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Academic Paper

How Shadow Coaching helps Leaders to Improve their Performance on the Job in Real-Time

Bernardus Roelofs (Roelofs Executive Coaching Solutions)

Abstract

Self-awareness is critical for leadership success. It not only builds and strengthens leadership skills, it also supports leaders' creativity and innovation and helps increase the self-awareness of those around the leaders. This study, used the qualitative research approach Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to gain rich and in-depth knowledge of the lived experience of eleven leaders being shadow coached, a coaching intervention where coaches join clients in their work environment and help them to increase their performance on the spot. Leaders found that shadow coaching not only increased their self-awareness within a very short time frame, it also showed there was instant positive change in their attitude and leadership approach.

Keywords

Shadow coaching, Executive coaching, Leadership development, Performance enhancement, On-the-job learning,

Article history

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Introduction

Self-awareness is key to leadership success (Flaum, 2010); even more than IQ and technical skills (Showry & Manasa, 2014). A higher self-awareness also drives "creativity and innovation" (Flanagan, 2013: 45). In addition, if leaders increase their self-awareness it also develops the "self-awareness of those around them as these leaders become role models for a more authentic style of leadership" (Symes, 2014: 2). On the contrary, "a lack of self-awareness can potentially alienate others, through misunderstanding the impact of your actions on them" (Price, 2018: 2). Therefore, it is fundamental for leaders "to raise self-awareness in order to build and strengthen leadership skills" (Roelofs, 2017: 2). Shadow coaching can help leaders and, through them, their companies to detect what the issues are and develop the necessary skills and actions on the job. In addition, they prefer to learn on the job from experience (Gitsham, 2009).

Whilst shadow coaches typically accompany leaders in their own work environment (Kets de Vries, 2006), they receive a wealth of information about the verbal and non-verbal communication, organisational culture, and key people the leader is working with. Information and issues that might take months to surface or might not be visible at all in conventional coaching "are immediately apparent" (Binney & Read, 2010: 16). The coach uses this information to give instant feedback on what really happened to raise the leader's self-awareness and practice coaching to strengthen their leadership skills in real time.

The study's objective is to explore experiences of leaders being shadow coached in relation to the benefits and critical success factors and how it could help leaders improve their self-awareness and leadership skills in a competitive business environment. In order to achieve this objective, the study starts with a literature review on the main aspects and benefits of shadow coaching, its concept, its process, and the requirements for successful shadow coaching. This is followed by discussion of the methodology used, the findings and analysis. The final section includes the discussion and conclusion.

Literature Review

Shadow coaching is viewed as an intervention to further enhance the coaching of executives, leaders and teams, enabling professionals to increase their effectiveness at the work place (Tulpa & Woudstra, 2015; Verlander, 1999; Homan & Miller, 2008). This coaching intervention is mentioned as one of the main tools for corporate coaching (Mukherjee, 2014), providing feedback (Korn Ferry, 2015), and requiring "the highest level of wisdom and integrity" (Tulpa & Woudstra, 2010: 277).

With shadow coaching the coach typically accompanies the leader in their work environment (Kets de Vries, 2006) and observes them in real-life working situations with colleagues, team members or clients during meetings, presentations or social events, in relation to agreed goals. This gives coaches such detailed information on the leader's environment, leadership skills, organisational culture, behaviour, various interactions with stakeholders and can help the leader work instantly on change.

In between and after meetings when the information is still fresh the coach is acting as unbiased, independent observer and provides first-hand feedback from verbal and non-verbal communication flows they perceived (Tulpa & Woudstra, 2015). Additionally, coach and leader address stated objectives by reflection and one-on-one coaching to increase self-awareness and close gaps between actual and desired performance in real time.

Thus, shadow coaching is a powerful coaching intervention, where leaders obtain independent, unbiased feedback in the moment, translate newfound awareness into practice and improve their performance in real time (Karlin, 2007; Verlander, 1999). Shadow coaching can thus significantly safe time and help avoid the repetition of mistakes or unnecessary revision of work (Williams, 2015). Hence, if the 'coaching was limited to face-to-face discussion' the leader 'would have provided only a partial and heavily biased picture of what was taking place' (Freedman & Perry, 2010: 200). This is in line with Donna Karlin's experience:

> Combining evidence with patterns of behaviour I can say that 50% of the data I use when coaching my clients is what they don't tell me. It's located between their words (Karlin, undated: 20).

