



Professional article: flow coaching – Insights and Examples

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flow coaching – Insights and Examples

Reason for Coaching for Managers

Often the classical forms of qualification like seminar learning, project learning, mentoring, job-rotation etc. are not enough to effectively prepare managers for their tasks and responsibilities or to provide support for specific requirements.

Based on the practical experience of flow consulting, there are six specific reasons that have become evident, in which coaching makes sense:

1. *Qualification*

With the help of coaching, building or elaborating on vital leadership skills of young managers can be boosted.

2. *Crisis/Conflict*

Where there is a crisis or conflict (caused by a person, situation or organization) coaching can be a helpful means for the manager to overcome the crisis.

3. *Orientation*

If a manager is in a phase of orientation, coaching can provide support in setting the course.

4. *Overload*

If a manager finds it difficult to cope with his tasks, a well positioned coaching, understood as a personnel development measure, can support the manager in successfully handling his workload.

5. *Role Change*

When a change of role is abreast, the workload needs to be streamlined with new structures. Coaching can provide specific reflection, possibly supplementing it with expert consulting, promoting a successful start for these new challenges.

6. *Change Project*

When managers are confronted with the supervision and design of change projects, coaching through a consultant who is experienced in the implementation of change projects can be a sensible measure and can ensure the success of the change project.

One should however not over-estimate the possibilities of coaching measures. Coaching cannot obliterate problems that lie within an organization. Depending on the outcome of the preliminary discussions, we might suggest additional measures of intervention (job rotation, workload distribution, team development, strategy



workshop, structural change, outplacement etc). The coaching is contracted either by a manager seeking coaching (executive coaching) or by the supervisor or personnel manager.

Goals of Coaching

The goals of coaching directly relate to the coaching grounds:

Amplification of leadership skills (1), coping with crisis (2), finding new orientation (3), reducing overload (4), ensuring quick integration into a new role (5), successfully designing a change process (6).

Over and above this, we make sure that whatever the grounds, in the course of the coaching two additional goals are achieved.

a) Expanding the managers self-management ability

A manager cannot simply lean back and implement the suggestions of the coach. A coach is not a supplement manager. By means of the coaching the manager should be positioned in such a fashion, that he is able to reflect on himself and visualize all activities and the consequences of thereof, gain new operational perspectives and continuously expand on his leadership performance. Depending on the situation, the consultant or coach can be an ideal sparring partner, can provide reflection support or professional expertise and bring in methodical suggestions. Besides being a short-term concrete help, the goal is also a medium-term strengthening of the leadership performance.

b) Ensuring the inclusion of the business context.

By building the required confidential relationship between coach and the coachee, a wide range of topics become approachable. Personal topics, obstacles or potentials can be revised. The organizational reality and organizational strategy however, must not be neglected. It is not about the individual goal or interest of a single manager. Coaching always entails the incorporation of the coaching-topics into a strategic overall departmental or organizational goal. We integrate this angle into the coaching in order to forestall the possibility of a manager forgetting the larger context.

The Process

The coaching normally takes place in 6 phases:

1. Contracting discussion with the client and coachee

When the coachee is also the one contracting, then he is the one the discussion is held with. In some situations, it might make sense to include a superior or other organizational promoter into the contract. If the head of personnel, the superior or other person is issuing the contract, the contracting discussion will be held with all three parties. Alternatively, two separate discussions may be held; one with the client followed by a discussion with the coachee.



During the contracting discussion the starting position is described, the goals for the coaching are defined, the extent of the coaching is determined and confidentiality is discussed (which information is passed on to the client, which is confidential?); the success factors are determined and the first coaching session is arranged.

As a prerequisite for successful coaching, the suitability of the coach and coachee is also established at this point. In the event that in our opinion, the intended coaching is not the right measure, we will make the client aware of this and will advise of more applicable, alternative measures.

2. Coaching-start

During the first coaching session the initial situation, grounds and the underlying problems are intensively analysed. In each individual case, appropriate coaching methods and tools are applied. Based on this analysis, initial solutions evolve, which in turn lead to action plans. We have found it to be beneficial if the potential analysis Power-Potential-Profile® is carried out and the analysed during the first coaching session. This first coaching session generally takes a full day, minimum half a day.

