marelich, 2002; Turban, Dougherty, & Lee, 2002). The social psychology literature on helping suggests that individuals prefer to assist others who are similar to themselves in terms of personality. Moreover, the costs associated with being with others perceived to

be different might be higher (Leek & Smith, 1989). According to Joo (2005), “a good match and relationship between the coachee and coach is a critical factor for enhancing self-awareness, learning, and thus behavioral change” (480). Other researchers (e.g., Baron & Morin, 2009; De Haan, Culpin, & Curd, 2011; Hodgetts, 2002) also concluded that general factors for all good coaching, including the quality of the coach–coachee relationship, predict helpfulness of coaching more so than specific behaviors, techniques, or models of coaching. Researchers have suggested that what is most critical for predicting attraction is that individuals believe their partners are similar, regardless of whether this belief holds true (e.g., Condon & Crano, 1988). Thus, we proposed the following:

H4a: A coachee’s (executive) perceived similarity with his or her coach will be positively related to the coachee’s feedback receptivity.

H4b: A coachee’s (executive) perceived similarity with his or her coach will be positively related to the coachee’s self-awareness.

## Method

### Data Collection and Sample Demographic Information

Approximately 200 participants were drawn from the client base of four executive coaching firms in Israel. In total, 72 executives (coachees), 68 coaches, 29 peers, and 28 direct supervisors agreed to participate in the pretest survey. For the analysis, we used the data set of 68 participants who also completed the posttest survey.

**Coachee demographics.** As for the demographics of coachee and peer participants (i.e., experimental and control groups respectively), 101 managers (i.e., executives and their peers) from Israel-based organizations representing diverse professional specialties (e.g., education, information technology, human resources, operations, finance and insurance, legal, marketing and advertising, and client services) participated. The sample of coachees comprised 53 (52.5%) men and 48 (47.5%) women. Coachee participants averaged 4.02 years of experience in their current position. Twenty-two (21.8%) participants were in some supervisory or team leadership positions, 31 (30.7%) were in middle

management positions, 39 (38.6%) were in upper management positions, and nine (8.9%) were in top (senior executive) positions (i.e., CEOs or presidents). The average age of coachee participants was 41 (SD = 10.19). Most participants in this study were university educated (81%) with almost a third of participants (32%) having earned master's degrees.

**Coach demographics and coaching approach.** All the executive coaches ( $n = 68$ ) in this study resided in Israel, consisting of 26 (38%) men and 42 (62%) women. Consistent with previous research (Aiken & West, 1991; Spence, 2006), coaching in Israel is currently predominantly a female profession. The highest proportion of coaches in this study was between 45 and 55 years of age, and the average age was 45 years. In line with previous studies (Aiken & West, 1991; Brooks & Wright, 2007; Judge & Cowell, 1997; Standards Australia, 2010), most coaches in this study were university educated (83%); 40% had earned bachelor's degrees and 43% held master's or doctoral degrees. These results are consistent with previous research and support the concern expressed in the literature regarding the variety of professionals identifying themselves as coaches (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Grant & Cavanagh, 2007; Hall et al., 1999; Judge & Cowell, 1997; Standards Australia, 2010).

The executive coaching approach underlying the current research represents a cognitive-behavioral approach, in which the coach and the coachee work through a process of behavioral change together. The executive coaching process implemented by all the coaches participating in the study included 10 to 12 coaching sessions with weekly interventions. All executive coaching endeavors began with an assessment and identification of a developmental issue, followed by a feedback session, goal setting, action planning, and follow-up coaching sessions, and concluded with an evaluation of outcomes. This approach of executive coaching is similar to the coaching approach adopted by many organizations (Ennis et al., 2004; Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Finn, 2007; Natale & Diamante, 2005).

## Measures

All the measures in our study were previously translated and adequately validated. For all of the measures, except for coach credibility and self-awareness, participant responses to questions were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Specific measures are described below, along with their Cronbach's alpha coefficient scores.

**Learning goal orientation.** Button, Mathieu, and Zajac (1996) developed and validated a goal orientation instrument assessed on two scales: performance orientation and learning orientation. We used an Israeli version of an eight-item learning goal orientation scale in the pretest. In the current study, the reliability of learning goal orientation was .87. A sample item from the learning goal orientation scale was: "I prefer to work on tasks that force me to learn new things."

**Developmental self-efficacy.** Developmental self-efficacy was measured using Guthrie and Schwoerer's (1994) six-item training self-efficacy scale, which was designed to measure how confident people are in their success in a training program. We assessed coachees' developmental self-efficacy in the pretest. The reliability of developmental self-efficacy was .88. A sample item from the developmental self-efficacy scale was: "I do well in training."

**Coach credibility.** We used Sue-Chan and Latham's (2004) six-item instrument for assessing coach credibility ( $\alpha = .80$ ) in the posttest. In the current study, we used a five-point scale and the internal reliability was .86. A sample item from coaching credibility scale was: "My coach was sincere in wanting to help me to perform effectively."

**Perceived similarity.** We adopted four items from Garcia's (2004) perceived similarity model ( $\alpha = .83$ ). It was assessed by the coachees as the post-test. In the current study, the reliability of perceived similarity was .92. A sample item includes: "The coach and I see things in much the same way."

**Feedback receptivity.** We used a 12-item feedback receptivity questionnaire (Ryan, Brutus, Greguras, & Hakel, 2000). Similar to the original study ( $\alpha = .87$ ),

the internal reliability in the current study was .86. A sample item from the feedback receptivity scale was: “The feedback I received was accurate.”

**Self-awareness.** We used an eight-item questionnaire answered on a six-point Likert-type scale that was developed and validated by Grant, Franklin, and Langford (2002;  $\alpha = .87$ ). In the current study, the reliability of self-awareness assessed after the coaching process was .80. A sample item from the self-awareness scale was: “I am usually aware of my thoughts.”

## Results

As mentioned before, all the constructs were adequately validated previously. We believe there is no particular concern with using them in an Israeli cultural context. We used IBM SPSS Statistics 20 for the analyses of descriptive statistics, correlations, and reliabilities analysis, as well as for multiple hierarchical regression analysis.

### Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Reliabilities

Table 1 on the next page illustrates internal consistency reliabilities as well as correlations among the six constructs: learning goal orientation, developmental self-efficacy, coach credibility, perceived similarity, feedback receptivity, and self-awareness. All measures demonstrated adequate levels of reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .80–.92). The relationship between learning goal orientation and feedback receptivity ( $r = .57^{**}$ ) and the relationship between coach credibility and feedback receptivity ( $r = .61^{**}$ ) were relatively stronger. All the predictors were significantly related to feedback receptivity, whereas learning goal orientation and feedback receptivity turned out to be non-significantly associated with self-awareness. Therefore, all the hypotheses but H1b (the learning goal orientation of a coachee (executive) will be positively related to the coachee's self-awareness) were supported.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Reliabilities**

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Learning goal orientation	6.09	.75	(.87)					
2. Developmental self-efficacy	6.09	.68	.37**	(.88)				
3. Coach credibility	4.46	.56	.40**	.26	(.86)			
4. Perceived similarity	4.69	1.27	.28**	.07	.33**	(.92)		
5. Feedback receptivity	5.55	.67	.57**	.41**	.61**	.33*	(.86)	
6. Self-awareness	4.19	.73	.21	.34**	.27*	.32*	.26	(.80)

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ;  $N = 68$

### Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 2 on the next page shows the results from hierarchical multiple regression analyses. In Step 1, demographic variables such as gender, age, and education level were entered to examine any influence on feedback receptivity and self-awareness. No demographic variable turned out to be significant. In Step 2, coachee characteristics (i.e., learning goal orientation and developmental self-efficacy) were included to examine their main effects on feedback receptivity and self-awareness. The changes in  $R^2$  were 36% and 11%, respectively. In Step 3, data for the coaching relationship (i.e., coach credibility and perceived similarity) were entered to examine their main effects on feedback receptivity and self-awareness. The changes in  $R^2$  were 19% and 5%, respectively. While not hypothesized, we conducted an additional analysis to examine potential interaction effects among coachee characteristics and coaching relationships (see Model 4). However, no interaction was found to be significant.

**Table 2: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Results for Feedback Receptivity and Self-Awareness**

	Feedback Receptivity				Self-Awareness			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Step 1: Demographics								
- Gender	.07	-.02	-.03	-.03	-.04	-.09	-.08	-.10
- Age	-.21	-.15	-.18 <sup>†</sup>	-.20 <sup>*</sup>	.14	.19	.14	.18
- Education	.11	-.17	-.18 <sup>†</sup>	-.15	.07	-.06	-.05	-.07
Step 2: Coachee Characteristics								
- Learning goal orientation (LGO)		.56**	.38**	1.25		.11	.00	-1.73
- Developmental self-efficacy (DSE)		.23 <sup>†</sup>	.18 <sup>†</sup>	.08		.34*	.33*	1.93 <sup>†</sup>
Step 3: Coaching Relationship								
- Coach credibility (CC)			.42**	.67			.12	-.81
- Perceived similarity (PS)			.12	1.20			.24 <sup>†</sup>	2.61 <sup>†</sup>
Step 4: Interactions								
- DSE * PS				-.86				3.30
- LGO * PS				-.94				-.88
- DSE * CC				.33				-1.65
- LGO * CC				-.35				-1.69
F-value	.96	7.30**	10.42**	6.68**	.51	1.98 <sup>†</sup>	2.18*	1.89 <sup>†</sup>
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.00	.36	.55	.53	-.03	.08	.13	.15
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	-	.36	.19	-.02	-	.11	.05	.02

<sup>†</sup>p < .10; \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01

In summary, the demographic variables, coachee characteristics, and coaching relationships explained 55% of the variance in feedback receptivity. In terms of the changes in  $R^2$ , feedback receptivity was more accounted for by coachee characteristics ( $\Delta R^2 = .36$ ) than by coaching relationships ( $\Delta R^2 = .19$ ). In terms of the effect size, learning goal orientation and coach credibility were the stronger predictors for feedback receptivity. However, the demographic variables, coachee characteristics, coaching relationships, and the interactions explained only 15% of the variance in self-awareness. Based on the changes in  $R^2$ , self-awareness was more influenced by coachee characteristics ( $\Delta R^2 = .11$ ) than by coaching relationships ( $\Delta R^2 = .05$ ) and the interactions ( $\Delta R^2 = .02$ ). In terms of the effect size, developmental self-efficacy and perceived similarity were the

stronger predictors for feedback receptivity. Lastly, there was no significant interaction effect between coachee characteristics and coaching relationships on either feedback receptivity or self-awareness.