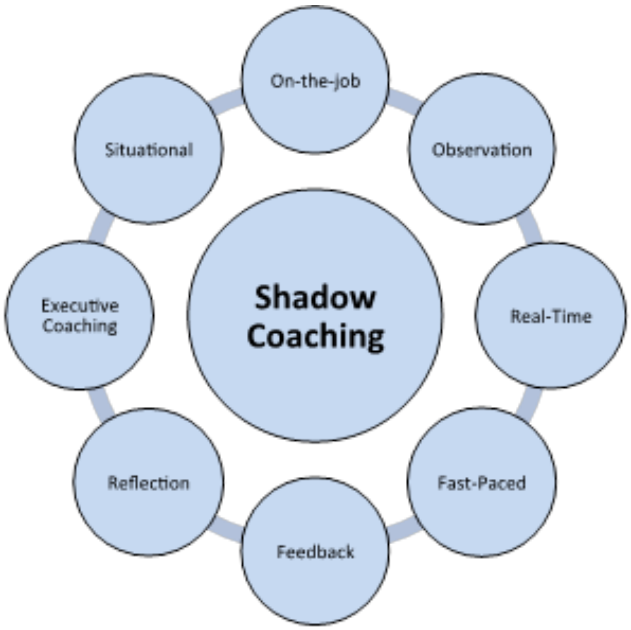
Freedman and Perry (2010: 200) add that the leader 'probably would not have recognized, understood, or described how his behaviour was perceived and responded to by his stakeholders'.

The duration for shadow coaching ranges from five sessions (Martinez Marcos, 2012) to five full days (Wilson, 2005; Verlander, 1999). For conventional executive coaching it is normal to have one coaching session each month for a period of six to twelve months.

The Different Concepts Included in Shadow Coaching

From the definitions and literature above concepts of shadow coaching include: on-the-job, observation, real-time, fast-paced, feedback, reflection, executive coaching and situational.

Figure 1: Concepts included in Shadow Coaching



On-the-Job

Because the world is becoming more complex, 'senior executives believe (…) effective learning (…) comes through practical experience' and 'can be enhanced by structured reflection through coaching' (Gitsham & Peters, 2009: 20). With on-the-job coaching, the coach enters the client's environment and receives information through all their senses, which

> (…) quickly provides a wealth of data about the environment, organisational culture and the key people and relationships that the leader is working with. Issues that might take months to surface or might not be visible at all in conventional coaching are immediately apparent (Binney & Read, 2010: 16).

The information from observation on the job, which might otherwise be missed, can now be used for feedback, reflection and coaching to enhance personal and corporate performance.

Observation

Because the observer spends much more time with the client at different events and has the opportunity to understand their reality through their eyes and observe their behaviour. Contrarily, with qualitative interviewing (one-on-one coaching) the coach relies on what the leader says.

During observations the shadow coach is not an active member, sits aside, takes notes and does not interrupt so the meeting or presentation can be conducted as it normally would (Binney & Read, 2010).

Being present as coach and observing, however, can have positive and negative effects on participants' normal behaviour and performance. This is called the "Hawthorne effect" (Oswald et al, 2014). Shadow coaches want to observe clients and acquire information on how they execute their work in real life. Only then, coaches will be able to help their clients increase their performance. If the information is biased due to the coach's presence, effective guidance becomes less likely. A practice to reduce this effect is the "six stage protocol for Hawthorne effect mitigation" (Oswald et al, 2014: 58), as:

> Building relations will not only improve the quality of data but also reduce the changes of findings being influenced by the Hawthorne effect (Oswald et al, 2014: 58).

Real-Time

With real-time coaching the shadow coach can provide clients with feedback instantly, when the 'ability to recall details of the event is fresh and no detail is too small if it leads to improvement' (Gardner, 2013: 171). This can be put into practice in the next meeting (Binney & Read, 2010).