3. Conducting the Power-Potential-Profile® potential analysis

The Power-Potential-Profile® potential analysis is conducted via a password secured online questionnaire. The coachee takes about 50 minutes of his time to answer all the questions. Additionally, the Power-Potential-Profile® can include an external evaluation by a superior or a 360-Degree-Feedback. The external evaluator will be required to allow 15 minutes to answer the questions, also submitted via the internet. There are several versions of the analysis, for managers (Leadership) and for sales representatives (Sales). The results of the analysis are discussed in the first or second coaching session. The advantage of this analysis is that in conjunction with the coachee, the coach can find quicker access to the relevant topics for this person. By working through these key areas the coaching achieves a higher degree of effectivity and the coaching goals are achieved more quickly. Additional information on the Power-Potential-Profile® is available at www.flow.de in the Leadership section or at www.Powerpotentialprofile.de.

4. Installing action plans in the day-to-day business

The action plans compiled in the first coaching sessions are put into practice by the coachee. As a rule, the coach holds telephone contact with the coachee; this enables the immediate reflection of implementation, effect and difficulties of planned intervention.

5. Further Coaching Sessions

flow coaching generally shows positive impact after the first half day session. Depending on the goal setting, one session might be enough. Should longer accompaniment be necessary, several coaching segments encompassing 1 to 5 sessions can be contracted. Whether or not a subsequent session is needed is decided after each segment. Subsequent sessions are normally held with 2 to 8



week intervals. We do not work on an hourly basis during coaching, each session lasts for a minimum of half a day, mostly outside the office and workplace. This allows for sufficient distance, uninterrupted by the operational business and a more effective discussion of fundamental questions. The extent of the session allows for a more effective strengthening of self-responsibility than would be possible in a one-hour session.

6. Evaluation of the results with the contractor and coachee

To conclude the coaching, the results (excluding the confidential topics) are presented to the contractor. This provides the contractor with all necessary information concerning the goal setting. This form of transparency supports the integration of the measures into the central departmental and organizational goals. If the contractor is the manager, this information offers him the chance to carry on supporting the coachee as a mentor during this development process.

Coaching-Approach and Methods

The methods we use during our coaching sessions are associated with the grounds and goal of the coaching and aligned with the potential analysis result.

Decisive factors for the coaching, besides coachee's readiness to conform, are the competence and experience of the coach as well as the selected method.

This is why it is important, that the coach possesses comprehensive competencies and is not committed to a particular school of method. One-sided techniques, occasionally still practiced by coaching services, are developed on the conviction of a therapist who methodically label their profile in comparison to that of other therapist. The flow consulting coaches however, are from a practical organization consulting background and not life counselling or therapy. Our coaches nevertheless hold the necessary psychological expertise. We pragmatically integrate the necessary methods and utilize effective concepts. Two basic principals govern our activities:

1. We support and strengthen

We orientate our operations in alignment with resource and solutions. At times, it may make sense to find and clarify the root of a problem within the biography of a person. However, if it is about coaching and not about therapy, this is quite often the wrong approach. If we arouse the resources within each person, we can accomplish faster and better results. This kicks off a success cycle (discover abilities – apply abilities – achieve effects – discover new abilities etc.), which can set off the development process more rapidly. At the same time, we will also point out the risks, blinders, blind spots and problems of the person in question; because new, successful and long-term tactics can only be pursued, if the problems are perceived. If certain psychotherapeutic issues need to be addressed, we will not tackle these ourselves, but will recommend respective professionals.

2. We introduce hidden perspectives



Coaching can be helpful in many situations. Coaching can however, when incorrectly applied, also be very problematic and create more problems, than it solves. Coaching is a measure involving only two persons. If this coaching takes place isolated, detached from the organizational goals, masking the perspectives of others or providing one-sided interpretation, it can lead to a narrowing of options and counterproductive solutions. This is why we see it as the responsibility of the coach, to introduce the hidden perspectives into the coaching. A few examples of hidden perspectives:

- The principle: I have no influence.
Negating the correlation of ones own action on other persons or the system.
- The principle: It has nothing to do with me.
Ones own participation in the problem is negated.
- The principle: I just want to know what I am supposed to do.
The responsibility of ones own leadership actions is passed on.
- The principle: Nothing can be done about it.
Complexity and impact of activity is reduced to seemingly absolute facts.
- The principle: Things are as I see them.
The perspectives of others are negated. Ones own opinion is made out to be the absolute.

