

Solitude Standing Coaching as a New Leadership Development Method

ÉVA HEIDRICH
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

e-mail: szv1655@uni-miskolc.hu

SUMMARY

Leadership is lonely business. Leaders have always found themselves alone in time of crisis and when it was about making tough decisions. Coaching as a service is intended to decrease this loneliness with the appearance of a supportive partner, who is not there for professional advises but who is there with paying attention, with listening without prejudice and with asking questions in these hard times, thus developing the skills of the leader.

With the appearance of coaching as an activity in leadership studies many questions arise regarding its relation with HRM and leadership development. This study aims to define coaching in the broader sense and also emphasizing the differences from other leadership development methods, thus marking the distinct characteristics of it. Coaching is not only used in business. It is widely used effectively in other segments of life. However the present study is limited to define and characterize types of business coaching. Therefore this paper is laying the ground with defining the different coaching categories.

INTRODUCTION

Being a manager is a lonely activity. When you have to make hard decisions and critical moments come, you always remain alone. Coaching services partly undertake to reduce and eliminate this type of loneliness by the provision of a supporting partner who, instead of giving professional advice, helps in these moments with his/her attention and questions without passing judgements and thus contributes to the manager's development.

With the appearance of coaching in management science, several new questions arise concerning its relationship with human resources management and management development methods. The paper aims to mark out the place of this new method of management development in the changing and development process of human resources management as well as in the system of established management development methods. In order to achieve this, it aims to give as comprehensive a definition of coaching activities as possible, underlining its difference from other similar methods.

Coaching is a development method applied outside the business sector, as well. Its application has proved useful in several other areas of life. The limits of this paper, however, only allow the identification and characterisation of business coaching types.

After the definition of coaching categories, the paper gives an overview of coaching-type management, its past

and background in management theory and its justification.

Finally, through giving an overview of the Hungarian scene, the paper presents the appearance and spread of coaching activities in the Hungarian business sector.

THE ORIGINS OF COACHING

In order to understand and properly define coaching, it is worth investigating the origins of the word and the changes in the activities denoted by it. Such an investigation reveals both the past and the special semantic changes of the expression.

In examining its origins, the changes of the word itself and the activities denoted by it should be separated.

However amazing it may be, the origin of the word goes back to a small Hungarian settlement, the village of *Kocs* in Northern Transdanubia. It is to this village with over a thousand years' past that the first vehicle in human history possessing two rotating wheels (*kocsi* in Hungarian) owes its name as it was first made here. It revolutionised transport in its time and added a new word to the vocabulary, the English version of which has the form *coach*.

Along with its form, its meaning has also changed and extended. Students started to call their favourite teachers by this name, those who did not only give them

knowledge but also educated them, giving advice and help in their problems.

As early as in ancient Roman times, people were perfectly aware that education is not equivalent with cramming a certain amount of knowledge into pupils but it rather means helping them to become aware of their own knowledge and abilities. The word 'education' originates from Latin *educō*, the meaning of which is "pull out, evoke".

Before the Romans, Socrates developed the form of education now called dialectics or "Socrates-type dialogue", with which he called up unconscious knowledge in his pupils, knowledge that they were unaware of, by asking a series of questions and then evaluating their answers and the related associations. (Chapman – Best – Casteren, 2003) Besides education, the field where we come across the concept of coach and coaching most often is the psychology of sport. The new and best-known, most often used meaning of the word is "trainer" (coaching=training). In the field of sport, the first publications (1975) were written about tennis and golf in relation to the content of coaching activities (Horváth, 2004), which can be summarised as follows:

- getting to know the athlete's character and physical organism
- the elaboration of a development plan in accordance with this
- the monitoring of the athlete's psychological and physical conditions
- the continuous development of the athlete for the purpose of achieving ever better performance
- the detection and elimination of factors hindering the increase of performance
- motivating to achieve commonly set goals

The next stage is the area of psychotherapy: Carl Rogers created the school which assists the patient in finding the best solution through reflective presence and attention. The principles of the Rogers school can be found in most business communication techniques. The theory is utilised in several fields in the business world but its application meant the greatest breakthrough in the area of coaching, where, if the activities defined here are compared with the earlier definitions of coaching, it can be concluded that the content of the activity has not changed just its name has been modified in accordance with the language of the business sector. Both in sport and business, the coach is the person who gives help in the achievement and maintenance of excellence, and his/her development activity is coaching.

The activity well-known in sport psychology was put in the focus of attention by a research conducted in the US which studied the careers of successful top athletes who started an enterprise after finishing their sporting career (Chmelár, 2005). According to research results, these enterprises achieved success in a very high degree. The research also revealed that the subjects' sporting attitude, i.e. their performance-oriented approach and permanent urge for development supported by the coach, had played

a great role in their success. Thus the special relationship between the athlete and the coach was emphasized, which has gained ground since in the business sector, too, as experience testifies.