That is why learning in the here and now (i.e. real-time), where awareness is present, 'is often a fundamental aspect of people's growth' (Bluckert, 2006: 90). Also, real-time coaching allows hidden issues or blind spots to be revealed much more, analysed, prioritised and worked on for performance improvement directly and more efficiently after the event.

Fast-Paced

As time is limited between meetings, feedback, reflection, coaching and pre-briefing has to be done at a fast pace and to the point (Karlin, undated). This implies additional challenges for shadow coaches.

Inherently in shadow coaching, the lack of time poses a serious challenge to efficient reflection by the coach (Bregman, 2011). A possible way to be ready for fast-paced coaching is to take time-out and develop a personal philosophy (Burton & Raedeke, 2008). The goal is to let a set of principles guide decisions, which reduces uncertainties in specific situations. Firstly, for developing your personal philosophy, it is important to develop self-awareness, which 'will heathen the speed and success at which you and your [client] (…) learn and perform the skills discussed' (Burton & Raedeke, 2008: 5). Secondly, a prioritisation of coaching objectives is crucial, requiring clear strategies on how to achieve them. The importance given to each objective will be the foundation of such a philosophy and is the corner stone of success or failure (Burton & Raedeke, 2008).

Feedback

Feedback is a prerequisite for learning and growing (O'Hara, 2015) as it can raise awareness and 'make you a much more effective manager' (Hill & Lineback, 2011:198). It works best when it relates to a specific goal (Gardner, 2013). Feedback should be articulated clearly, in a 'non-critical, supportive manner and without too much investment in whether (…) [it is] right' (Bluckert, 2006: 144). As subordinates do not want to offend their superiors, it is less likely that the client/coachee will receive constructive feedback (Gallo, 2012). This can lead to missed opportunities for generating better ideas, performance and strategy (Gallo, 2012). With shadow coaching unbiased, independent and instant short feedback can be given by the coach straight after the meeting, in the hallway or at the coffee machine (Karlin, undated). However, it is advisable to wait for the right time, giving the client/coachee the chance to be fully alert, willing and open to talk about what happened (Bluckert, 2006).

Reflection

Reflecting on a specific task will increase the performance more readily than taking the same time to practice with this same job (Di Stefano et al, 2015). As Bregman (2011: 2) puts it 'reflect[ing] less (…) limit[s] our growth'. Reflection is about 'gain[ing] new insights into self and be[ing] empowered to respond more congruently in future situations' (Johns, 2013: 2).

Client/coachee and coach both reflect after meetings on goals set upfront to learn from them and implement change for future meetings. This is called "reflection-on-action" (Schön, 1983, Johns, 2013). It encourages 'raising awareness, thoughtfulness, critical thinking, willingness to learn and change, turning practical experience into knowledge, having more choices and being mindful as much as possible' (Roelofs, 2016: 6), 'in order to confront, understand and move towards resolving contradiction between one's vision and actual practice' (Johns: 2013: 2). When guided, like in shadow coaching, the reflection process might accelerate the learning considerably more than self-reflection (Boud et al, 1985). Some fundamental qualities for reflection are 'curiosity, commitment and intelligence' (Fay, 1987 cited in Johns, 2013: 4).

Executive Coaching

Apart from providing the leaders with feedback and enabling reflection on the meeting and agreed goals, coaching is part of the process. It is to unlock the leader's 'potential to maximise their performance' (Whitmore, J, 2009: 10). It is non-directive and often it is a thought-provoking and creative process. The coaching can be as short as a few minutes in between meetings and longer, for example, at the end of the day.