Our coaches are trained in several methods and apply them purposefully and it is vital, that the correct method is chosen. To help visualize this, here is a list of a few coaching methods:

a) The Coaching Dialogue

The most important form of intervention in coaching is dialogue: Active listening, asking questions (even unconventional ones), exchanging opinions, introducing new perspectives, confronting, offering a looking glass perception, slipping in to the role of others, putting arguments into perspective, developing solutions, extracting thoughts and so on. This sounds simple; however, the success of a coach does not depend on how much methodical diversion he instigates, but on what effect he achieves. Successful dialogue requires a large spectrum of abilities and experience.

b) Expert Service

In flow coaching dialogue, self-reflection, analysis, exercises and solution development are occasionally supplemented with expert services. This expertise is part of the repertoire of the coach, for instance his knowledge and experience of the industry, a specific specialist subject or in the form of expert knowledge in Change Management. An additional expert can be called in, alternatively the coach conducts research or commissions studies of which the insights are then integrated into the coaching process.



c) Power-Potential-Profile®

The potential analysis Power-Potential-Profile® has been briefly commented on above. This analysis, which may include an integrated 360-Degree-Feedback, swiftly brings the relevant topics to the surface.

d) Reiss Profile

It is beneficial to supplement the Power-Potential-Profile® with motivational analysis. This itemizes the motivational structure of the coach, which enables a speedy description of intrinsic factors that drive the manager's actions.

e) Organization Feedback

The consultant can gain feedback with the aid of employee, colleague and superior interviews but also through analysis or field observation in the organization. By means of the analysis of the external consultant, the perception of the coachee can be expanded.

f) Relationship Network Analysis

By means of a Relationship-Network-Analysis, the system of relationships becomes apparent, in which the manager moves within an organization. Who is a key player, who is the promoter, who is isolated, who slows down? Coherences in the relationship network become visible from which conclusions can be drawn.

g) Force Analysis

A force analysis rates the factors that influence a topic, a project or a department and assigns positive, neutral or negative impact to these factors. This enables a smoother navigation of these forces.

h) Reframing

Sometimes one becomes caught up in the mindset or assessment of a situation. In this case it is helpful to conduct a so-called Reframing, changing the frame and assessments. This allows many a thing to be viewed from a different perspective. A reframing must be meticulously tailored in order for it to impact and open up the mind map for the next actions.

i) Role-play

Role-play can be conducted in various ways. Sometimes the coach slips into the role of the manager and symbolises behavioural patterns. The coach can also enact the role of an absent party and thus visualize a dispute. The coachee can also slip into the role of a colleague, superior, customer, partner, associate and so on. Psycho-dramatic elements can enhance the role-play and intensify the experience.



j) Behaviour Training

Behaviour training exercises help to train specific behavioural patterns, to fasten and anchor them. The successful repetition of behavioural patterns, even in simulation, provides stability and strengthens accommodating automatism.

k) Telephone or E-Mail Coaching

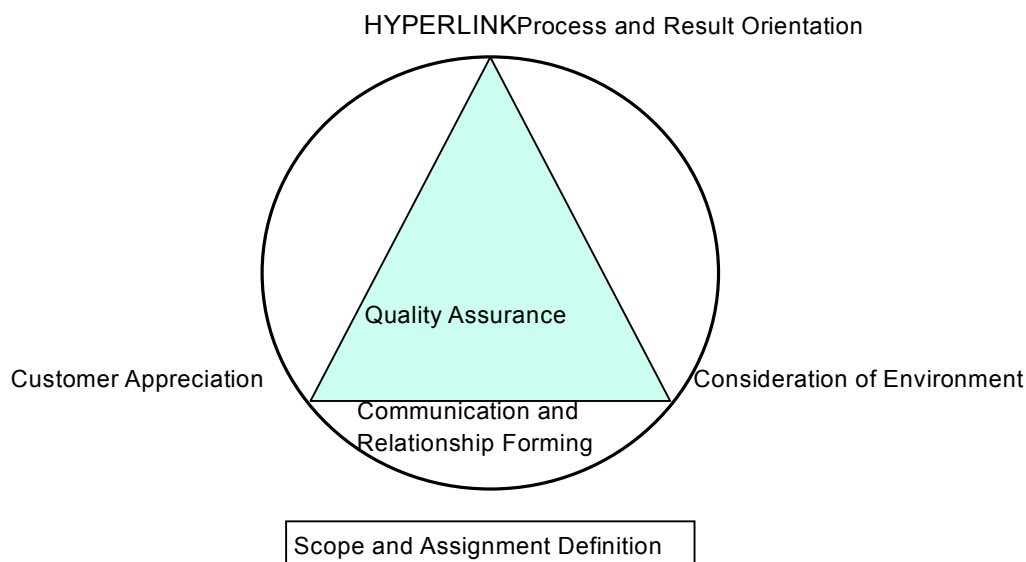
Besides the half or full day coaching session, direct communication per telephone or e-mail can be necessary. This provides realtime reflection and support.