## **Discussion**

The study results indicated that coachee characteristics (i.e., learning goal orientation and developmental self-efficacy) and coaching relationships (i.e., coach credibility and perceived similarity) contributed to the proximal outcomes of executive coaching effectiveness (i.e., feedback receptivity and self-awareness). We found that while all the predictors were significant (H1a, H2a, H3a, H4a), learning goal orientation and coach credibility were the stronger predictors for feedback receptivity. That is, executives with higher learning goal orientation who perceiving their coaches as more credible tended to be more ready for feedback. In addition, this study also found that all constructs but learning goal orientation (H1b) were significant antecedents of self-awareness, supporting the hypotheses (H2b, H3b, H4b). When a coachee with higher developmental self-efficacy perceived a coach as being similar in many aspects, he or she appeared to be more ready to reflect on his or her strengths and weaknesses.

## **Implications**

As mentioned earlier, empirical evidence in support of these observations remains limited (Bono, Purvanova, Towler, & Peterson, 2009; Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Finn, 2007; Hall et al., 1999; Levenson, 2009; Passmore & Gibbs, 2007). As noted, there is something of an unknown or “*black box* feel” as to what executive coaching encompasses—the activities, competencies and responsibilities of coaches; and the recipients of executive coaching (Feldman & Lankau, 2005, 845). In particular, the executive coaching literature lacks empirical evidence on what must be essential components of executive coaching—the personal characteristics of coachees in terms of personality and motivation, as well as the relationship between coach and coachee. The purpose of the current study was to fill this gap.

We identified preferred personal characteristics of coachees for successful executive coaching. This study is the first of its kind to find the positive role of developmental self-efficacy in feedback receptivity and self-awareness. It is also the first study to identify the positive role of learning goal orientation in feedback receptivity. Thus, we recommend that HR managers assess an executive's level of motivation and readiness to learn before executive coaching is provided.

We believe this study contributes to the executive coaching research by identifying the impact of perceived coach credibility by a coachee and importance of the coach-coachee matching process in an executive coaching intervention, as well as their relationships to executive coaching outcomes. It is evident that coachees will have confidence in the coaching when the coach has knowledge and credibility (Bacon & Spear, 2003). Although Joo (2005) proposed the potential effect of coach credibility on coaching outcomes, no identified study has ever empirically examined the relationship between a coachee's perception of coach credibility on the coachee's feedback receptivity and self-awareness. We also found that the personal chemistry between coach and coachee are associated with the proximal outcomes of executive coaching. A coachee's perception of similarity with the coach was positively associated with the coachee's feedback receptivity and self-awareness. Therefore, it is imperative that HR managers assess the relevance of a coach's educational background, coaching experience, and coaching approach to the coaching objectives.

These findings have several important practical implications. First, this research provides a greater understanding of the types of proximal outcomes of executive coaching, and under which conditions executive coaching is likely to be more beneficial for participants. This is imperative with the increased use of executive coaching in organizations and the substantial time and cost associated with external coaching. Second, this study justifies the assessment of an executive's readiness for coaching intervention. Management development is not for everyone. It should be very selective of the critical few who exhibit a high potential to fill the bench strength of the management. As it is critical to enhance the coachee's readiness or motivation before the actual intervention, an initial in-

depth assessment of the coachee's personality and motivation is recommended. Third, the findings of this study emphasize the importance of a strong coach–coachee alliance for producing positive proximal outcomes, namely improvements in feedback receptivity and in self-awareness. The key to selecting the right coaches and matching them to coachees appears to be a critical issue for HR managers who are responsible for executive coaching. Specifically, the study highlights perceived similarity and coach credibility by the coachee as key contributors to a coach–coachee “fit.” These findings can guide organizations, clients, and coaching providers toward improved coaching outcomes due to their ability to match executives and professional coaches. Thus, an opportunity should be provided to develop matches where the paired individuals have at least something in common (e.g., common interests, experiences, values, and work styles).

### **Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

There are several limitations in terms of methodology. One of the limitations of this study is the small sample ( $N = 68$ ). We used dyadic data with two time frames (pre- and post-coaching), which is extremely difficult to collect. The response rate of dyadic data tends to be as low as 20% or less. This could be the reason why there is a lack of robust empirical studies in executive coaching, such as confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling.

Second, we relied on self-reported responses, which leave room for speculation with regard to causality among the variables. As Joo et al. (2012) recommended, future executive coaching research should be based on longitudinal studies with at least a six-month interval to evaluate the distal outcomes of executive coaching. The current study adequately responded to Joo et al.'s request, based on both pre- and post-coaching data. It is now recommended that future research assess the long-term progress made by executive coaching on individual and organizational performance to better understand the sustainability of executive coaching benefits. In addition, it is recommended that future research collect data from other sources in the

immediate circle surrounding the executive in order to build a more comprehensive appreciation of the executive coaching function.

Third, the current study focused only on the proximal outcomes of executive coaching. Future research should investigate the more distal outcomes of coaching in a long-term perspective. In terms of the unit of analysis, future research could be focused on a team level, measuring longer and broader effects of executive coaching, instead of a simple dyadic relationship. Along similar lines, there are a number of missing links in the conceptual model suggested by Joo (2005). For example, the roles coach characteristics play in coaching effectiveness need to be examined. More specifically, future research could investigate how coaches' educational backgrounds, coaching experience, and/or coaching approaches impact their coaching objectives.

Last, but not least, it is imperative that researchers and practitioners in the executive coaching field collaborate to develop a comprehensive instrument that can measure key predictors as well as the effectiveness of executive coaching. This comprehensive instrument with reliability and validity should be based on solid theoretical ground and needs to be validated in diverse countries.

## References

- Aiken, L. S., & West, S. G. (1991). *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Avolio, B. J., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16(3), 315–338.
- Bacon, T. R., & Spear, K. I. (2003). *Adaptive coaching: The art and practice of a client-centered approach to performance improvement*. Palo Alto, CA: Davis-Black.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Baron, L., & Morin, L. (2009). The coach–coachee relationship in executive coaching: A field study. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 20(1), 85–

106.

Berscheid, E. (1994). Interpersonal relationships. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 45, 79–129.

Bono, J. E., Purvanova, R. K., Towler, A. J., & Peterson, D. B. (2009). A survey of executive coaching practices. *Personnel Psychology*, 62(2), 361–404.

Bozer, G., Joo, B.-K., & Santora, J. C. (2015). Executive coaching: Does coach–coachee matching based on similarity really matter? *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 67(3), 218–233.

Bozer, G., & Sarros, J. C. (2012). Examining the effectiveness of executive coaching on coachees' performance in the Israeli context. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 10(1), 14–32.

Bozer, G., Sarros, J. C., & Santora, J. C. (2013). The role of coachee characteristics in executive coaching for effective sustainability. *Journal of Management Development*, 32(3), 277–294.

Brett, J. F., & Atwater, L. E. (2001). 360° Feedback: Accuracy, reactions, and perceptions of usefulness. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(5), 930–942.

Brooks, I., & Wright, S. (2007). A survey of executive coaching practices in new Zealand. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 5(1), 30–41.

Byrne, D., & Griffitt, W. (1973). Interpersonal attraction. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 24, 317–336.

Button, S. B., Mathieu, J. E., & Zajac, D. M. (1996). Goal orientation in organizational research: A conceptual and empirical foundation. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 67(1), 26–48.

Colquitt, J. A., LePine, J. A. & Noe, R. A. (2000). Toward an integrative theory of training and motivation: A meta-analytic path analysis of 20 years of research. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85(5), 678–707.

Condon, J. W., & Crano, W. D. (1988). Inferred evaluation and the relation between attitude similarity and interpersonal attraction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54(5), 789–797.

- Day, D. V., Fleenor, J. W., Atwater, L. E., Strum, R. E., & McKee, R. A. (2014). Advances in leader and leadership development: A review of 25 years of research and theory. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 25(1), 63-82. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2013.11.004
- De Haan, E., Burger, Y., Grant, A. M., Dini, S., Per-Olof, E., Man-Mul, A., . . . Voogd, M. (2014). *A large-scale study of executive coaching outcome: The relative contributions of relationship, personality match, and self-efficacy*. Manuscript submitted for publication. Available at [http://personalmc.nl/page/downloads/Effectiviteit\\_executive\\_coaching.pdf](http://personalmc.nl/page/downloads/Effectiviteit_executive_coaching.pdf)
- De Haan, E., Culpin, V., & Curd, J. (2011). Executive coaching in practice: What determines helpfulness for clients of coaching? *Personnel Review*, 40(1), 24–44.
- Dweck, C. S., & Leggett, E. L. (1988). A social-cognitive approach to motivation and personality. *Psychological Review*, 95(2), 256–273.
- Ely, K., Boyce, L. A., Nelson, J. K., Zaccaro, S. J., Hernez-Broome, G., & Whymand, W. (2010). Evaluating leadership coaching: A review and integrated framework. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 21(4), 585–599.
- Ennis, S., Hodgetts, W. H., Otto, J., Stern, L. R., Vitti, M., & Yahanda, N. (2004). *The executive coaching handbook: Principles and guidelines for a successful coaching partnership*. Wellesley, MA: Executive Coaching Forum.
- Ensher, E. A., Grant-Vallone, E. J., & Marelich, W. D. (2002). Effects of perceived attitudinal and demographic similarity on protégés' support and satisfaction gained from their mentoring relationships. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 32(7), 1407–1430.
- Feldman, D. C., & Lankau, M. J. (2005). Executive coaching: A review and agenda for future research. *Journal of Management* 31(6), 829–848.
- Finn, F. A. (2007). Leadership development through executive coaching: The effects on leaders' psychological states and transformational leadership behaviour (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Queensland University of Technology, Australia.
- Fisher, S. L., & Ford, J. K. (1998). Differential effects of learner effort and goal orientation on two learning outcomes. *Personnel Psychology*, 51(2), 397–420.