Situational

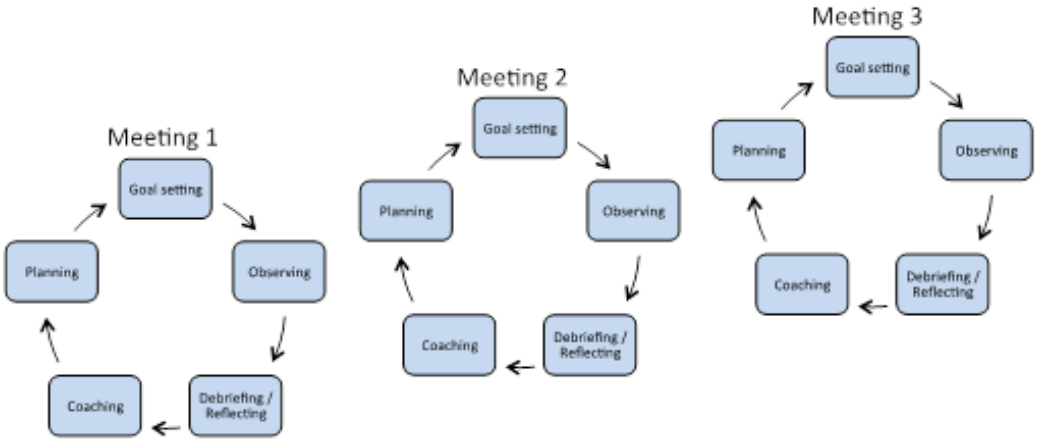
Every client is exceptional and every situation is different. This implies that 'clients have unique developmental needs that require customised attention' (O'Neill, 2007: 213). Therefore, there is no one-size-fits-all coaching style which can be used for all situations even with the same client. [Coaches] (…) have to match [their] (…) coaching style of direction and support to their clients' needs at the time. (O'Neill, 2007: 214). As a result of this, shadow coaches should not only have a broad range of coaching skills, but also need to be flexible in their coaching approach, including going outside their own comfort-zone whenever needed.

Additionally, as shadow coaches enter their coachee's environment, they need to make a transition, to be accepted instantly. This includes for example considering the right 'presentation of self' (Peltier, 2010: 376): like appropriate clothes or usage of language.

The Shadow Coaching Process

The process of shadow coaching can be described as cycles of five stages each, see figure 2. After the contracting has been done with the leader and other stakeholders, each cycle starts with the goal setting, what the leader wants to achieve in the meeting or event and where the shadow coach especially focuses on when observing them. Goals can be for example around self-awareness, focus, delegation, communication skills, providing and receiving feedback, being present, integrity or empowering others. After the observation the leader and coach debrief and reflect on the meeting's goals and achievements, which encourages 'raising awareness, thoughtfulness, critical thinking, willingness to learn and change, turning practical experience into knowledge, having more choices and being mindful as much as possible' (Roelofs, 2016: 6), 'in order to confront, understand and move towards resolving contradiction between one's vision and actual practice' (Johns: 2013: 2). Following this, a coaching session is held to close the gap between the actual and desired performance and planning for the next meeting. Debriefing, reflection and coaching in between the meetings can be a short as a few minutes.

Figure 2: The Shadow Coaching Process



Requirements for Successful Shadow Coaching

To conduct shadow coaching effectively, there are several requirements for the leader, the shadow coach and the organisation/sponsor. For the clients, it is important that they take the courage to disclose that they work with a coach, who will shadow them in their daily job, to increase their performance (Binney & Read, 2010). Also, the leader decides on the issues they want to be shadow coached on and achieve a behavioural change. (Binney & Read, 2010).

For the shadow coach Binney and Read (2010) describe ten requirements for to be successful. First, being as invisible as possible, not intervening in meetings. Second, noticing what is going on and focussing on what is important. The wealth of data should not present a distraction. This requires a massive amount of energy (Karlin, undated). Third, being able to improvise when needed, as:

> You never know what is going to happen as you accompany a leader; what issues will emerge and what relationship you can develop with the leader (Binney & Read, 2010: 17).

Fourth, telling leaders the truth and being honest, based on facts, exact wording and examples. This takes courage. Fifth, the coach should be confident, know what they are doing, and build a relationship of trust and professionalism. Sixth, the coach should be able to familiarise the client with concepts to raise their self-awareness and ability to use that for future practice. Seventh, the coach also helps all other participants who might have questions about shadow coaching or how it might affect them. Eighth, the coach assures clients of their unconditional positive regard and that they are there to help, not to assess, criticize or feed-forward any information to anybody else. Ninth, the coach should pause and reflect when real change happens with clients and access exactly what they did differently. Tenth, the coach has supervision, to talk about, reflect on and improve shadow coaching work practice.

