Musing:
Contracting for Organizational Coaching Services

Mike Jay

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Musing: Contracting for Organizational Coaching Services

MIKE JAY

There are several ways to look at this topic, so pardon me if I don’t look at it in the way you would like me to during this muse. Back in 1998, when coaching seemed much smaller, I wrote a piece which today sums up the context for how to get to the point of contracting for services, just in case, any of you are saying, “heck with contracting, how do I get into organizations with coaching in the first place?” Find it at http://www.coachingedge.com/insight/Brkcorp.htm

If you already know how to get in and you’re really at the point of contracting for services, then perhaps I can share a couple of stories with you that may help you with contracting. Here are the key points.

You have to have a champion to work with. What I mean is that someone in the organization has to help you fight through the battles of getting a contract for organization coaching services that is beyond just the executive team, or a few people here and there. If you’re truly going to get a contract that will last any length of time, then you’ll need to find someone who is going to support your work over the long term.

It’s the system, stupid. Want to get contracts for organizational coaching services? Then make sure you have a system. Black boxes in coaching are rampant. In 1999, ICF and Linkage did a corporate survey on coaching together with around 40+ corporations. What I read changed my ideas about black boxes. I had a pretty big one myself. I’m a bit of a precog, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Precognition]—being a dominant intuitive and confident of myself to begin with. So I walked into most situations already “knowing” what to do. By the way, you can’t teach this, you either have the package or you don’t. Trusting your intuition is a lot more than going with your gut feelings. For those people who operate out of the black box of intuition, you’ll
find it difficult to get organizational contracts. You got to have a system. Develop your own professional model underlying what it is you do and systematize it before you take another step in coaching! http://www.reflectivepractitioner.com/docs/coach_as_reflective_practitioner.pdf

**Learn how organizations work.** To be honest, few people actually realize how organizations really work and if you don’t, you’ll never be able to use the fourth point I’m going to tell you. Every coach should study some organizational development and behavior—you’ll need both. While you’re at it, review all the main leadership models, [http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UNSSC/UNPAN024982.pdf] as you’ll need background on those because once you get a contract, you’ll need to make sure you understand what is really going on in the organization—preferable before you get one. Organizations consist of informal and formal communication flows that are affected by the “locks and dams” (as my friend Don Beck of Spiral Dynamics would say) of values, along with accountability hierarchies, which the work that Elliott Jaques did in Requisite Organization demonstrates, and the many shared and unshared purposes that weave themselves together as organization.

**Coaching as a virus.** No, you’re not going to make everyone sick! But if you understand the principle of coaching as a virus, you’ll automatically create better contracts from your scope of work, which I’ll say a bit about before I close this muse. *If you’re a coach contracting for services, you had better know how to do a scope of work correctly, or you’ll find yourself making absolutely no money on the contract.*

Think about this. Coaching, like a virus, depends on a living being. A virus, like coaching, uses the symbiont in such a way as to help both thrive. If the virus kills its host, unless it finds another, its own existence is threatened. Therefore you have to understand coaching as a virus, because there are going to be times in organizations where coaching is going to kill the host if you don’t pay attention, and you’ll be done as well. Coaching, even when it is well done, is going to have some casualties. As a virus, coaching becomes a catalyst and whatever is going on in the organization, coaching seems to speed up any change that is occurring, personally, professionally, in business and throughout the network the coaching touches. Remember, it’s a virus…and viruses spread. Sometimes that’s good, sometimes not so good. Pay attention to the kind of host into which you introduce coaching.

**Get good at doing a scope of work.** Back in the 90s, I went out to visit Silicon Valley. I had the opportunity to go to a software programmers project training session…in fact, I went on purpose. I wanted to know how this world functioned because at the time, with the dot.com enthusiasm at its highest, I wanted to
see what was so special about this world. Needless to say, I didn’t stay long—those guys and gals are just different—but I took something very powerful away that has helped me get contracts in organizational coaching. It was doing a scope of work. Here is a link, [http://www.leadu.com/scope] that may save you a lot of time in rounding up some “go to the bank” ways to look at doing a scope of work, or as some like to call it, a “needs analysis.” Get this right and the contracting for organizational services won’t bankrupt you.

**A summary that leaves you hanging**

I suppose I should put a wrapper on this muse, because contracting for organizational coaching services is an art as well as a science. It’s real easy to get wrong. If you allow scope creep and you’re not really tough on the boundaries, “the people in the organization will eat your lunch.” Remember, these people have as their number one priority, effective negotiation. Tell me when is the last time you saw a course in business negotiation for coaches?

I will leave you with one idea, among the many that the boundaries of this muse does not allow me to touch on—but perhaps someone will remind me that there is a lot more to the story. Given that event, I can write at some point about how things like triangulation, requisite coaching, and understanding how to work with organizational structure, culture and translation can improve your coaching success in organizations.

Now, here are my final words: *In negotiation, the person having the greater leverage or power is the one who can walk away.* Remember that when contracting for coaching services.

*Mike Jay*
Resource Center for Professional Coaching in Organizations

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