- Garcia, M. F. (2004). Antecedent of an interviewer's fit perceptions of an applicant: The role of perceived similarity. *Academy of Management Proceedings 2004*, G1–G6.
- Grant, A. M., & Cavanagh, M. J. (2007). Coaching psychology: How did we get here and where are we going? *InPsych*, 29(3), 6–9.
- Grant, A. M., Franklin, J., & Langford, P. (2002). The self-reflection and insight scale: A new measure of private self-consciousness. *Social Behavior & Personality: An International Journal*, 30(8), 821–836.
- Gray, D. E., & Goregaokar, H. (2010). Choosing an executive coach: The influence of gender on the coach–coachee matching process. *Management Learning*, 41(5), 525–544.
- Guthrie, J. P., & Schwoerer, C. E. (1994). Individual and contextual influences on self-assessed training needs. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 15(5), 405–422.
- Hall, D. T., Otazo, K. L., & Hollenbeck, G. P. (1999). Behind closed doors: What really happens in executive coaching. *Organizational Dynamics*, 27(3), 39–43.
- Hodgetts, W. H. (2002). Using executive coaching in organizations: What can go wrong (and how to prevent it). In C. Fitzgerald & J. G. Berger (Eds.), *Executive coaching: Practices and perspectives* (pp. 203–223). Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black.
- Ilies, R., Morgeson, F. P., & Nahrgang, J. D. (2005). Authentic leadership and eudaemonic well-being: Understanding leader–follower outcomes. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16(3), 373–394.
- Joo, B.-K. (2005). Executive coaching: A conceptual framework from an integrative review of practice and research. *Human Resource Development Review*, 4(4), 462–488.
- Joo, B.-K., Sushko, J. S., & McLean, G. N. (2012). Multiple faces of coaching: Manager-as-coach, executive coaching, and formal mentoring. *Organization Development Journal*, 30(1), 19–38.
- Judge, W. Q., & Cowell, J. (1997). The brave new world of executive coaching. *Business Horizons*, 40(4), 71–77.

- Kilburg, R. R. (1996). Toward a conceptual understanding and definition of executive coaching. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 48(2), 134–144.
- Kilburg, R. R. (2001). Facilitating intervention adherence in executive coaching: A model and methods. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 53(4), 251–267.
- Laske, O. E. (1999). An integrated model of developmental coaching. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 51(3), 139–159
- Leek, M., & Smith, P. K. (1989). Phenotypic matching, human altruism, and mate selection. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 12(3), 534–535.
- Levenson, A. (2009). Measuring and maximizing the business impact of executive coaching. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 61(2), 103–121.
- Lincoln, J. R., & Miller, J. (1979). Work and friendship ties in organizations: A comparative analysis of relational networks. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24(2), 181–199.
- Luthans, F., & Peterson, S. J. (2003). 360-degree feedback with systematic coaching: Empirical analysis suggests a winning combination. *Human Resource Management*, 42(3), 243–256.
- Moen, F., & Kralsund, R. (2008). What communications or relational factors characterize the method, skills and techniques of executive coaching? *Journal of Coaching in Organisations*, 6(2), 102–123.
- Natale, S. M., & Diamante, T. (2005). The five stages of executive coaching: Better process makes better practice. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 59(4), 361–374.
- Noe, R. A., Hollenbeck, J., Gerhart, B., & Wright, P. (2012). *Human resource management: Gaining a competitive advantage* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- O'Connell, P. K. (2014). A simplified framework for 21<sup>st</sup> century leader development. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 25(2), 183–203.

- Ozkan, E. (2008). *Executive coaching: Crafting a versatile self in corporate America* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA.
- Passmore, J., & Gibbs, C. (2007). The state of executive coaching research: What does the current literature tell us and what's next for coaching research? *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 2(2), 116–127.
- Ryan, A. M., Brutus, S., Greguras, G. J., & Hakel, M. D. (2000). Receptivity to assessment-based feedback for management development. *Journal of Management Development*, 19(4), 252–276.
- Sherman, S., & Freas, A. (2004). The Wild West of executive coaching. *Harvard Business Review*, 82(11), 82–90.
- Smither, J. W., London, M., Flautt, R., Vargas, Y., & Kucine, I. (2003). Can working with an executive coach improve multisource feedback ratings over time? A quasi-experimental field study. *Personnel Psychology*, 56(1), 23–44.
- Spence, G. B. (2006). *New directions in the psychology of coaching: The integration of mindfulness training into evidence-based coaching practice* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Sydney University, Australia.
- Sprecher, S. (1998). Insider's perspectives on reasons for attraction to a close other. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 61(4), 287–300.
- Stajkovic, A. D., & Luthans, F. (1998). Self-efficacy and work-related performance: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 124(2), 240–261.
- Standards Australia. (2010). *Coaching in organizations: Survey of coaches*. [Report of Survey.] Sydney, Australia: Author.
- Sue-Chan, C., & Latham, G. P. (2004). The relative effectiveness of external, peer, and self-coaches. *Applied Psychology*, 53(2), 260–278.
- Thach, E. C. (2002). The impact of executive coaching and 360 feedback on leadership effectiveness. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 23(4), 205–214.
- Theeboom, T., Beersma, B., & Van Viansen, A. E. M. (2014). Does coaching work? A meta-analysis on the effects of coaching on individual level outcomes in an organizational context. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*,

9(1), 1–18.

Turban, D. B., Dougherty, T. W., & Lee, F. K. (2002). Gender, race, and perceived similarity effects in developmental relationships: The moderating role of relationship duration. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 61(2), 240–262.

Gil Bozer, PhD, is a lecturer in the Management Human Resources Department at Sapir Academic College, Israel. His current research interests include executive coaching, executive succession planning, and leadership development. He has published in professional and research-based literature on executive coaching, succession planning, and executive development. Dr. Bozer earned his PhD in Management from Monash University. Prior to his academic career, he served as a human resource officer in the Israeli Defense Force. He can be reached at [gilbotzer@gmail.com](mailto:gilbotzer@gmail.com).

Baek-Kyoo (Brian) Joo, PhD, is an assistant professor of human resources management at Winona State University, Minnesota. He received his PhD in Human Resource Development and a MA in Human Resources and Industrial Relations from the University of Minnesota. His current research interests include positive organizational behavior, organizational creativity, leadership, coaching, career satisfaction, and international human resources management. He has published research papers in such journals as *Career Development International*, *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, and *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*. He can be reached at [baekkyoo.joo@gmail.com](mailto:baekkyoo.joo@gmail.com).

## The Rise of “Neo-Individualism” in the Workplace: A Critical Approach on Coaching for Workplace Leadership\*

Jessica F. Tabarovsky  
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

The aim of this article was to examine the instrumental role that coaching methods may play in serving the status quo of the neoliberalism ideology and the subsequent implications on workplace leadership. An ethnographic exploration in a financially self-sustaining Israeli nonprofit organization served as a case study, which was focused on the manager-as-coach practice. Participant observation, face-to-face semi-structured interviews, and unstructured interviews were used to collect data. Data analyses show that neoliberal logic plays an inherent role in the manager-as-coach practice and influences employee behavior, which may result in reduced organizational effectiveness. The article also presents new insights on the practice of coaching that may contain the potential for enhanced coaching interventions, as well as recommendations for future study.

**Key words:** coaching, individualism, manager-as-coach practice, neoliberalism

*Neoliberalism* is the basic idea of expressing the way in which the relationship between the state, on the one side, and individuals, corporations, companies, and markets, on the other side, should be structured. According to the neoliberal order, state intervention in individual affairs is perceived as detrimental to the natural market balance. The only legitimate purpose of the state is to safeguard individual liberty, especially the commercial liberty to act as an agent in a free market economy. The neoliberal assumption also includes individual moral virtue. The virtuous person must be able to access the market and function as a competent actor in it (Thorsen, 2011). The contemporary neoliberal ideology is accompanied by a profound belief in individual responsibility, beyond any socioeconomic structural influence. Harvey (2005) argues:

While personal and individual freedom in the marketplace is guaranteed, each individual is held responsible and accountable for his or her own actions and well-being. This principle extends into the realms of welfare, education, health care, and even pensions (social security has been privatized in Chile and Slovakia, and proposals exist to do the same in the [United States]). Individual

---

\*To cite this article: Tabarovsky, J. F. (2015). The rise of “neo-individualism” in the workplace: A critical approach on coaching for workplace leadership. *International Leadership Journal*, 7(3), 59–82.

success or failure are interpreted in terms of entrepreneurial virtues or personal failings (such as not investing significantly enough in one's own human capital through education) rather than being attributed to any systemic property (such as the class exclusions usually attributed to capitalism). (65–66)

For example, there are certain development programs that address poverty in South America, where individuals are expected to take responsibility for their situation; specifically, a person is expected to become a self-improvement financial actor, a self-regulated unit, and able to resolve socioeconomic problems at an individual level of action. A shift in responsibilities from the state to the individual is taking place. "Reliance" on state assistance is construed as a marker of irresponsibility (Meltzer, 2013). While people are supposedly free to choose, they are not expected to build strong collective institutions (Harvey, 2005). Consequently, socioeconomic issues are associated with individual action and behavior rather than structural circumstances.