This takes us to the penetration of coaching activities into management science. The appearance of coaching brought a new type of methodology, which deals with people with personalised methods, tailored to their particular needs, which respect and appreciate their characters. Coaching helps them to get to know themselves better and do their work both with greater awareness and success. It gives assistance to managers who are dissatisfied with their achievement within the organisation, have management and cooperation problems, are isolated or would like to see the conditions of the organisation in a new light and want to clarify both their own visions and plans for the future and those of the organisation. 'It is amazing how rarely a lot of clever, highly motivated and obviously responsible people stop to think over their behaviour and its consequences. Instead of more careful consideration and because of always feeling an urge for permanent progressing, managers may get into top positions without being aware of their limits. Coaching makes them focus on consciousness and watch the effects evoked by their words and actions. This enables them to recognise their opportunities instead of simple responding.' (Sherman – Freas, 2004)

THE DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPT OF COACHING

Whenever a new management term appears, dozens of definitions are coined to fill the conceptual vacuum. It was no different in the case of coaching, either. Several definitions exist which in many cases describe the activity from different angles. Beyond the variedness of the coaching activity, the great number of definitions reveal that neither its content nor its relationship with related methods (the differences between them) have been properly investigated. In the following section, a possibly comprehensive definition of coaching activities is given from different viewpoints (management theory, communication, methodology), which is then contrasted with similar management-counseling methods from which it should be distinguished for the sake of an unambiguous definition.

Coaching is a *supporting relationship* between the customer with managerial authority and the coach, within the framework of a formally defined agreement for the purpose of achieving commonly defined goals. These goals are basically related to the enhancement of professional performance and personal satisfaction and thus to the efficiency of the customer's organisation. The coach primarily does not facilitate the development of the manager on a professional basis but rather through the

development of his/her skills and abilities and a shift in attitude. (Heidrich, 2004)

Coaching is an *approach* based on the assumption that the customer is capable of developing and finding solutions to his/her current problems. Activising the manager's inner forces, coaching urges him/her to find his/her own solutions, thus inducing greater commitment and responsibility in the manager to perform the necessary changes and make the related decisions than any other method. The objective of the activity is to bring to the surface the creative solutions hidden in the customer and eliminate the obstacles in the way of implementation. Through studying the different patterns and old routines thoroughly, the coach may urge his/her customer to adopt so far untested forms of behaviour with the objective to enhance the customer's performance and reveal his/her learning abilities.

Coaching is a *dialogue* conducted in a performance-oriented context, the parts of which are, in addition to feedback, motivation, efficient question-making and the conscious shift of approach on the part of the coach depending on how much the customer is ready to perform the given task. It is by no means one-way communication, in the course of which the coach would

tell the customer what to do and give instructions as to how. It is rather about posing the proper questions than giving ready answers. Coaching helps to bring to the surface answers that the customer probably already knows but has never formulated clearly. (Horváth, 2003)

Coaching is about learning but it should never be forgotten that, on the one hand, the coach is not a teacher, and on the other, he/she does not need to know anything better than his/her customer. (Zeus – Skiffington, 2000; Landsberg, 1997; in Horváth, 2003)

If we consider coaching to be a part of the manager's work, then it is 'a *communication process* which ensures staff development and the achievement of expected performance.' It is not only a process to urge staff to enhance performance but to give them guidance and assistance in making up for their shortcomings for the sake of achieving higher performance. (Elbert – Farkas, 2000)

In terminological clarification, it is important to distinguish coaching from other ways of counselling. It is most often associated with therapy, training, mentoring and counselling. Table 1 gives a short definition of these as well as a list of features which distinguish them from coaching.

