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Hungarian Section

*Sok munka,  
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egy kis szerencse*

*Bálint Zsuzsanna*

THE  
Business  
of Your Career

*Kim Sawyer*

How to Create  
your First  
ONLINE COACHING  
Program

*Benay Wettle*

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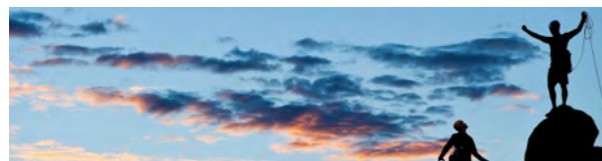
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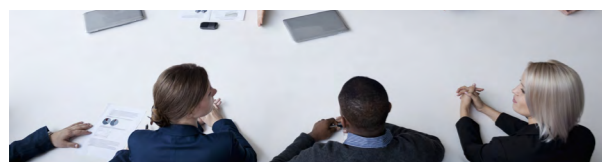
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**Career Coaching – Reality or Illusion?**

Malcolm Nicholson (United Kingdom)

Is career coaching ‘coaching’ in the way that the Coaching Industry aspires to be, or is it a more directive, formulaic advice based approach?

As there are no agreed definitions of career coaching worldwide, mainly due to cultural, linguistic and perceptual differences I will offer a primarily UK centric view.

Good career advice in and immediately after full time college or education can have a significant impact and put individuals on more solid footing, providing not only the tools – a good CV, interview skills, advice on using online tools, networking etc, - but also with a mindset that helps them understand that the career path of today is not as direct as it might have been in previous generations, advice with which the traditional parental or educational sources may not have caught up.

Later in a career, should career coaching be a separate stream or a natural part of executive and business coaching? “People are likely to change jobs, at least eight times in the current workplace, and every time they faced a choice. Should they embark on a traditional job hunt, or follow a life changing job hunt?”(1)

Anecdotally, some examples of life changing career changes on which my own coaching clients have embarked include building a hydroelectric dam in India, a children’s home being built in the Philippines and major career path changes or promotions that have emerged as a result of a new perspective resulting from coaching. The search for meaning is a basic human need, and the conflict between this and an environment where there is no inherent meaning on the other hand causes conflict. Frankl wrote “man’s search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life... This meaning

is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone. Only then does it achieve any significance which will satisfy his own will to meaning.” (2)

Consequently, the search for meaning in career coaching is an area that should be given due emphasis and space. Organisations also have a part to play in providing career opportunities for individuals or risk losing them, by being more original, flexible, and adaptive in meeting individuals rising expectations of meaning and career fulfilment. This will only increase as the Millennial Generation - who do not expect to stay in a job for more than 3 years - progress through their working lives.

The principle of non-directiveness requires a coach to not direct the conversation or give advice within the coaching process. It has been one of coaching’s sacred cows. It holds true the assumption that the individual has the answers within them, which enables more opportunities as the individual develops their own solutions to issues. Looking at a spectrum from fully nondirective to directive, it would appear from a non-exhaustive review of career coaching marketing material that the majority of career coaching approaches are more rather than less directive. It is often closer to mentoring, advice or consultancy than coaching in its purest approach.

Conversely, when does ‘career coaching’ morph into outplacement?

Outplacement (working with individuals who are exiting an organization) can have a procedural or coaching based methodology and at its best provides focus during a period of career upheaval.

From the individual's perspective, it necessarily works at a variety of different levels, from CV development and interviewing skills to coaching, career counselling and providing reflective time and fast forwards them through the adverse reactions of job loss.

From the company's perspective, outplacement enables people to leave with practical help, whilst protecting the company's employment brand. It contributes to the corporate social responsibilities of an organisation; for the responsible business, this means doing more than simply complying with legal requirements. It contributes to the individual having a sustainable livelihood going forward, whilst showing the organisation to be one that supports its people.

So career coaching in the guise of outplacement significantly helps individuals and businesses.

However, surely the job of the external coach with an individual in employment is to enable the individual to fulfil their potential. The best coaches are able to engage in 'music of the moment' or in other words pull from their tool kit a range of approaches that will elicit the most powerful responses for the individual.

Is focusing simply on career coaching, working either at a superficial level – ignoring other elements of the individual's reality - or excluding other potential avenues for them. Could it be then that 'career only' coaching might be seen to be amoral, as the coach will be complicit in fulfilling a non-independent role?

An informed insight on this stance comes from the author's recent interview with Dr. Tim Miller, whose unique perspective comes from a career spanning both Academia and Commerce. Dr. Miller introduced a strengths based methodology of leadership recruitment and development - backed up by internal and external coaching - into an international top 25 FTSE 100 company.