l) Diary / To-Do-List / Protocol

A coaching diary, a to-do-list or coaching protocol assist in capturing the learned. A conversation, even in a coaching, can be fleeting once the day-to-day business and routine sets in. Behavioural patterns of managers have been developed over a long period of practice and can quickly re-integrated into the behaviour of the coachee. Where several patterns are to be changed, learning aids, consolidation, repetition, commitment and consequence are required.

Prof. Dr. Harald Geißler worded the necessary competences of a coach in a quality catalogue. Verify that these criteria are fulfilled, when hiring a coach.

Demands on Quality in a Coach



Source: www.coaching-gutachten.de (Graph according to Prof. Dr. Harald Geißler)



Prof. Dr. Harald Geißler extensively describes the 6 following topics in a competency profile:

1. Scope and Assignment Definition
2. Customer Appreciation
3. Consideration of Environment
4. Communication and Relationship Forming
5. Process and Result Orientation
6. Quality Assurance

A coach must display extensive competencies in all 6 fields to be able to perform professionally and effectively during a coaching.

You can read the abbreviated version of Prof. Dr. Harald Geißlers competence profile in the following table. The text is based on the abbreviated version published in the magazine *managerSeminare* No. 2/2005. The full version is available to read at www.coaching-gutachten.de

Quality Criteria One-To-One Coaching (Coach Competency Profile)

Scope and Assignment Definition

The Coach...

- Has diverse background knowledge on coaching.
- Is able to assess whether coaching is the correct measure during the definition of the assignment.
- Has a good working knowledge of methods, which will enable him to discern concealed expectations and goals beyond the expressed ones.
- Has a good working knowledge of developing coaching designs, which will provide sufficient coverage of clients' problems.
- Has a good working knowledge of techniques and strategies for professional negotiations.
- Has the ability to estimate the success potential of an assignment and coaching.

Customer Appreciation

The Coach...

- Has a wide range of knowledge on problem solving and problem evasion behaviour, of learning and personality development.
- Displays empathy and the ability to differentiate the stipulations of the client.
- Can structure facts and based on these, form substantial hypothesis.
- Can identify the clients resources with potential for development and build a differentiated picture for himself under which these can unfold to the full.
- Has a good working knowledge of methods by means of which he, in discussions with his client, is able to validate his hypothesis.

Consideration of Environment

The Coach...

- Has differentiated management knowledge on the meaning of organizational structure, -strategy and -culture.
- Can clearly identify which facts of the organizational environment are relevant to the problems.
- Can develop valid hypothesis from the asserted information.
- Has a good working knowledge of methods that enable the client to see his environment clearly.
- Has a good working knowledge of methods with which he can comprehend how others are assessing him.
- Has a good working knowledge of methods with which he can help the customer discern what would happen in his environment if he changed his behaviour.



Communication and Relationship Forming

The Coach...

- Has diverse knowledge of communication, client centred and consultant guided dialogue and on balancing of empathetic proximity and analytical distance as well as the meaning of appreciation of good client contact.
- Is able to balance the tension between empathy and analysis.
- Can adapt to the client verbally and non-verbally.
- Can utilize "active listening" and interview techniques as diagnostic and intervention tools.
- Can visualize and convey his thoughts comprehensibly.

Process and Success Orientation

The Coach.....

- Has a good working knowledge of methods by means of which he can support the client in distinguishing the coaching goals and the identifying, implementation and success verification of problem solving measures.
- Can provide the client with orientation i.e. by determining the location.
- Can assess tests and potential-analysis-procedures and implement these as diagnostic- and intervention tools.
- Is able to ensure an emotionally positive learning environment.
- Can identify at which point it is appropriate to provide the client with problem solving hints and has a good working knowledge of methods that help him to verify these critically.
- Is able to confront the mental constructions of the client critically.
- Can provide feedback on strengths, weaknesses and potentials.

Quality Assurance

The Coach.....