Table 1. The comparison of coaching with other ways of counselling

<i>Form of counselling</i>	<i>Features</i>	<i>Characteristics of coaching</i>
Psychotherapy	The therapist <i>detects</i> and analyses the given person's <i>past</i> problems and relieves the inner tensions arising from them.	In contrast to the therapist, the coach <i>concentrates on the future</i> , setting goals together with his/her customer for the achievement of which they elaborate action plans. Performance is in the focus of attention.
Training	Counselling for groups, focussing on a given topic. Low transferability: participants are able to convert the knowledge and skills gained in the training to performance enhancement and business results in only 8-12%. There is a lack of continuous feedback and support. In contrast to coaching, <i>change and solutions come from outside</i> .	In contrast to training, in coaching <i>the idea to change comes from the customer</i> , the implementation of which is monitored by the coach who thus provides continuous feedback to the customer. Personalised development, usually not done in groups. It is characterised by continuous feedback.
Mentoring	The mentor performs his/her activities for the purpose of the customer's career development and promotion, and his/her protection against attacks. The mentor is a person holding a higher position in the same organisation as the customer therefore it is his/her professional interest to develop and support the customer's career. The hierarchical relation between them means that <i>the mentor helps his/her customer with professional advice and counselling in getting promoted within the company</i> . Personal support, friendship and counselling are aspects of the mentoring relationship.	With regard to its content, coaching is probably most closely related to mentoring. The difference between the two activities is primarily manifested in the relationship between the coach or mentor on the one hand, and the customer on the other. <i>The coach is mostly an outsider having no hierarchical or professional relationship with his/her customer</i> . If there is a hierarchical relationship, then we are not concerned with coaching but with coaching-type management. (A more detailed overview of this can be found in the section about coaching types.) Furthermore, many times the coach does not need to possess professional knowledge in the customer's field of work as it is this that enables him/her <i>to support the customer from an outsider's viewpoint and not on a professional basis</i> . Regarding the nature of the relationship, the similarity between these two ways of counselling is that in both cases there should arise a close, intimate relationship between the partners for the purpose of efficiency.

<i>Form of counselling</i>	<i>Features</i>	<i>Characteristics of coaching</i>
Counselling	After getting to know the customer's problems, <i>the counsellor comes up with suggestions and solutions on the basis of his/her own expertise and the information received from the customer.</i> Implementation is done with joint work.	Coaching can be clearly distinguished from traditional counselling, too. In the latter case, it is namely not the <i>coach</i> who suggests solutions to the current problems on the basis of professional knowledge but <i>by asking the proper questions, he/she guides the customer to a new approach and new solutions</i> eliminating old routines and patterns. In contrast to the counsellor, the coach is not required to have thorough knowledge in the customer's field. To the contrary! It is precisely the new approach deriving from the coach being an outsider that greatly contributes to bringing the customer's creativity to the surface and helping him/her to learn a new approach.

COACHING CATEGORIES

In a wider sense, coaching includes lifestyle planning, career counselling, the provision of health and nutrition information, knowledge from the skill of public speaking to the art of flirting. (Sherman – Freas, 2004) Narrowing down this wide spectrum, an area called Business coaching can be delineated, which gives assistance in the

solving of the difficulties of business life and managerial work and in the detection and relieving of developmental constraints. Within the field of Business coaching, several categories can similarly be distinguished. These can be put into two groups as the function of purpose-orientedness. Table 2 provides the characterisation of the two main types of business coaching.

Table 2. Characterisation of the types of business coaching

<i>Personalised coaching</i>	<i>Characterisation features</i>	<i>Development of a coaching attitude</i>
periodical/occasional	<i>time dimension of coaching</i>	continuous
inner human relations expert/outside counsellor	<i>coach</i>	company management
some middle and top managers	<i>customer/target person</i>	the whole staff
initiator/participant	<i>the role of top managers in coaching</i>	main supporter of the development of a coaching attitude
top and middle managers	<i>management levels affected</i>	all management levels
often low if coaching is not provided on the customer's own resolution	<i>level of commitment of the organisational members affected</i>	high-level
improvement of managerial performance, developing of weak points	<i>result of coaching</i>	transformation of hierarchical relationships, improvement of organisational performance
not necessary	<i>incorporation of coaching into corporate culture</i>	necessary
it improves the efficiency of individual learning	<i>relationship with learning</i>	it contributes to organisational learning and the emergence of a learning organisation

COACHING TAILORED TO PERSONAL NEEDS

The most widespread field of Business coaching in Hungary is also the individual or group coaching service tailored to the needs of a particular manager or managers. The implementation of these types of coaching:

- coaching activity for a specified period
- for particular people in management positions in the company
- not affecting every management level and organisational unit

- performed in order to achieve concrete objectives.

Within the area of individual coaching, several types can be distinguished primarily on the basis of the number of participants and the orientation of coaching.

Executive Coaching

A coaching service used by top managers at their own initiative. It owes its popularity with managers to managerial loneliness comparable to the loneliness of the long distance runner. In an organisation it is typically the manager (top manager) who cannot speak about his/her problems as there is no-one he/she can ask for advice in a

difficult or unstable situation. In such cases it helps if a person standing outside the inner corporate network of interests and free from professional chauvinism or fixed patterns of thinking listens to the manager and guides him/her to find his/her own solutions with the help of the well-known coaching techniques. As a personal counsellor and partner, the coach helps to dissolve this type of loneliness, to strengthen personality and achieve managerial success. As co-authors Sherman and Freas put it in their article: the coach is the outer supplier of honesty. (Sherman – Freas, 2004)

The person providing the coaching may be a suitable member of the staff of the human resources section of the company but may also be an outer person involved in counselling. The latter solution is more suitable as it ensures to a much greater extent the outsider attitude, different way of thinking and non-involvement in the problem required of the coach. On the other hand, the use of an inner coach is much more cost-effective and in the first period of coaching it is time-effective, too, as no considerable amount of time is needed for him/her to get to know and understand the relationships of the coached person and his/her company.