Given this context, there seems to be a trend toward individualization of social problems. Neoliberal discourse encourages people to be independent, favoring individual action for achieving success, individual happiness, and overall (personal) improvement. Individuals are seen as being solely responsible for the consequences of their decisions (Thorsen, 2011). However, individuals who adhere to the development objectives of the state, while serving their own objectives, help maximize the potential of the population (Lupton, 1999).

The concept of *responsibilization* was identified as a concept that links the scheme of governance with actual practices, where "the language of responsibility has become a pervasive element of our culture flowing in many directions and addressing a variety of subjects" (Shamir, 2008, 379). Neoliberal concepts concerning the individual are also being adopted in the workplace, constructing an autonomous entrepreneur employee totally responsible for perfection of and investment in his or her own human capital (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005).

Since the 1980s, profound changes have been taking place in state-economic relations in most of the Western world, including Israel. Among those changes is the adoption of neoliberal policies. These changes, at the macro level, are shown

in deregulation, including the liberalization of financial markets, as well as in the reduction of restrictions on the movement of capital and products and the accelerated privatization of public assets (Maman & Rosenhek, 2012). A process of privatization and delegation of social welfare to nonprofits, NGOs, local governments, and religious organizations has also been taking place and, as a result, nonprofit organizations are now forced to compete with one another for resources, show efficiency, minimize government accountability, and become economically viable (Weiss, 2011). NGOs must now assume an enterprise model to accommodate the market criteria of competitiveness imposed on them and demonstrate efficiency to external forces (Taylor, 1999).

Within this context, the discipline of coaching has been flourishing in multiple areas, including the organizational arena, where coaching has rapidly become a significant part of organizational strategy (Bennett & Bush, 2009; Joo, 2005). Therefore, the aim of this article is to examine the instrumental role that coaching methods play in serving the status quo of the neoliberal ideology and the implications of this on the coaching discipline and workplace leadership. For this purpose, I focus on the manager-as-coach practice, a leadership approach that focuses on empowerment—helping employees learn and improve abilities and capacities—and where coaching practices occur in everyday on-the-job activities (Joo, Sushko, & McLean, 2012).

The main research question of this exploration is as follows:

*Research Question 1 :In what ways has coaching been adopted by individuals to support neoliberal thinking?*

The answers to the two following research questions are also examined:

*Research Question 2 :To what extent do coaching practices seem to reproduce the logic of the neoliberal ideology?*

*Research Question 3 :What are the possible implications for the discipline of coaching, its effectiveness on organizational development, and its role in workplace leadership?*

### **Theorizing Coaching as a Social Tool of Neoliberalism**

The discipline of coaching has been developing dramatically during the last 20 years as a new approach to achieving individual goals by implementing and maintaining behavior that would cause a desired change in one's personal and professional life (Whitworth, Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House, & Sandahl, 2007). Research (e.g., Bowerman & Collins, 1999; Bozer, Sarros, & Santora, 2014; Huang & Hsieh, 2015) shows a positive link between coaching and the improvement of employee behavior and performance. Coaching is believed to facilitate individual learning and encourage individual growth and career development (Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999). According to Blattner and Bacigalupo (2007), "coaches can emphasize both personal empowerment and social consensus, fostering an essential mindset for personal career and organizational leadership" (209). One of the basic premises of coaching is to see the individual as a person who is able to change the course of his or her life by taking responsibility for the results of his or her achievements (Whitworth et al., 2007). This assumption is consistent with the re-definition of "good citizenship" under the neoliberal way of thinking, in which citizenship is not viewed just as a legal status or bundle of rights, but as a subjective space of action, where changing understandings of development and progress can take place (Meltzer, 2013).

Therefore, the basic postulate of coaching that emphasizes individual responsibility can be understood conceptually not just as a tool for personal and professional progress or organizational effectiveness, but also as a tool for self-construction. In other words, this theorizes that coaching is a type of neoliberal governmentality. French philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault (1926–1984) used the term *governmentality* as a guideline for analysis of the technologies of power. Government is considered not only as a political structure, but also as a conduit for guiding forms of self-control and directing the "soul." It links technologies of the self with technologies of domination. Foucault introduced the concept of governmentality to study the "autonomous" individual's capacity for self-control and explore how it was linked to forms of political rule and economic exploitation. This approach presents the neoliberal

governmentality as a channel for controlling individuals by assigning them the responsibility for self-managing and self-regulating social risks (Lemke, 2001, 2002).

Given this framework, one is able to explore forms of power and consider the process of subjectification (Lemke, 2001). Rather than looking at coaching just as an organizational practice, the aim of this article is to explore the possibility that coaching may embed neoliberal imperatives that can shape citizenship and review the implications for leadership in the workplace.

### **Coaching and “Neo-individualism”**

Coaching in the workplace includes internal coaching and executive external coaching as popular practices. Frisch (2001) notes that “managers these days are expected to foster the development of their staff as well as to be prime movers of their own growth” (240). In the literature, coaching has received particular attention by its positive outcome. Executive coaching is viewed as a means of improving well-being, happiness, and resilience on the individual level as well as facilitating company and social success. Coaches significantly contribute to the process of change and growth in society (Fitzgerald, Moss, & Sarros, 2010). In other words, “the presumed outcomes of executive coaching are changes in managerial behavior with presumed increases in organizational effectiveness” (Feldman & Lankau, 2005, 834). Internal coaching, performance coaching, or manager-as-coach practices supply individuals with the means to succeed and enable people to develop themselves (Gilley & Gilley, 2007). According to these points of view, coaching places an emphasis on the individual level in order to achieve organizational prosperity.

In contrast, a common approach in organizational behavior focuses on the organizational culture as a key to organizational success and effectiveness. A strong organizational culture that has a significant impact on the organization’s members is seen as a primordial actor for organizational effectiveness and progress. It establishes a cognitive framework of shared values, attitudes, basic assumptions, behavioral norms, and shapes a sense of shared responsibility and

commitment to the vision of the organization. When organizational culture is a solid underlying contract, people feel connected to a larger entity—larger than any one individual interest—that reminds them of the organization’s purpose (Greenberg & Baron, 2008). A well-established organizational culture may facilitate a company’s success. However, the current focus on coaching practices seems to support a shift in the focal point from the organizational to the individual level. It places an emphasis on one’s individual responsibility for personal development, personal happiness, and improving one’s capacity to set and meet personal goals to facilitate company success. Personal responsibility may now be more heavily weighted when exploring methods for organizational effectiveness and success than organizational culture and structure.

This view is associated with neoliberal ideology. Within this context, coaching may be a type of governmentality, which builds individualism in society by consolidating neoliberal citizenship and spreading it to the workplace and displaying a kind of “neo-individualism” by pursuing individual interests and goals (above all, personal happiness and success). This consideration should not be interpreted as dismissing the importance of organizational culture, but as a crucial factor that may shape that culture as one of neoliberal individualism.

## **Case Study**

The organization in this study is a third-sector Israeli organization founded in the early 1990s. Its mission is social empowerment by managing and operating a variety of projects that make an important social impact to its constituents in the intermediate to long term. It offers eight projects for a wide array of populations, institutions, and topics, including leadership and women and youth empowerment. The organization employs 42 employees, only four of whom are managerial staff. The basic organizational structure consists of individuals placed in key roles and teams. In most cases, teams act as self-governing units and do not maintain continual communication with other teams.

The organization is financially self-sustaining (it promotes revenue-producing activities) with an annual revenue of approximately seven million shekels or

\$1,810,212 USD (1 shekel = approximately .26 USD) that supports organizational activities and employee payroll.

This organization, which utilizes a manager-as-coach approach, was selected for two main reasons: (a) the researcher had access to the organization and its actors as an employee and manager, and (b) it was an ideal organization to conduct a case study because coaching practices are a substantial element of the organization's practices, especially manager-as-coach. When using the case study method, the major rationale is to cover a particular phenomenon and the context within which the phenomenon is taking place. While a single case study may lack generalization, it may potentially help refocus future investigations in the field (Yin, 2014).

## **Method**

This study is qualitative in nature and uses ethnographic methods. Ethnography is usually linked to anthropology research. Mead (1901–1978) described the anthropologist in her work *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) as “the student of man in all of his most diverse social settings” (4), including physical presence in the field of study. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ethnography became one of the research methods of Western sociology, and the case study was developed as a method within it. An ethnographer is often involved in the everyday life of people, watching and listening, studying their daily actions and accounts, asking questions through informal and formal interviews, and collecting available data. Analyses of ethnographic data include interpretation of the meanings, functions, and consequences of human and institutional practices and their implications in local, and perhaps, larger contexts (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007).

## **Procedure**

Several methods were used to collect the data for this study. First, four formal face-to-face semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews were conducted with three top management staff and one leading employee, and eight unstructured interviews were conducted with eight employees who worked in different positions within the organization. Second, participant observation was

used in the present research to investigate how organization members interacted and worked in their natural organization environment of the everyday working place. Participant observation, a main investigation method for anthropological and sociological studies, particularly in ethnographic research (Kawulich, 2005), entails not only observation, but also intimate knowledge of the people being studied. A major requirement for community or organizational field study (Foote, 1943), participant observation is “a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and culture” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011, 1).