- Has a wide range of knowledge coaching approaches.
- Has the financial freedom and self-commitment to turn down assignments if there is reason to doubt the success.
- Has the self-determination to systematically document and assess each session.
- Can decide when he is in need of supervision, colleague support or advanced training.
- Has a clear concept of his values, favoured hypothesis and interventions, as well as of when and how he is endangered by transference and projection during his assignments.
- Cultivates networks and observes the coaching market enabling him to approach new developments.

Coaching Examples

The description of the following three coaching examples has been abbreviated; names, organizations as well as persons have been changed. Only passages of the coaching are described, preserving the confidentiality of the coachee. However, you will catch a glimpse of the possible coaching routine.

Example 1 – Change Process despite Opposition

Industry: Mechanical Engineering

Reason: Change-Project

Client: Sales Manager Mr. Müller (Coachee)

Scope: 3 Sessions 1 day each, including contracting and appraisal

Initial Situation: The sales department of the organization is due to be restructured. The Sales Manager is the driving force of this change project. The customer structure is changing; there are more and more contacts at international level. More and more of the contracting takes place via the home office. Besides



engineering, more and more customers involve the sales department. The sales structure of the organization is to be adapted to these circumstances. This implicates the change of regionally dictated structure to a customer-orientated structure as well as a tighter integration of field sales with the administrative departments and inside sales.

Goal-Setting: By means of the coaching, the Sales Manager intended to gather the necessary know-how for this change project. He wanted to reflect the conducted steps with a change-professional. Over and above this, he wanted to use the project to expand on his leadership competencies and learn more about his leadership personality.

Methods: Coaching-Dialogue, Power-Potential-Profile®, Reiss Profile™, Skilled input on Change Management, Confrontation training, Relationship-Network-Analysis, Force-Analysis, To-Do-List with Milestones.

Selected content aspects: The coaching became very effective through the combination of personal learning elements (feedback, confrontation training, Power-Potential-Profile®, Reiss Profile™) and through the planning and reflecting of the steps of the change management. The analysis of the Power-Potential-Profile® for instance brought to the fore, that Mr. Müller is a very innovative person, who initiates many projects, inspires others and leads his employees down the targeted route. This was very clearly seen throughout the Change-Process: at the outset of the process, Mr. Müller was able to convince his team of the logic and necessity of the project and gained many active supporters and collaborators. On the other hand, however, the analysis also showed that Mr. Müller seldom finds the energy to follow through the projects he initiated. Once he initiates a project, it very quickly becomes unimportant to him. He prefers to jump into the next project. This difficulty is also apparent in the process of this concrete project. After putting across the first goals, Mr. Müller thought things should continue by themselves. He became involved in other things. A change project however seldom runs itself. More and more problems arose in the implementation, which Mr. Müller brushed away light-handedly. The employees however, who were experiencing these difficulties through the intense contact to the customers were beginning to demonstrate frustration. They had the feeling that their suggestions and their description of the difficulties were not being taken seriously and seen the entire project endangered. During the coaching Mr. Müller learned a lot about the underlying principles of a change project and quickly implemented many of the steps planned during his coaching. However, he initially did not want to accept the fact that he was not proving consistent in seeing things through. By means of the Power-Potential-Profile® and Reiss Profile™ results, which the coach had strengthened through the confrontation training, he eventually permitted the subject as a hypothetical part of the curriculum. Amongst others, the coach asked the following question: "Let us assume, that it was in reality as the analysis show it is, how would that affect your behaviour?" With the help of this hypothesis, Mr. Müller consented to the experiment of discussing this topic in his inner circle of associates. Hence, within the framework of the change project, he conducted a reflective round table discussion in which he wanted to test this hypothesis. He asked his associates: "Frankly, how do you view the current situation: That we are encountering a steady growth of resistance against the change-project and the difficulties of the last months are being defined by many as irresolvable, is that



also due the fact, that I personally am already becoming strongly involved in the follow-up project?" During the coaching, Mr. Müller reported the answers he received from his associates. Initially there was a very careful discussion, then gradually evolving into a more open discussion amongst the associates. As Mr. Müller was not defending himself and permitting the responses, the associates became more definite. Mr. Müller was forced to hear, that he himself had not been pursuing many of the topics. He had not kept to some of the commitments that he himself had made. He could not even remember them. In one case, he was supposed to acquire backing from the board of managers. He had neglected to do so, brushed it aside as inconsequential and hence displaced it. The subject however, still hung in the air. The board had meanwhile made a decision, which was running counter-productive to the objectives of the project. This feedback proved to be a key factor in the coaching of the leadership competencies of Mr. Müller. For him it became the most important learning curve. Now he was ready to work on the issue.

