



Contracting for Organizational Coaching Services

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“As in most relationships between two people or among a group of people, the parties tend to make implicit, critical assumptions about the relationship. In a coaching relationship, these assumptions may include the purpose of the relationship, roles and responsibilities of those involved, coaching method and process, participation levels, and so on. If these assumptions are not aired and reconciled, trouble can ensue.”

Contracting is a conversation that can make assumptions explicit and serves three important functions. First, contracting defines the coach’s and client’s roles and the desired results, while providing a common language for coaching and development activities. Second, contracting establishes structure – for example, the steps for realizing the goals, the coaching methods employed, time frames, progress measures, and related matters. Third, contracting models the action-learning process that is the essence of coaching. This includes disclosure, inquiry, and commitment to one another’s success.”

-- John Bennett, “Contracting for Success”



FROM THE DESKS. . .

Of the Co-Editors

It is our belief that contracting is a critical step in the coaching process. Done well, it can create a strong foundation for a productive and profitable partnership between the coach, the client and other stakeholders. Done poorly, it can derail the process, damage relationships and tarnish the reputation of the coach and the coaching profession.

We also believe that, in spite of the significance of sound contracting practices, coaching professionals (ourselves included) do not always give adequate time and attention to the process. It is because of these beliefs that we have dedicated an entire issue of *IJCO* to this topic. Each article offers a unique perspective on the contracting process and, combined, provides a multi-dimensional, experienced-based perspective of the issues and learning. It is our intention to inspire you, the reader, and the coaching community at large to reflect on and refine the contracting process.

Contracting for coaching services can be very complex and this may explain why it is often a challenging process:

- *Managing the integrity of the coaching process requires much consideration.* The critical underlying ethical and legal issues of coaching may not be immediately or easily recognisable until an issue arises and it is too late.
- *Contracting can be time-consuming.* Responding to Requests for Proposal (RFPs) can accurately, completely and successfully can tax the experience or resources of the coach. Even when an RFP process isn't used, there is much to discuss and align on.
- *Contracting can be a moveable feast.* Because coaching occurs in complex and changing environments, multiple contracts or renegotiating of contracts may be required to manage the relationships and resources required for success.
- *Contracting can be implicit or explicit.* Assumptions may override the clear understanding and execution of the coaching process if not clarified at the onset and throughout the conversation.
- *Contracting can get lost in the coaching process.* Even an experienced coach - someone eager to market coaching, build rapport and/or demonstrate the process by providing the coaching service before the contracting process – can unintentionally confuse or mislead the client.
- *Contracting may require customisation.* Coaching is a universal process but differences in clients, cultures, companies and customs may require coaches to change or customise the contracting process and the contract.
- *Contracting requires preparation.* Identifying appropriate performance measures, managing expectations, and designating and appropriating required resources are prerequisites to the contracting process and should not be overlooked in a rush to begin coaching.

Any one of the issues listed above can derail a contracting process if it is not carefully addressed, just as leaving one ingredient out of a recipe can ruin the dish. Because of this, it was difficult to identify a prescribed order in which to present the articles in this issue. The issues in contracting don't necessarily fall into a chronological order. No one issue necessarily has a greater impact or importance than another. Would the ethical considerations override the emerging process of coaching? Or would the RFP process supersede the evaluation process?

So, although the order of the articles is not significant, they are grouped into the following three themes to assist the reader in connecting the ideas and issues: the intention of the coaching contract and the coach, the complexity and subtleties of the contracting process, and the internal and external perspective of the contracting process.

The Intention of the Coaching Contract and the Coach

In his article “Contracting for Success”, John Bennett creates the context, sets the stage and highlights the core elements of contracting for coaching services based on his experience as a coach, researcher and executive.

To engage the reader in a reflection on the important ethical issues in coaching and intentionally bring them into the contacting process, John Fielder and Larry Starr highlight important issues and ideas for handling them in “What’s the Big Deal About Coaching Contracts?”

The Complexity and Subtleties of the Contracting Process

Jay Patel’s article, “Six Degrees of Contracting: Approaches and Lessons from a Global Coaching Program”, navigates the pathways through the multiple stakeholders and multiple issues that challenge coaches when contracting to coach managers at the global IT corporation, Hewlett Packard. Describing the experience of a manager responsible for coaching his direct reports and colleagues, Patel provides tips for successfully contracting in a complex environment.

With over six years of experience responding to over 30 RFPs, Laurie Voss and Stephan Oberli, in the article “Global Coaching Contracts: Differences between U.S. and European Corporate Approaches and Lessons Learned”, highlight the intricacies of creating contractual relationships via the written proposal. This offers a seasoned perspective on the nuances of reading, writing and winning global contracts, including practical information for how to engage in a competitive contracting situation.

The Internal and External Perspective of the Contracting Process

To view the same contracting process from the vantage points of both the client and the coaching service provision organizations, Derek Steinbrenner, Richard McAnally and Melinda Pearson provide a case study of the design, development and delivery of the contracting and the coaching for leadership development at John Deere. In “Contract Design and Oversight: How John Deere Championed and Delivered Top-Down Executive Coaching with Strategic Vision”, the many ongoing decisions and renegotiated design demonstrate the need for flexibility, focus and calibration in the contracting process.

We end our review of the organizational contracting process with an article that does not fit neatly into any one category. This thought-provoking article, “Being You, Being Me”, by Christopher Cooke, presents a model he has developed based on psychological theories to enable the coach to act with intention. Cooke suggests that it is possible for coaches to intentionally engage through the contracting process in an emergent process in order to create a sustainable relationship with self, client and kosmos.

In addition to the above articles, we also have several other pieces to engage and inform you. We showcase a newly accepted peer-reviewed research article about the impact of executive training on performance in business by Frode Moen and Einar Skaalvik, “The Triggering Effect of Business Coaching on Performance Psychology”. One of our editorial board members, Leslie Hilton, has reviewed the recently published book co-edited by David Drake, Diane Brennan and Kim Gørtz, *The Philosophy and Practice of Coaching: Insights and issues for a new era*. Some of the historical aspects discussed in this book are further explored in the next issue of *IJCO*. Finally, one of our resident gurus, Mike Jay, adds his insights on coaching and contracting in his “Musing”.

Thanks to all who laboured on this issue. Long awaited, we hope that this satisfies on many levels: identified shared concerns, useful information, relevant perspectives, provocative questions with the reflection they inspire, and the opportunity for further dialog. Let us know what you think.

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