Middle Management Coaching

In this case, it is usually the boss of the coached person who orders the service. The objective is to enhance and improve the person's performance and improve his/her weak points. As there is no inner incentive on the part of the employee to use the assistance, his/her motivation may be severely impaired, which endangers the success of coaching from the very beginning.

Team Coaching

A coaching service provided for a team in a project, mostly with the objective to solve the problems arising in relation to the project.

Group Coaching

A distinctly different category from the former one. Group members are managers of different companies who discuss their experiences and views through shared case studies. In this learning process the role of the coach is that of moderator.

Organisational Coaching

The leaders of a particular company or one of its organisational units make use of the coaching services. It basically originates from two kinds of motivation:

- if they face difficulties on the structural level
- if they intend to introduce and maintain the culture of coaching at the company

In this respect, organisational coaching represents the transition to another category of Business coaching involving the development of a coaching attitude. Compared with personalised coaching, the development of a coaching attitude is less specific in company operations and involves a more comprehensive process with regard to organisational involvement.

DEVELOPMENT OF A COACHING ATTITUDE

This managerial approach to coaching is more comprehensive and general. In contrast to the types of personalised coaching, it is not a definite time relationship with the purpose of achieving a particular goal. In this case, coaching means a change in managerial attitude or a shift in management style the purpose of which is to make it possible to deepen the manager-staff relationship, to promote the professional development of staff and discuss problems in an open way. It follows from this that in this case the role of the coach is fulfilled by the manager who provides this service for a member of his/her staff.

In this case, the manager is not present in the manager-employee relationship exclusively as a coach but he/she can incorporate coaching devices in his/her inventory, and if needed, he/she can apply coaching techniques and methods which make it possible for his/her staff member to develop and find his/her solutions to his/her problems. If this management style is extended to all management levels in the company, it can be incorporated among the values representing corporate culture.

The coach-manager role may be hindered by several factors on the part of both the manager and staff members, which makes it difficult to develop an open contact or partnership:

- The employee is reluctant to open up to his/her boss and reveal his/her weaknesses. However, this is the starting-point for an efficient coaching programme.
- Due to his/her affectedness, the manager cannot view the problems of his/her staff members as an outsider. As Einstein put it: 'The mind that has created the problem cannot solve it.' In this case, the objectivity and outsider approach of the coach are not ensured.
- It follows from the previous point that it is very difficult to overcome "corporate blindness". Participants of a given organisation or culture rarely come up with new solutions or approaches.
- Due to his/her affectedness and expertise again, the manager will sooner or later adopt the role of counsellor depriving his/her 'customer' of the opportunity to come up with his/her own solutions.

➤ Finally, coaching assumes the application of a special methodology requiring some psychological pre-schooling, certain personal traits and abilities. It is indispensable to learn or possess these.

On the basis of all this, perhaps it is doubtful whether a manager can operate efficiently as a coach. The roles of manager and coach somewhat clash with each other and are not easily reconcilable. However, it is possible to reconcile the two if the manager does not strive to become the coach of his/her employee in the narrow sense but in a way different from traditional management styles, he/she strives to develop and maintain a supportive mental relationship fruitful for both parties. In management science, this type of approach to management is not novel: with the appearance of Contingency theories, the style characterising the abovementioned relationship can be classified as one of the styles defined by the creators of Situational management theory.

As we have seen, the theoretical foundation of human resource management goes back to an over 100 years' past. During this time, it has been in the state of constant change due to economic and political changes on the one hand, and the development of other disciplines (psychology, sociology) on the other. Nowadays, we can witness the renaissance of human resources due to

globalisation and increasing competition, which is accelerated to a formerly unprecedented extent.

The effect of rehumanisation and the re-emphasising of human values can be felt in several fields of life. The present paper focusses on a small segment of this complicated process: managerial counselling within the field of management science. The very high expectations towards managers, the requirement of long-term outstanding performance and the continually and ever more rapidly changing environment all put an extraordinary burden on employees and managers.

In this situation the demand has arisen for an efficient and rapid method of learning and development, which makes it possible to experiment with and implement radically new ideas, approaches and solutions in a personalised way providing continuous feedback.

The evaluation of coaching has changed even in its short lifetime. Earlier it was regarded to be an extra service used as a remedy against performance problems. Now we are starting to realise that there is an upper limit to the enhancement of performance with more and harder work, and even those most inclined to apply an autocratic management style are developing an interest in the philosophy of coaching. (Chapman et al., 2003)

The appearance of coaching marks the end of an era: the time of managers struggling with their problems alone is over!

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