Result: The change-project is now successfully completed. The results sought for have become visible. Mr. Müller's reputation in the organization has visibly increased, as he was the most important promoter of the project. He has now taken the next step in his career and is in charge of a responsible role at international level.

Example 2 – Preparation for a new Role with Turnaround-Assignment

Industry: Hotel Business

Reason: Role Change

Contractor: Board / Hotel Corporate Management

Scope: 1 Contracting meeting with the client, 1 Coaching session with the client and coachee, 1 Coaching session with the coachee, 1 Assessment discussion with the client, coach and coachee.

Initial Situation: One of the Hotel Corporate sites had been running in the red for a few years. Several workshops with the management team of the hotel had not brought any improvement to the situation. The enforcement of the agreed on-site measures with the current hotel director and the department team was not successful. Based on this, the decision was made to replace the current director. A new hotel director was sought, who would manage the turnaround. An assessment of associates within the Hotel Corporate brought to the fore replacement alternatives. Mr. Müller, already an associate of the corporate, is identified as potential candidate (talented) during the assessment. He is presumed to have the ability to take on the problematic site and manage the turnaround. However, this is the first time Mr. Müller is to tackle an assignment at this scale. This prompts management to provide him with a coach to kick off this assignment.

Goal Setting: The success of the turnaround is to be secured; the problem analysis to be simplified for Mr. Müller. The first measures that Mr. Müller implements are to be reflected and aligned with the help of a coach. The coaching is to help Mr.



Müller cope with his new challenge. To do this he needs to develop his leadership skills swiftly. The turnaround is to be achieved quickly as there is a high level of pressure from finance. This means, that Mr. Müller's first interventions must take immediate effect.

Methods: Coaching-dialogue, Feedback on Strength-Weakness-Profile based on Assessment, Mystery-Shopping in the Hotel, Relationship-Network-Analysis, Force-Analysis, Structural Changes, Project Plan, To-Do-List with Milestones, Telephone Coaching.

Contracting discussion and preliminary Analysis: Following the contracting discussion with the client (the Managing Director of the Hotel Corporate) it was agreed, that a detailed problem report was to be conducted. Prior to the first coaching session, Mr. Müller is to get a personal impression of the hotel. In addition, the coach is to assert the current service level by means of a mystery shopper. The to-date development of the Hotel, including environment analysis (figures, customer structure, previous interventions and their effect, market data and so on) are provided by the Managing Director. This encompassing analysis of the initial situation is important for a wide scaled problem report. If you only have the Managing Director describe the initial situation, the only thing brought into the perspective is that, which is described by the current data. The new Hotel Director bringing in his personal interpretation of the current situation allows him to prove his analytical skills. He gained his insights through his on-site observations, several discussions with the department managers, associates, customers and guests. Of course, he also internalized the data provided. It was important for him, not to take any steps respecting personnel or processes; he let various meetings be conducted in the same manner as they had been in the past and merely observed the department managers holding the meetings. The coach conducted a mystery shopping, incorporating further aspects from the customers/guests point of view into the analysis.

First Coaching-Session: The first coaching session was conducted with three attendees: The Coach, Mr. Müller and the Managing Director. Some may class this kind of session consulting. However, for us this is directly linked to the coaching. The Managing Director best knows the history of the hotel; he can clearly convey his goals and provide support for the analysis within the first session. The findings of the problem analysis conducted by Mr. Müller, the Managing Director and the Coach were compiled and interpreted. As agreed, the Managing Director held back his suggestions for solutions. This would have been counterproductive for the development of Mr. Müller's leadership potential as Mr. Müller was to manage the hotel, not the Managing Director. This requires a certain amount of scope for decision-making. Next to the compilation of the findings, a Relationship-Network-Analysis was conducted. With the help of this analysis, all of the participants were made aware of the informal network between the employees. This first coaching session took up more or less half a day (8am to 4pm).

Second Coaching-Session: The second coaching session was conducted the same day (4pm to 11pm). The Managing Director left the room for this period, leaving Mr. Müller and the Coach working alone. Due to the Relationship-Network-Analysis, certain conclusions could be made, which would ensure a positive switch



amongst the department managers. The influence on these networks is driven by key figures.