The researcher was a member of the administrative team and a participant observer of the organization’s activities. The role of the researcher as an employee is “total immersion, and to all intents and purposes the researcher is one with the employees alongside whom he or she will work” (Vinten, 1994, 31). Caution was taken to avoid the risk of bias by “getting too close,” as interpretations of given situations and observations may contain partialities, tendencies, or prejudices caused by the intimacy of the researcher with people being studied (Agar, 1980). To avoid this possible contamination risk, the researcher was acutely aware of “getting too close” and possibly negatively influencing data collection and analysis while gaining access to many types and variety of information, thus enhancing the quality of data (Johnson & Weatherford, 2006). Moreover, as an employee, the participant observer avoids some of the difficulties outside ethnographers face when they are collecting field data because getting the necessary acceptance or the trust of the people in the field may take a long time (Agar, 1980).

To supplement the data collection, a semi-structured interview technique was used for the formal interviews. The semi-structured interview is an effective tool for data collection that permits reciprocity, a space of engagement between researcher and respondent that facilitates clarification, meaning generation, and critical reflection. These features contribute to the accuracy of the analysis (Galletta, 2013). This kind of interview enables approaching different

respondents in different manners while collecting the same data amplitude due to the level of flexibility that it offers. The semi-structured interview permits interactional dialogue, a thematic-centered orientation, and a perspective regarding knowledge, but with a fluid and flexible structure (Edwards & Holland, 2013). The formal interviews, which lasted approximately 35 to 45 minutes, were recorded. The unstructured interviews, which lasted approximately 10 minutes, were not recorded; however, field notes were written. Iterative listening of recorded interviews and reading of field notes with the research questions in mind were used for qualitative data analysis. The data were thematically analyzed, allowing for the identification of emerging themes. The interview content was categorized based on responses to individual questions, and subsequently dominant emerging themes were identified. Three basic steps were used: (1) determining the natural meaning units, (2) stating themes that dominate the natural units, and (3) exploring data in terms of the purpose of the study (Giorgi, 1975).

Three kinds of concerns must be considered about respondent's privacy in social research: (a) public exposure of their views and actions may have damaging consequences for them, (b) the participants may be deprived of control over their self-presentation, and (c) the research may probe into areas of their private space (Kelman, 1977). Vainio (2012) also notes that "anonymization of participants, organizations or cases analyzed in qualitative studies serves many functions. In addition to its ethical importance, it also has an effect upon the ontology, analysis and independence of the research and the researchers" (694). To protect the respondent's identities, their names were replaced by code names. In order to maintain anonymity, some distinguishing characteristics of the organization, such as name and exact location, were also removed.

### **Sample**

The top management team was selected for the semi-structured interviews. The team consisted of four people: the author, and three other team members, who were interviewed by the author. An additional employee was also selected for a semi-structured interview. Unstructured interviews took place with eight non-

administrative organization employees. These respondents were chosen because they worked on different projects, representing the typical activity of the organization, and represented more than 20% of the non-administrative employees. They contributed to the study by bringing a range of organizational perspectives: different positions, genders, seniority, and experience.

Tables 1 and 2 present the profiles of the respondents based on demographic and organizational data. Table 1 focuses on the data from the four respondents from formal semi-structured interviews, including their role, seniority, age, gender, and educational level.

**Table :1 Semi-structured Formal Interviews Respondent's Profile**

<b>Respondent N = 4</b>	<b>Role in the Organization/Title</b>	<b>Seniority (in years)</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Educational Level</b>
A	Leading employee in various organizational projects	10 >	50s	F	Bachelor's degree
B	Top managerial team member	7 >	40s	F	Bachelor's degree
C	Top managerial team member	5 >	30s	F	Bachelor's degree
D	Top managerial team member	10 >	50s	F	Bachelor's degree

Table 2 on the following page presents the unstructured interview respondent's data, including the number of projects on which each employee works in the organization, seniority, and demographic data.

**Table 2: Unstructured Interviews Respondent's Profile**

Respondent N = 8	Number of Projects on Which the Employee Works	Seniority (in years)	Age	Gender	Educational Level
1	2	< 5	30s	F	Master's degree
2	2	< 10	50s	F	Bachelor's degree
3	1	> 5	30s	M	Bachelor's degree
4	2	> 5	30s	M	Bachelor's degree
5	1	> 5	30s	M	Master's degree
6	1	> 5	30s	F	Master's degree student
7	1	> 5	30s	F	Bachelor's degree
8	1	> 5	30s	M	Master's degree student

### **Data Analysis and Findings**

The findings of this study are presented in two ways. The first two research questions raised are addressed first: In which ways has coaching been adopted by individuals to support neoliberal thinking, and to what extent do coaching practices seem to reproduce the logic of the neoliberal ideology? The third question was addressed next: What are the possible implications for the discipline of coaching, and its effectiveness on organizational development, and its role in workplace leadership?

### **Neoliberalism and the Rise of "Neo-individualism" in the Workplace**

Along with the coaching orientation of the organization, it seems that neoliberal imperatives of autonomy and responsible behavior are also being stressed by the organizational climate. Emphasis is on individual responsibility and the neoliberal spirit of not excessively engaging in workers actions was found to be an emerging dominant theme. As Respondent B stated:

The workers know to be independent. . . . They are not dependent people that don't know to do their own steps and constantly need approval from me; it is not right to do so; they should feel responsibility. . . . Coaching is reflected right there, by letting people be independent, to know to run things alone and be quiet. Even if I do not hear from them [for] a few days, I know things are right because I have [great] confidence in them. . . . If there is a problem, first and foremost, they are [expected] to seek a solution by themselves; if they cannot solve it on their own, they can come to consult. . . . Before he (the employee) comes to consult, he has to arrange the work, because if not, it's not just "[pass] the responsibility" but [it] also is going backward in your abilities; everyone is able to reach a solution.

The observed assumptions of Respondent B are embedded in neoliberal imperatives, one of which is having little or no state intervention in individual actions, as well as the expectation for acting independently and taking responsibility for individual and organizational outcomes. Additionally, the personal development of workers and work performance improvement is one of the required outcomes of manager-as-coach. This required outcome is viewed by responders not just as an organizational responsibility, but as part of the individual's efforts to achieve success. With regard to coaching and management, Respondent B noted:

I love to see people develop; not just become independent, but stronger with time . . . [each person] has his [or her own] skills and he [or she] has to bring them to fruition, which I think is part of . . . the individual freedom and of [each person's] commitment, to do things, to study, to develop, [and] to take [the] reins by themselves.

The idea of an individual who is expected to take personal responsibility for his or her outcomes and not be "reliant" on the organization, and whose personal capabilities and skill development is considered his or her individual duty is also the nucleus of neoliberal reasoning.

One may notice the interpretation that Respondent B gives to "freedom"—an individual's duty to advance themselves in all ways possible, a subject construction that uses market rationalities about efficiency, competition, entrepreneurialism, and individual autonomy. This interpretation was well internalized by Respondent B. Thus, in neoliberal assumptions, a virtuous person is viewed as an individual who must be able to access the market and function as

a competent actor in it. Reliance on the state can be seen almost as an act of irresponsibility.

As in neoliberal society, a shift in responsibilities takes place in the workplace from the organization to the individual. Such a shift may be increasing individualism—namely, individualization of organizational issues and outcomes—in the workplace, and that is reinforced by coaching. This is illustrated in a conversation that took place among the members of the top management team. The executive director asked the training and content developer and the HR director if they needed help with their tasks, “Well, not me,” one answered. “Me neither,” the other said. The executive director (ED) concluded: “We are a bunch of soloists.” It is important to pay attention to the word *soloists* here. There is a symbolic difference between “autonomous” and “soloist.” While *autonomous* refers to a self-governed person, a *soloist* is a person who simply performs solo; a performance of one person. Once again, this indicates a mindset of individualism, reflecting the tendency to work under a prevailing sense of individual responsibility for organizational and individual success, beyond any organizational structure. This tendency to place responsibility on the individual was also observed when the ED shared on several occasions that she received repeated feedback from members of the organization expressing her “reluctance to delegate authority and deliver responsibility” and her “willingness to do everything by herself.” This tendency or mindset sets the framework for very little (or sometimes not at all) organizational intervention in personal actions for achieving stated goals. As Respondent C stated:

What defines a good worker here is a lot of caring, personal commitment, a lot of personal responsibility beyond the workplace; after I leave the office, if there is a problem, my personal commitment is very high, and I’ll find a way to solve the problem. Success in the job is the satisfaction of those [with] whom I’m working. . . . I changed work processes to make [the] job comfortable to me and to update it to the changing market . . . and the responsibility for things being that way is mine . . . no one else could do it because it’s entirely my responsibility.

These two premises, individual responsibility for outcomes and few organizational/state interventions, are easily recognizable in neoliberal ideology.

Thus, the spirit of coaching dominates the organizational scene, and it seems to reinforce neoliberal mandates. Similar to neoliberalism ideology, coaching strives to attain individual responsibility via an accountability based on the construction of moral agency as a condition for shifting the regulatory capacities of government to individuals.

Clearly evident in Respondent C's statement is the concept of *economization of authority*, a term used by Shamir (2008) to describe a type of neoliberal governance that distributes authority to "an imagined field of *competitive market relations*" (377), which facilitates best-practice solutions that give control to those who are in the field (an alternative to the top-down model of coercive regulation). This model also entails an element of moralization, which predisposes actors to assume responsibility for their actions.