For coach and leader the support from the organisation/sponsor can be very relevant and create value (Bachkirova et al, 2017; Verlander, 1999). The organisation/sponsor should allow leaders time to follow through with the shadow coaching (Verlander, 1999).

> It will be a major disruption to let other business issues get in the way, to cut it short, break it up into chunks, or simply stop halfway through (Verlander, 1999: 67).

Also, the sponsor can amongst others help explore ‘how the coaching contract is best managed’, and give ‘input into the goals for the coaching engagement’ (Grant, 2017: 75). Additionally, it can

be helpful that the sponsor introduces shadow coaching so all participants understand what it is and buy into it. This supports both, client and coach to achieve their objectives and be successful.

Thus, literature describes shadow coaching as a very powerful coaching intervention. It can increase newfound self-awareness and implement change in real-time, which in normal one-on-one coaching would have taken months or even years. This in turn enhances work practices. The potential power of shadow coaching relates to the fact that the coach works with the client when they are in the job. The coach is part of the client's environment and observes the communication flow, verbally and non-verbally, providing useful information for feedback and reflection. As the coach is with the client, he or she can give feedback instantly, when information is still fresh and work on behavioural change, even before the next meeting.

Methodology

To gain rich and in-depth knowledge on the lived experiences of leaders being shadow coached qualitative research approach Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was chosen. IPA forces researchers to look at factors, which make the event special, to try and understand and derive meaning from the participants' view of the event to the extent that this is possible and an in-depth exploration of each single participant's perspective (Pietkiewics & Smith, 2012). Furthermore, IPA allowed the researcher and participant to discuss every possible theme that could arise in more detail with additional questions (Pietkiewics & Smith, 2012).

Participants

Semi-structured interviews were carried with eleven leaders to gain insights on their experiences being shadow coached. For IPA there is no fixed rule on the size of the sample (Smith & Osborne, 2003), but small sample sizes are preferred instead of large sizes to study the phenomenon. According to Tang and Dos Santos (2017) most IPA studies do not have a sample size of more than 10 participants. With eleven participants, this study is just over this sample size. The group of eleven leaders was reasonably homogeneous from the working environment perspective, academic level and background in conventional 1-o-1 coaching, which can be concluded that the results are more meaningful than a less homogenous group (Smith et al, 2009). Seven of eleven participants were from the same team and all eleven worked within leadership and career development, were conventional coaching is an important part of their job. Nine participants had a strong background in coaching, of which two had prior experience with shadow coaching. Most of the participants held a Master of Science or similar qualification and one held a PhD. In addition, this particular group size, 'gives an opportunity to examine similarities and differences between individuals' (Pietkiewics & Smith, 2012: 364). Prior to the interviews all participants gave their permission to use their interview responses for this research.

Nine participants in this study were shadow coached voluntarily by the researcher prior to the interviews. Four of eleven participants were shadow coached over a period of one to two days. They were shadowed three to seven times during different meetings. The other seven participants could only receive one or two shadow coaching sessions of 30 to 60 minutes (observation and debriefing). However, contracting was done before, in a face-to-face conversation.

Table 1: Participants

	Interviewed by Researcher on experience being Shadow Coached	Working in Same Team	Working in Leadership & Career Development	Eductation Level	Strong Background in Conventional 1-o-1 Coaching	Prior Shadow Coachee Experience	Shadow Coached by Researcher	Shadow Coaching period 1 -2 days	1-2 Shadow Coaching Sessions	3-7 Shadow Coaching Sessions
Participant 1	✓		✓	MSc	✓	✓		✓		✓
Participant 2	✓		✓	MSc	✓	✓		✓		✓
Participant 3	✓		✓	Msc	✓		✓		✓	
Participant 4	✓	✓	✓	MSc	✓		✓		✓	
Participant 5	✓	✓	✓	M.A.	✓		✓		✓	
Participant 6	✓	✓	✓	B.A.			✓		✓	
Participant 7	✓	✓	✓	MSc	✓		✓		✓	
Participant 8	✓	✓	✓	-	✓		✓		✓	
Participant 9	✓	✓	✓	MSc	✓		✓	✓		✓
Participant 10	✓	✓	✓	MBA			✓			
Participant 11	✓		✓	PhD	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

Findings

The following two overarching research questions were used in the interviews.