Who can be won over as a supporter of the turnaround process?

For which key positions are new associates needed?

Which measures will quickly stabilize the site?

What areas are best to apply leverage for a strong short-term effect?

On the one hand, dealing with these and similar questions leads to a concrete To-Do-List, on the other hand it develops Mr. Müller's strategic thinking.

Third Coaching-Session: The following day, the To-Do-List was agreed with the Managing Director.

In what areas does Mr. Müller require management support?

Which decisions can he not make on his own?

As the Managing Director was present, they were in the position to initiate decisions that could only be made by the Corporate Board. At this point, Mr. Müller tried to requisition the Managing Directors backing for measures that were not only short, but also medium termed. For some of the measures, Mr. Müller would need time to establish himself as leader. He has to position himself as the recognized principle reasonably quick.

Fourth Coaching-Session: On the afternoon of the second day, the Coach and Mr. Müller carried on working without the Managing Director. The initial action plan had been outlined. Mr. Müller was to assess his strengths and weaknesses based on the new leadership role. This allows him to increase his ability to reflect, which will help him continuously assess his actions and optimise them going forward, after the coaching. Feedback analysis was applied; mental training and brief role-play sessions, preparing Mr. Müller for the next months as Hotel Director.

Telephone Coaching: After two days of intensive coaching the next steps were followed through via telephone consulting. Mr. Müller only rarely had the chance to take a time-out during the first months. By means of telephone accompaniment by the Coach, the first effects of the measures were discussed, new difficulties were discussed and new solutions agreed.

Assessment-Discussion: After six months an assessment discussion was conducted with the client and Mr. Müller:

- Which results had been achieved to date?
- Is the action plan working?
- How is the work motivation amongst the associates coming along, which indicators are the business results showing?
- What kind of feedback was the Hotel receiving from the guests and customers regarding the change of philosophy?
- How was Mr. Müller experiencing his role as leader?
- Which competencies was he able to enhance and how did he cope with his weaknesses?

Outcome: Kicking off the coaching, the target was to successfully achieve the preliminary requirements within the first six months, work with a positive economical tendency in the following six months. However, the indices already showed a positive tendency within the first six months. Over and above this, Mr. Müller had established himself as successful Hotel Director. He proved to have a



keen eye in strategic matters, reflecting on his own work well and feeling very secure in his new role. Based on this, the decision was made, that no further coaching session would be necessary. Mr. Müller was to call on the support of flow consulting should the necessity arise for support on a specific matter.

Example 3 – Orientation as Entrepreneur

Industry: Retail

Reason: Orientation

Client: Owner and Managing Director Mr. Müller (Coachee)

Scope: 12 sessions lasting one or half day each, over a period of 2 years, telephone coaching between sessions.

Methods: Coaching-Dialogue, Telephone-Coaching, Force-Analysis, Relationship-Network-Analysis, Expert Advice, Power-Potential-Profile®, Organization-Feedback, Coaching Protocol.

Initial Situation: A long-established retail company with ca. 600 employees takes a close look at organizational succession. The company is managed by the owner and has a small second tier management team. The company can look back at a 50-year-old success story. In the past few years, new challenges have presented themselves to the company due to a change in the buying behaviour of the customers as well as massively growing competition and opposition. The company is in need of a suitable change of course to ensure its survival. The current owner (Mr. Müller senior) will retire in 5 years time. His son has been in a managing position for close to a year, to help him assess, whether or not the role is the right one for him. He originally had planned a different career. However, he gave way to the cajoling of the senior and let himself into a 3-year test phase. After the first months of breaking-in, Mr. Müller junior decides to let himself be accompanied by a coach.

Goal-Setting: Mr. Müller wants the chance of having an uninvolved sparring partner. On the one side, the coach is to help him make strategic and operational decisions, to help Mr. Müller get used to his new role. On the other side, he wants to assess and develop his leadership skills with the help of a coach. He wants to do this to support him in making a well-founded decision as to whether he is to take on the executive role permanently.

1st Phase: Establishing trust and Expert Advice: More than anything else, the initial relationship between Mr. Müller and the Coach was built on establishing trust. The Coaching-Dialogue started; most of the topics were discussed from the Expert Advice point of view. This primarily helped Mr. Müller with the quality of his operational decision-making. In the process of the coaching Mr. Müller opened up to his coach more and more, allowing topics at a more personal level, which were strongly associated with sensitive company data, to be discussed in later sessions. In professional coaching it is understood, that confidentiality must be strictly adhered to, but still a level of trust needs to be established anew, with each client.