However, the study's observations showed some undesirable outcomes related to the trend of working "solo." On several occasions, the high expectations of an autonomous and independent behavior caused a lack of synchronization among people in different positions within the organization. At times, the organization experienced reduced effectiveness in information sharing. In some circumstances, team leaders or middle-level coordinators experienced the absence of any clear guidance, which slowed and hindered work, or affected morale. On other occasions, the requirement "to know what to do" caused confusion and inefficiencies rather than effective entrepreneurial behavior. The resulting "hyper-responsible" employee character caused, in some cases, the need to retroactively fix work done incorrectly. Two respondents from the unstructured interviews expressed a desire for regular evaluation meetings with their team coordinator; Respondent A also said that "not enough meetings are held" with the manager.

### **Reproducing Neoliberal Logics**

The neoliberal outline presents the state as holding only one legitimate purpose: safeguarding individual liberty. Freedom of action and decision is one of the foundations of neoliberal thinking. However, with this freedom of choice, there is also an expectation of what the individual should choose. In this case study, the

liberty provided by the organization emerged as a very dominant theme. Personal liberty and autonomy has a major impact, in accordance with neoliberal assumptions. Observations and interview response analysis reveal a high degree of importance given to freedom of action. Respondent B stated that “one of the strengths (of the organization) is the allowing conditions.” The internalized concept of freedom in the neoliberal ideology, as in the organization, seems to lead to the perceived correct and desired behavior; the embodiment of the entrepreneurial self.

One of the basic hypotheses of coaching presented in literature, which is also articulated by Respondents A, B, and C, is the capability of individuals to change his or her outcomes. For this matter, freedom of action and autonomy, are conditions sine qua non. In neoliberal social terms, the organization in this case study expects employees to act autonomously, to understand what should be done, and if necessary, to take action. All 12 interviewees mentioned the organizational atmosphere of freedom and trust. Respondent A’s statement illustrates that:

one of the important behaviors which are being reinforced through the organization is “do not wait for things to be done, but take the initiative”; there is a lot of room for initiative. Management is involved, but do not get involved, management style [is] not [to] ask if it was okay or not okay. [Management] trusts me; if something is wrong, I will tell or I’ll check with the manager. Management . . . believes that [the] employee is fully responsible for the entire process. The executive director[’s] view is one that trusts people to do for themselves and pushes [in] that direction; it is very trusting and is not in [the habit] of intervening. [Management] will be there only if you need it.

On the one hand, there is an atmosphere of trust reflected in Respondent A’s words, as expected in a manager-as-coach approach. Also recognizable is freedom and a sense of nonintervention, sending messages of individual responsibility for processes and outcomes in accordance with neoliberal imperatives. On the other hand, it is possible to identify a kind of self-supervision. Governmentality takes place and acts as a conduit for guiding forms of self-control; a technology of power. The statement “do not wait for things to be done, but take the initiative” is not considered by Respondent A as an imperative, but

as freedom of action. As noted by Respondent A, *freedom* means “being responsible for the entire process.” These requirements are reinforced simultaneously in different areas of individual action, including the workplace. In fact, this logic fits the economic neoliberal process of privatization and the conversion of responsibility from the state to the individual.

It is important to note that coaching processes seem to achieve certain positive results for the organization, and that coaching as a discipline has not been tested in this article, but it is, rather, a possible side product. Coaching may be acting as a form of governmentality or a channel through which it could be made easier for the dominant neoliberal status quo “to win.” The tenets of coaching may be embedded in neoliberal imperatives that help shape citizenship inside and outside the workplace, thus serving the neoliberal ideology. This is not happening in a vacuum, as shaping appropriate citizenship has been accompanying neoliberalism in various fields (see Charles, 2013; Meltzer, 2013). The increasing use of coaching techniques and the establishment of coaching assumptions may contribute to enhance a neoliberal state of mind, one suitable for the dominant contemporary socioeconomic structure. As Respondent D notes:

[This] is the kind of management [that] is optimal for this stage of the organization, [at] a time [when] so many nonprofit organizations in Israel [have] collapsed [because of] the impossible economic situation. . . . Management realized that you cannot rely on [foreign donors] and then started to do all the work for an increasingly independent income; it's a big change. It is . . . a business model that in the past [would] not [have had] a chance to be accepted by the founders; it would get all the objections [as] they were very idealistic and with [a] very socialist orientation. . . . But the team got it; the team looked right and left and saw a lot of organizations falling; [they] understand that it does not make us evil, that [it] gives [us] a lot of work, and [that it] does not mean that we [are selling] our souls to the devil.

This comment clearly describes the individual concession and resignation to what needs to be done—the attitudes the organization must adopt or change to survive the developments brought on by the process of neoliberalization in the third sector. Evidently, an alignment to the status quo emerged, demonstrated by the way in which Respondent A justified the new organizational policy.

## **Discussion**

The organization's coaching ambience suggests that the individual is considered to be an autonomous actor who is expected to take individual responsibility for personal development and for organizational and personal outcomes. Consistent with neoliberal logic, little to no intervention in individual affairs is viewed as the right balance for individual and organizational effectiveness. "Reliance" on state assistance is construed as a marker of irresponsibility (Meltzer, 2013). The organization in this case study is experiencing a process of adjustment to the neoliberal market model in which it was submerged, and it seems to be making the required reinforcements to the individual way of thinking via its prevalent coaching climate.

Research has shown a positive impact of coaching in the workplace, starting with the development of effective leadership and the improvement of employee performance (Blattner & Bacigalupo, 2007; Bowerman & Collins, 1999; Bozer et al., 2014; Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Fitzgerald et al., 2010; Huang & Hsieh, 2015). Although coaching practices in this case study may be yielding some positive outcomes for the individual and the organization, such as an increased sense of responsibility, trust, and empowerment, the analyses showed some less successful results, contrary to what one might expect. Neoliberal logic is integral to many of the coaching practices in the manager-as-coach approach, and thus, may be leading to the development of an autonomous unit of increasingly responsible individuals in the workplace, which is similar to the neoliberal-developed individualism. While individual responsibility for solving problems without involving the manager is considered one of the principles of coaching (Team FME, 2013), the members of this organization display a trend of hyper-responsibility, willing to succeed by "doing everything" themselves. On certain occasions, this tendency reduced the free flow of information and the capacity to work as a team, thereby reducing the ability of the organization to be an effective learning organization.

In internal coaching interventions, a relationship of trust is of utmost importance (Frisch, 2001). The act of providing confidence in one's personal abilities helps

create the necessary trusting environment (Augustijnen, Schnitzer, & Van Esbroeck, 2011; Carey, Philippon, & Cummings, 2011). Trust and confidence in an employee's capabilities was also one of the dominant issues addressed by all the respondents in the formal and informal interviews. But, in line with the hyper-responsibility, leadership submerged in neoliberal hegemony, reinforced by a coaching climate, may be unwilling to delegate authority and responsibility. This unwillingness to delegate may counter the climate of confidence in an employee's abilities and capabilities, creating confusion. On one hand, management presents a message of trust in employees' capabilities and individual responsibility for outcomes, while on the other hand, they send a message of not enough trust by not delegating responsibilities to employees. As a result, organizational effectiveness may be reduced.

The findings of this case extend our understanding of coaching for workplace leadership and offer insights on a possible coaching side effect, namely the possibility that it might reinforce the neoliberal ideology and reduce effectiveness for organizational development and change. The significance of these findings is directly connected to the coaching practice in the organizational field.

## **Implications**

***Implications for the discipline of coaching.*** The findings in this study raise new questions about the institutionalization of the profession of coaching. On one hand, should coaching enhance or weaken the dominant socioeconomic status quo? Should coaching have any interaction with the dominant discourse? On the other hand, is it possible for coaching to be completely independent of the time?

It may be virtually impossible for coaching to be indifferent to the issue of time and the environment. Coaching is about people and people live in a context. For that reason, it is important to focus on possible coaching outcomes and refine coaching interventions to fit as appropriate.

***Implications for workplace leadership.*** Coaching is a relatively new discipline that deals with rapid changes and developments. Leadership, in general, and workplace leadership, in particular, both face the same challenge of unexpected changes. In order to meet these challenges, leadership must be

creative, escape standards, and break established thought patterns. Coaching is considered a significant strategy for organizational leadership and change (Bennett & Bush, 2009), but if coaching is functioning as a tool to reinforce the neoliberal status quo, acting as a technology of power and reproducing the existing neoliberal logic; then it is contributing to conformist behavior instead of encouraging creative thinking that is capable of breaking existing patterns. It is imperative that we consider the many challenges that rapid change places on the coaching profession. We must be ready to test and transform our mental patterns and practices to embrace change.

### **Limitations**

The present study has some limitations. Even though the results suggest an involvement of coaching practices with the rise of a kind of “neo-individualism” in the workplace and in reproducing neoliberal logic, the study was limited to one case study. It focused on the manager-as-coach leadership approach as the main practice of observation; as Respondent A noted, “I do not make a distinction between coaching and management because coaching is the way the executive director relates to persons, things, and issues. This is how coaching is expressed in our organization.” One of the concerns about a single case study is generalization. Case study research is only generalizable to theoretical proposition, not to populations or universes. Therefore, the case study is not a “sample”; it represents an “analytic generalization” contrasting with the “statistical generalization” (Yin, 2014). The findings of this study serve as a snapshot of a single organization. Consequently, the generalizability of the conclusions must be contemplated within the borders of this context.

We must consider other possible aspects that may influence the findings of this study, especially the process of attraction, recruitment, and selection. It is possible that the organization profiled in this case attracts and selects homogeneous populations who share the same neoliberal values that have been reinforced by the coaching practices, creating a two-way feedback system of reinforcement.

## Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Research

Neoliberal ideology is accompanied by imperatives such as increased individualism, which places almost all of the responsibility for personal and social outcomes on the individual, giving economic and social structure minor importance, thus creating an individualization of social issues and outcomes. This neoliberal framework shapes citizenship and constructs a perception of the world. Coaching practices in the workplace may serve the neoliberal status quo by influencing organizational leadership and employees' points of view, favoring conformity with the dominant ideology. The embedded neoliberal ideology in the practice of coaching may result in reduced organizational effectiveness.