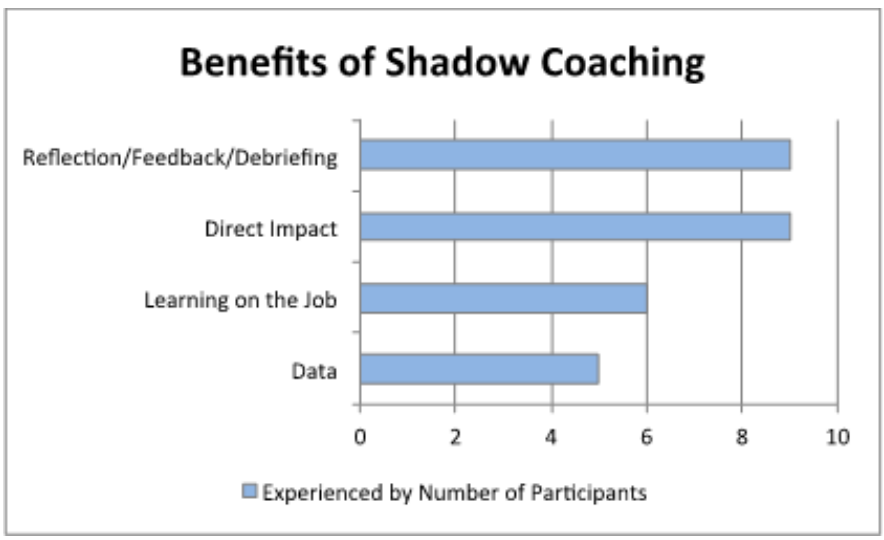
- From your understanding, what are the benefits of shadow coaching?
- From your experience, what are the critical (most important) success factors, conditions and/or stages for successful shadow coaching?

The findings were the result of a thorough structuring process of the raw data. Starting with the interview recordings and transcripts, the relevant data was copied into a spreadsheet following the questions asked. The data was coded firstly into benefits and critical success factors. In a second step, these were separated further, as the data was coded by themes. Finally, a clear overview emerged from the main sections “benefits” and “critical success factors” of shadow coaching, further themes and experiences of participants.

Benefits of Shadow Coaching

The main benefit themes of shadow coaching, which derived from coding the research information, are illustrated in figure 3 below:

Figure 3: Benefits of Shadow Coaching



Direct impact

Being shadow coached, most participants experienced one or more direct benefits. Awareness creation was mentioned most often. Other benefits cited include: unlock thinking, change in attitude, big shift in leadership approach, raising blind spots, growth in confidence, listening more, and improved collaboration, trust and commitment to the team.

> *'Increased awareness about, what you do and how you do it / Improved collaboration, trust and commitment to the team' (Participant 2)*

Some participants, who had only one shadow coaching session, did not feel or think it had any impact at the time. They felt that a few sessions would be needed to see an impact and it could be benchmarked.

Reflection/Feedback/Debriefing

Participants mentioned reflection, feedback, dialogue or debriefing as a crucial shadow coaching benefit. Shared replies were that the feedback was there, fresh in mind, it was not drawing memories of what happened. It created an opportunity for active reflection and critical thinking and that a lot of learning came from reflection. Furthermore, it helped the participants either continue doing what they are doing well or change what they not doing well to make them a better person.

> *'So actually taking time out to discuss it, and critically think, and critically reflect was probably the most important part of it' (Participant 5)*

Learning on the job

Common responses of the participants mentioning on-the-job learning as a benefit, were that it is real, it is factual, not theoretical and that it is practical. It encouraged participants to be reflective on their practice. Several mentioned that they prefer learning by doing.