Dr. Miller said; "Let's put this in context. I come from a research and experiential based approach that shows any dollar spent on developing the self awareness and skills and behaviours of leaders will be well spent and help them develop engagement in their teams. It's impossible to create organisational

growth without leadership growth. Despite the recent economic vicissitudes, coaching has added significant value as an intervention that develops space for leaders and managers to reflect get clarity and fulfil their potential. Despite cutbacks, enlightened businesses have been hesitant to cut coaching." (3)

"However, the coach's job is surely to coach the person in front of them. They should, by definition, be independent and working towards the best outcomes for the individual, fulfilling a roll unencumbered by a narrow focus."

"Anything else will be a coaching relationship built on sand as opposed to professional integrity. Consequently focusing solely on career coaching may be doing the coachee a disservice. Often coaches need to go back in order to go forward, so establishing with a coachee their sense of purpose, meaning, authenticity and values are key elements of making a leader more self aware and effective. If the coach's desired outcome is simply the next career move, then that coaching may be built on sand rather than having firm foundations."

"There is, however a hard business case for career coaching at the acclimatisation (or on boarding) stage. An organisation hiring an executive with a \$1/4M package would see more than its return on investment by employing a coach to assist the individual in their first 100 days."

This reiterates trends that are now emerging in career paths. Senior executives are changing jobs at rates faster than ever - global CEO turnover is at roughly 15%. The consequences of poor talent management are therefore significant. (4)

Actions taken by executives in their first three months in a new role tend to be determinants of their subsequent success or failure. Small differences in actions have disproportionate impacts on results as people look keenly for signs of leadership style and what it will mean for them. These critical few months should be dominated by a steep learning curve and information gathering. "Many executives fall foul of the pitfalls of AMOS – 'At my old shop' "(5) The implications of this going wrong for a business are significant. Various surveys make depressing reading:- 40% of new leaders fail within the first 18 months; there's a 50%

chance an executive will quit or be fired within his/her first three years; 40% of new leaders fail to meet expectations of management in their new role. (6)

The cost of turnover is 200 - 250% of annual compensation for senior positions whilst the "Soft Costs" of unsuccessful transitions create a huge negative impact that ripples throughout the organization; lack of credibility, disruption to productivity, a lack of and resulting inconsistent direction as well as a negative impact on team morale and employee engagement.

Dr. Miller continued "Investing a fraction of the recruitment costs to help immunize the new executive from rejection by the corporate body is a sound investment which can provide a 20% improvement in ramp-up time for a senior executive, which alone covers the investment in transition coaching. It also reduces leader turnover, direct report turnover and hiring and relocation costs. Ironically, many organizations spend on outplacement more readily than they invest up front helping the executive to succeed!"

"New hire executives should do a lot whilst appearing to not do a great deal. They should spend their time listening, not criticizing, reflecting and evaluating their learning whilst empathizing. These are all areas where the input and reflective space provided by coaching have a massive positive impact."



## RETURN ON INVESTMENT EXAMPLE

So why hasn't the executive headhunting industry latched on to career coaching in a wholesale fashion? An interesting insight was provided by Tim Kemp, Partner with CT Partners, a global executive search organization. "Many executive head hunting businesses are, like any commercial organization, financially driven. Consequently, the emphasis is on appropriately filling executive vacancies in as timely a manner as possible. Competitive tendering means that assignments have to be focused on completing the key task at hand within budget. We see that executive coaching, particularly in the on boarding stage, has a vital role to play. However, within the industry sourcing an appropriate coach has historically been seen as the responsibility of the hiring organization or the newly hired executive. There could also be the issue of recourse should the coaching be viewed as not successful. However, we in the headhunting business are fully aware of the major benefits from on-boarding coaching." (7)

So, is Career Coaching coaching or something else? Telling a compelling story about the modern day career's twists and turns is now an essential component of self-marketing. Ultimately, if it gets the required results it does not matter, however, there should of course be a congruence between that under which it is being marketed and the product itself. Career Coaching? Career Mentoring? Career Counselling? Career Advice? You decide.

- (1) Bolles, R.N. 'What colour is your Parachute?' 2005 Berkeley, CA. Ten Speed Press.)
- (2) Frankl, V.E. 1959 "Man's Search For Meaning – An Introduction to Logotherapy" New York. Washington Square Press.
- (3) Miller, Dr T.J. Interview with author 2014.
- (4) Booz Allen Hamilton [2007]
- (5) Miller, Dr T.J. Interview with author 2014.
- (6) Talent Strategies Update, 2006; Aon Consulting, 2005; Right Management survey of 826 HR directors, 2003.
- (7) Kemp, T.H. Interview with author 2014.



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