Finally, additional research is needed to extend our understanding of this issue and overcome the limitations in this study. It is important to take into consideration the availability of broader quantitative research that could include a representative statistical sample to complement the qualitative research. Future research could include a multiple-case approach as well as other dimensions related to the topic, such as the influence of a neoliberal mindset on perceived well-being in the workplace.

Acknowledgment: I am very grateful to Andrew Tabarovsky for his time and attention and for his significant contribution to the improvement of this article by offering helpful suggestions and advice.

## References

- Agar, M. H. (1980). *The professional stranger: An informal introduction to ethnography*. New York, NY: Academic Press. Retrieved from [http://www.interactiondesign.se/wiki/\\_media/courses:agar.pdf](http://www.interactiondesign.se/wiki/_media/courses:agar.pdf)
- Atkinson, P., & Hammersley, M. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Augustijnen, M.-T., Schnitzer, G., & Van Esbroeck, R. (2011). A model of executive coaching: A qualitative study. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 6 (2), 150–164. Retrieved from <http://in.bgu.ac.il/aranne/Pages/default.aspx>

- Bennett, J., & Bush, M. W. (2009). Coaching in organizations. Current trends and future opportunities. *OD Practitioner*, 41 (1), 2–7. Retrieved from [http://ravenconsultinggroup.com/Raven\\_Consulting\\_Group/Coaching\\_Resources\\_files/Coaching\\_in\\_Organizations.pdf](http://ravenconsultinggroup.com/Raven_Consulting_Group/Coaching_Resources_files/Coaching_in_Organizations.pdf)
- Blattner, J., & Bacigalupo, A. (2007). Using emotional intelligence to develop executive leadership and team and organizational development. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 59 (3), 209–219. doi:10.1037/1065-9293.59.3.209
- Boltanski, L., & Chiapello, E. (2005). The new spirit of capitalism. *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, 18 (3–4), 161–188. doi:10.1007/s10767-006-9006-9
- Bowerman, J., & Collins, G. (1999). The coaching network: A program for individual and organizational development. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, (11)8, 291–297. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/13665629910300414>
- Bozer, G., Sarros, J. C. & Santora, J. C. (2014). Executive coaching: Guidelines that work. *Development and Learning in Organizations* 28, (4), 9–14. doi:10.1108/DLO-05-2013-0020
- Carey, W., Philippon, D. J., & Cummings, G. G. (2011). Coaching models for leadership development: An integrative review. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 5(1), 51–69. doi:10.1002/jls.20204
- Charles, N. (2013). Mobilizing the self-governance of pre-damaged bodies: Neoliberal biological citizenship and HPV vaccination promotion in Canada. *Citizenship Studies*, 17(6–7), 770–784.
- DeWalt, K. M., & DeWalt, B. R. (2011). *Participant observation: A guide for fieldworkers* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Plymouth, United Kingdom: AltaMira Press.
- Edwards, R., & Holland, J. (2013). *What is qualitative interviewing?* London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Academic. Retrieved from [http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/3276/1/complete\\_proofs.pdf](http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/3276/1/complete_proofs.pdf)
- Ellinger, A. D., & Bostrom, R. P. (1999). Managerial coaching behaviors in learning organizations. *Journal of Management Development*, 18 (9), 752–771. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/02621719910300810>
- Feldman, D. C., & Lankau, M. J. (2005). Executive coaching: A review and agenda for future research. *Journal of Management*, 31(6), 829–848. doi:10.1177/0149206305279599

- Fitzgerald, P., Moss, S., & Sarros, J. C. (2010). *Sustainable coaching: A primer for executives and coaches*. Prahran, Australia: Tilde University Press.
- Foote, W. W. (1943). *Street corner society*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Frisch, M. H. (2001). The emerging role of the internal coach. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 5(4), 240–250. doi:10.1037//1061-4087.53.4.240
- Galletta, A. (2013). *Mastering the semi-structured interview and beyond: From research design to analysis and publication*. New York: New York University. Retrieved from <http://in.bgu.ac.il/aranne/Pages/default.aspx>
- Gilley, J. W., & Gilley, A. (2007). *The manager as coach*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Giorgi, A. (1975). An application of phenomenological method in psychology. In A. Giorgi, C. Fischer, & E. Murray (sed.) *Duquesne studies in phenomenological psychology* (Vol. 2, pp. 82–103). Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press. doi:10.5840/dspp197529
- Greenberg, J., & Baron, R. A. (2008). *Behavior in organizations* 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson.
- Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from [http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/research/centres/socialtheorycentre/archive/events2010-11/readinggroup/harvey\\_a\\_brief\\_history\\_of\\_neoliberalism.pdf](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/research/centres/socialtheorycentre/archive/events2010-11/readinggroup/harvey_a_brief_history_of_neoliberalism.pdf)
- Huang, J. T., & Hsieh, H. H. (2015). Supervisors as good coaches: Influences of coaching on employees' in-role behaviors and proactive career behaviors. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 2(1), 42–58. doi:10.1080/09585192.2014.940993
- Johnson, J. C., & Weatherford, J. (2006). The active participant-observer: Applying social role analysis to participant observation. *Field Methods*, 18(2), 111–134. doi:10.1177/1525822X05285928
- Joo, B. (2005). Executive coaching: A conceptual framework from an integrative review of practice and research. *Human Resource Development Review*, 4(4), 462–488. doi:10.1177/1534484305280866
- Joo, B., Sushko, J. S., & McLean, G. N. (2012). Multiple faces of coaching: Manager-as-coach, executive coaching, and formal mentoring. *Organization*

- Development Journal*, 30(1), 19–38. Retrieved from <http://www.isodc.org/page-1730212>
- Kawulich, B. B. (2005). Participant observation as a data collection method. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 6(2). Retrieved from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs/>
- Kelman, H.C. (1977). Privacy and research with human beings. *Journal of Social Issues*, 33(3), 169–194. Retrieved from [http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/hckelman/files/Privacy\\_and\\_research.pdf](http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/hckelman/files/Privacy_and_research.pdf)
- Lemke, T. (2001). “The birth of bio-politics”: Michel Foucault’s lecture at the Collège de France on neo-liberal governmentality. *Economy and Society*, 30(2), 190–207. doi:10.1080/03085140120042271
- Lemke, T. (2002) Foucault, governmentality, and critique. *Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture & Society*, 14(3), 49–64, doi:10.1080/089356902101242288
- Lupton, D. (1999). Developing the “whole me”: Citizenship, neo liberalism and the contemporary health and physical education curriculum. *Critical Public Health*, 9(4), 287–300. Retrieved from <http://in.bgu.ac.il/en/aranne/Pages/default.aspx>
- Maman, D., & Rosenhek, Z. (2012). The institutional dynamics of a developmental state: Change and community in state-economy relations in Israel. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 47(3), 342–363. doi:10.1007/s12116-012-9098-3
- Mead, M. (1928). *Coming of Age in Samoa :A psychological study of primitive youth for Western civilisation*. New York ,NY :William Morrow .Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/comingofageinsam00mead>
- Meltzer, J. (2013). “Good citizenship” and the promotion of personal savings accounts in Peru. *Citizenship Studies*, 17(5), 641–652. doi:10.1080/13621025.2013.818382
- Shamir, R. (2008). Corporate social responsibility: Towards a new market-embedded morality? *Theoretical Inquiries in Law*, 9(2), 371–394. doi:10.2202/1565-3404.1190
- Taylor, L. (1999). Globalization and civil society: Continuities, ambiguities, and realities in Latin America. *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, 7(1), 269–295. Available at: <http://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/ijgls/vol7/iss1/10>

- Team FME. (2013). *Principles of coaching: Coaching skills*. Retrieved from <http://www.free-management-ebooks.com/dldebk-pdf/fme-coaching-principles.pdf>
- Thorsen, D. E. (2011). *The politics of freedom: A study of the political thought of Isaiah Berlin and Karl Popper, and of the challenge of neoliberalism* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Oslo, Norway. Retrieved from <https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/13298>
- Vainio, A. (2012). Beyond research ethics: Anonymity as “ontology,” “analysis” and “independence.” *Qualitative Research*, 13(6), 685–698. doi:10.1177/1468794112459669
- Vinten, G. (1994). Participant observation: A model for organizational investigation? *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 9(2), 30–38. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/02683949410059299>
- Weiss, H. (2011). Gift and value in Jerusalem’s third sector. *American Anthropologist*, 113(4), 594–605. doi:10.1111/j.1548-1433.2011.01372.x
- Whitworth, L., Kimsey-House, K., Kimsey-House, H., & Sandahl, P. (2007). *Co-active coaching: New skills for coaching people toward success in work and life* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Mountain View, CA: Davies-Black.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research :Design and methods* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Jessica F. Tabarovsky is an MA student in sociology-critical social studies in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel. She holds an honors BA in Human Resource Management from Sapir Academic College, and a Coach Expert Diploma in Personal and Group Coaching from the External Studies Department at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, jointly with Kishurim Institute. She serves as a group facilitator, content producer, training developer, and workshop leader. Her work focuses on leadership, public speaking skills, interpersonal communication skills, women’s empowerment, creativity, employability development, and personal development. Ms. Tabarovsky spent many years writing programs, conducting workshops, and working in content and training development. She can be reached at [jessicat@post.bgu.ac.il](mailto:jessicat@post.bgu.ac.il).