The expert advice mostly related to industry-associated topics (market development, retail landscape, competition etc.). Additionally questions pertaining to organizational leadership and personnel management as well as a few personal questions were cleared up. The coaching steps developed in the process of working together.

2nd Phase: Confrontation: From session to session the coach was able to, and indeed had to, work more confrontationally. The confronting techniques helped Mr. Müller perceive his masked weaknesses and to work on them. The Power-Potential-Profile® not only gave Mr. Müller a new perspective of his personal strengths and leadership skills, he also gained encompassing feedback on his leadership activities from his management team. The Coach conducted an Organization-Diagnosis, which helped Mr. Müller to view his company from an external, professional point of view. The management and employees were asked for their evaluation of the company, mystery shopping as well as competition and location analyses were conducted. A leadership workshop carried out with the full management team provided new accentuation. Due to the continuously tightening financial situation, the goal of distinctive enhancement of profitability became more and more predominant.

3rd Phase: Key Topics: Three key topic became evident that had to be worked through if the coaching was to be successful:

- a) Mr. Müller's lack of consistent implementation; though he displayed openness for a variety of ideas and methods, he preferred to develop one idea after the next without consistent implementation of any one idea. He lacked the necessary persistency to stick with a topic, i.e. focussing on a central topic with high leverage and distinctly pursuing it into every detail and level.
- b) The medium sized and deadlocked organizational culture; many of the employees were stuck in a rut of long standing mindsets and took a great deal of convincing to go along with the cautious change of direction in the company.
- c) The emerging conflict with Mr. Müller senior; he let his son try many things but kept interfering in day-to-day decisions uncoordinatedly. This led to a lot of employees receiving conflicting information and decisions.

4th Phase: Breakthrough: After these key topics had been identified and Mr. Müller realized he had to act, the following interventions were agreed and carried out:

On a) Mr. Müller's consistency: With the help of strategy workshops the ideas and options for organizational development were evaluated. Key managers also participated in these workshops. It became evident, that the company lacked clear directives. Mr. Müller had to learn to be consistent in one direction and not to become tied up in too many ideas.

On b) deadlocked culture: For 3 months Mr. Müller delved into the basics of his company. He himself had worked as a sales representative (something he had never done before) and spoke to his customers about their expectations, satisfaction and critics; he held on-to-one's with on-site employees and found out a lot about their daily routines. Besides providing him with basic information, these conversations allowed him to convey his vision for development of the company. Doing so gained him his employees respect. His acceptance as new manager grew, as he had acquired in depth knowledge of the company, the industry and the customers. On route, Mr. Müller had removed several employees who were blocking his way. The impression of many employees "He is a nice guy, but



clueless” was corrected in towards;”He means business. He has become acquainted with the business, knows his stuff and has an idea that might work.”
On c) Conflict with Senior: A joint discussion with Mr. Müller, the Coach and Mr. Müller senior took place in order to work through the conflicts. It became apparent, that Mr. Müller senior was not aware, that his intervening decisions undermined the authority and the directional decisions of his son. Agreements were met, which would allow a better coordination between senior and junior.

Outcome: After 2 years of coaching, the tracks were set for a new organizational direction. It was now clear to Mr. Müller that he wanted to carry on managing the company himself. He is confident he can do the job and finds his motivation in his personal maturation and further development of the company. Mr. Müller senior is also confident of his son’s abilities and has largely stepped back from the operational side of the business. After a brief drop, the company is now back in black. The distribution and supplier structure is re-aligned. Management has established ongoing employee training. Transparency and key financial indicators have grown, which strengthens the on site managers ability to act. The strategic direction has been communicated and is constantly being worked upon. A management team is in place, which actively supports Mr. Müller’s philosophy and is part of its development and implementation. However, at the end of the coaching there is still one risk left: Sometimes Mr. Müller wants too much simultaneously and gets frittered up. He has to continue focussing on the main topics, to allow him a consistent implementation of key decisions. He is aware of this risk and will (hopefully) remind himself of the coaching.

Résumé

Coaching is not effective in all cases. However, there are reasons for a goal-orientated, rapidly effective and beneficial coaching. The preliminaries, competencies and methods of the coach need to be aligned. Closely assess what your requirements are and make sure you are proposed a useful process during the initial discussion.

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