## VIEWPOINT

### Mentoring and Coaching for Leadership Development\*

Stanley J. Smits  
Georgia State University

Dawn E. Bowden  
Johnson & Johnson

This viewpoint piece introduces two time-tested stalwarts of leadership development, *coaching* and *mentoring*, and a more recent asset, *organized peer coaching*. We argue the relevance of these developmental technologies in today's "Googlized" world and urge readers to become actively engaged with them as providers and recipients.

**Key words:** career development, coaching, leadership, leadership development, mentoring

How important are mentoring and coaching for leadership development? Our objective for this viewpoint piece is to convince you, the reader, that these tried and true leadership development hallmarks are still valuable in today's digital world, where the answers to many questions are only a Google search away. In fact, we argue that the dynamic complexity of our digital world makes them more necessary than ever before. As we share our perspective, we sometimes use the terms *mentoring* and *coaching* interchangeably. Precise usage defines *mentoring* as being more focused on long-term career development and *coaching* as dealing with more immediate problem solving and the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities. The two functions have much overlap, with successful coaching paving the way for career advancement through improved performance; and mentoring for career objectives serving as a motivational force for the core functions of coaching: learning, skill development, and performance improvement.

---

\*To cite this article: Smits, S. J., & Bowden, D. E. (2015). Mentoring and coaching for leadership development. *International Leadership Journal*, 7(3), 83–89.

## Leadership Development Challenges

*“Becoming a great leader demands tremendous self-awareness. It requires an understanding of how others experience you, perceive you, and respond to you.”—Jeff Jordan (2014, 40)*

In his personal perspective column, Jordan (2014) asks: “If a world-class athlete uses a coach to improve, why should managers go it alone?” (40) Our answer: They shouldn’t. Try combing your hair without a mirror. It can be done, but it is more efficiently and effectively done with the feedback a mirror provides. Coaching helps provide the accurate feedback needed to develop and maintain leadership skills. Accurate feedback, in turn, provides inputs for reflection and self-management—essential foundations for leadership development.

Another major challenge faced by both today’s developing and seasoned leaders involves the context for leadership. As Ashby and Miles (2002) conclude from their interviews with top executives:

One of the most important attributes of all leaders is their ability to learn continuously throughout their careers. . . . Throughout careers, new roles and challenges arise, and the skills that led to success in a previous role may be detrimental in the next one. It is essential to be able to recognize the new realities and adapt accordingly. (214)

Recognizing new realities and adapting accordingly are what coaches help leaders do, but our digital age makes these essential functions even more challenging. According to Fernández-Aráoz (2014), “Geopolitics, business, industries, and jobs are changing so rapidly that we can’t predict the competencies needed to succeed even a few years out” (56). In brief, the dynamic complexity evident in our “Googlized” digital world makes effective coaching more necessary and more challenging than ever before.

Traditional mentoring involves “an intense work relationship between senior (mentor) and junior (protégé) organizational members” (Chao, 1997, 20) to promote the career development of the protégé. Such developmental relationships exist today and are often very productive in contexts where “mentoring is an act of generativity—a process of bringing into existence and

passing on a professional legacy” (Johnson & Ridley, 2004, xv). However, where dynamic complexity defines the context, a more collegial approach in the form of “peer coaching” is widely endorsed (Avolio, 2005; Carroll, Hunt, & Weintraub, 2007; Parker, Hall, & Kram, 2008; Smits, 2010). Peer coaching, an important source of learning through the ages (Carroll et al., 2007), is facilitated by our connected world (e.g., e-mail, LinkedIn, Twitter) and innovative applications of communication technology such as e-leadership, virtual coaches, leadership development websites, and peer learning centers (Avolio, 2005).

Robbins (1991) defines *peer coaching* as “a confidential process through which two or more professional colleagues work together to reflect on current practices; expand, refine, and build new skills; share ideas; teach one another . . . or solve problems in the workplace.” (1; as cited in Carroll et al., 2007, 206). The timeless functions listed in this definition collectively serve as a developmental tool that promotes a system of learning driven by the needs of the learners in a cost-effective manner (Carroll et al., 2007; Parker et al., 2008).

## **Organized Peer Coaching**

While peer coaching occurs naturally in educational, work, and other settings, it also exists as an organized activity designed to facilitate leadership development, such as those in the following brief examples.

### **Within an Organization**

Given the dynamic complexity of the work environment and the health care industry, enhancing abilities and increasing professional knowledge and understanding occurs on the job; through formal training; and more often, through peer-to-peer conversations and engagements. The Women’s Leadership Initiative (WLI) is a voluntary, employee resource group at the Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies that “is committed to the development, advancement, and retention of women leaders with a vision to ‘grow women to grow the business and our world’” (Johnson & Johnson, 2013). Participation takes the form of in-person meetings in cities around the world, one-on-one virtual coaching sessions conducted telephonically or via other digital media, or

through access to online programs that match up new members with experienced leaders who serve as mentors. Women leaders within the company are able to select peer coaches and mentors to facilitate specific skill development, obtain guidance on issues they are facing in their daily work, or even for simple networking conversations to search out and obtain new opportunities within the organization. Many of the interactions are virtual, which aligns with how the business operates on a day-to-day basis.

### **Within an Industry**

There are also numerous trade, industry, and professional outlets for networking, coaching, and mentoring. For example, the Women Business Leaders of the U.S. Health Care Industry Foundation (WBL) is a national nonprofit organization that connects a peer group of senior executive women from across the health care industry. The organization hosts networking events and educational opportunities. Many of the interactions are virtual in order to accommodate the changing and complex dynamics of the workforce and how people interact.

### **Winners and Winners**

*“Competent mentoring has the potential for win-win outcomes for protégés, mentors, and the organizations they serve.”—Johnson & Ridley (2004, xvi)*

Johnson and Ridley (2004) summarize the benefits of mentoring and coaching consistently demonstrated by research as follows:

- Persons coached and mentored experience “enhanced promotion rates, higher salaries, accelerated career mobility, improved professional identity, greater professional competence, increased career satisfaction, greater acceptance within the organization, and decreased job stress and role conflict” (xv).
- Mentors and coaches experience “internal satisfaction and fulfillment, enhanced creativity and professional synergy, career and personal rejuvenation, development of a loyal support base, recognition by the

organization for developing talent, and generativity (pleasure associated with shaping future generations)” (xv-xvi).

We would like to add two benefits from our experience, one obvious, one less so: First, peer coaching provides the same benefits cited by Johnson and Ridley (2004). We have benefitted greatly from our shared learning contacts with colleagues at work; our interactions with former classmates, both on a friendship basis and through our alumni associations; and our active involvement in nonprofit networking and development organizations like the WBL and the WLI. Second, we have grown from the unvarnished feedback, counsel, and caring of trusted mentors at various points in our careers. As Greenleaf, the author of *Servant Leadership* (1977), notes: “None of us are perfect by ourselves, and all of us need the help and correcting influence of close colleagues” (as cited in Carroll et al., 2007, 205).

## Conclusion

Mentoring and coaching continue to be relevant as important functions facilitating leadership development in our high-tech, wired, networked world. In reality, they are more important than ever because keeping pace with unprecedented change requires multiple, shared perspectives. Peer coaching, through collegial relationships at work and other professional settings, is emerging as potent source of shared learning, shared problem solving, and shared leadership development. It is a timeless form of shared development, less researched than mentoring, but worthy of our participation and study.

Our purpose in this invited viewpoint has been to get you, the reader, *into to the game*, so to speak. We hope it encourages you to become more involved in mentoring and being mentored, and in peer coaching. Our advice: Try it, you'll like it!

## References

- Ashby, M. D., & Miles, S. A. (2002). *Leaders talk leadership: Top executives speak their minds*. New York, NY: Heidrick and Struggles International and Oxford University Press.

- Avolio, B. J. (2005). *Leadership development in balance: MADE/born*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Carroll, P. A., Hunt, J. M., & Weintraub, J. R. (2007). Peer coaching at Citizen's Financial Group (CFG). In J. M. Hunt, & J. R. Weintraub. *The coaching organization: A strategy for developing leaders* (pp. 205–214). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Chao, G. T. (1997). Mentoring phases and outcomes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 51, 15–28.
- Fernández-Aráoz, C. (2014, June). 21<sup>st</sup>-century talent spotting. *Harvard Business Review*, 46–56. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2014/06/21st-century-talent-spotting>
- Greenleaf, R. K. (1977). *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness*. New York, NY: Paulist Press.
- Johnson & Johnson Services Inc. (2013). *Women's Leadership Initiative (WLI)*. Retrieved from the Johnson & Johnson WLI Intranet site on September 18, 2015.
- Johnson, W. B., & Ridley, C. R. (2004). *The elements of mentoring*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Jordan, J. (2014, May). Leaving it all on the field. *Harvard Business Review*, 40.
- Parker, P., Hall, D. T., & Kram, K. E. (2008). Peer coaching: A relational process for accelerating career learning. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 7(4), 487–503.
- Robbins, P. (1991). *How to plan and implement a peer coaching program*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.
- Smits, S. J. (2010). Extending the journey: Leadership development beyond the MBA. *Poznan University of Economics Review*, 10(1), 62–77.

Stanley J. Smits, PhD, is a professor and chair emeritus of the Department of Managerial Sciences, Robinson College of Business, Georgia State University, and a licensed psychologist. His research and teaching interests focus on leadership development, organizational culture, teamwork, and organizational change. He can be reached at [sjsmits@bellsouth.net](mailto:sjsmits@bellsouth.net).

Dawn E. Bowden, PhD, GBA, has worked in the health care industry for over 17 years, serving in leadership roles for companies such as Johnson & Johnson, CIGNA, Ceridian Corporation, and United Health Group. Her work includes teaching, research, and management of projects in innovation, strategic marketing, change management, and health care economics. She can be reached at [dawn.bowden@gmail.com](mailto:dawn.bowden@gmail.com).