> *'I know there are things I can do but if there's someone sitting in a room watching like a fly on the wall, that can help me spot those and change them, then that is a 100 percent benefit' (participant 8)*

Data

Data was also often mentioned as benefit. Mutual replies included that the coach could see the facts, got a richer picture and better quality data, and saw things, which were not know to others.

> *'Shadow coaching is the benefit of the observational data allowing insight based on a richer picture what was going on during a particular event' (Participant 4)*

Critical (most Important) Success Factors, Conditions and/or Stages for a Successful Shadow Coaching?

The nine overarching critical success factors derived from coding the research information, are illustrated in figure 4:

Figure 4: Critical Success Factors of Shadow Coaching

1. **Reflection, feedback and debriefing**

All participants mentioned that "reflection, feedback and debriefing" was a critical success factor. Overall participants preferred to have feedback directly or not that long after observation meetings, as information stays 'fresh'. Also feedback outside the framework that was pre-discussed might be quite valuable, for example, tone of voice, arm movements, etc.

> *'Feedback immediate and straight after the session. If not, it would be a degradation of effectiveness if time went by' (Participant 4)*

2. Shadow coach

The critical success factors related to the shadow coach were: 'competency or credibility', 'positive intent' and 'shadow coach completely invisible during observation'. On competency, it was mentioned that the coach should be able to do real-time coaching but as well that the personality of the coach is absolutely essential for this to be successful. In addition, taking risk as part of the coach was mentioned because of the transparency and visibility.

> *'So I think the personality of the coach is absolutely essential for this to be successful (...)' (Participant 9).*

3. Contracting

Most participants gave multiple feedbacks on contracting. As success factors participants mentioned "setting goals and objectives", "rules for interruptions", "transparency to all stakeholders" and "understanding shadow coaching". For example, on rules for interruption:

> *'Interventions are good as long as agreed before' (Participant 2)*

4. Trust, rapport and relationship were key for the majority of the participants.

On trust participant 1 said:

'Absolutely need to know that I trust the person' approach' (Participant 1)

5. Setting

Participants reported "setting", like the shadow coach should not be in line of sight of participants, room size, temperature and noise level. In addition, the atmosphere should be open, not too serious and an environment where people can take risks.

'The observer shadow coach, to be out of reach, out of eyeshot of the client, quie't (Participant 5)

6. Shadow Coaching Sessions

Often participants mentioned "shadow coaching sessions". They said, that they would like more sessions, to have patterns to give feedback and building relationship.

'I think it's difficult if you just do a one-off observation as well because yeah, you need a pattern of getting feedback which is important.'(Participant 7)

7. Coachee/Client

The "coachee/client" is another critical success factor. Topics include that it's the clients choice, agenda is set by the client, be willing to be coached but as well biting the bullet and doing it and that the risk-taking on the parts of the coachee is important.

'It was my choice, I was in control' (Participant 1)

8. Stakeholder in the room.

To facilitate shadow coaching, the stakeholders in the room, other than the shadow coachee and shadow coach, should behave normally during observations, no artificial scenario, be authentic, be happy with shadow coaching, and be comfortable. If this were not the case, it would devalue the shadow coaching.

'If one person in the room wasn't fundamentally happy with shadowing, it would value down the shadow coaching' (Participant 3)

9. Sponsor

The role of the "sponsor" was mentioned to be critical as well. The sponsor can for example give support in contracting with different stakeholders and set up meetings between employees and shadow coach. Specifically, in organisations where the general level of self-awareness is low, the sponsor can help the shadow coach to be successful.

'I think there's more contracting for me to do at the beginning with the stakeholders. (…) a clear role for me to play in setting you up. So the sponsors help the shadow coach be successful.' (Participant 9)

A few other critical success factors for shadow coaching, not grouped with any of the above listed themes, were the possibility of being videoed because the coach is not in the room, not distracting people and having the ability to go back and to go to things over and over again (Participant 5). Also, it was mentioned as important to leave enough time before and after each shadow coaching session for de-briefing and pre-briefing (Participants 4 and 11).

Discussion and Conclusion

This study used the qualitative research approach Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to gain rich and in-depth knowledge on the lived experiences of eleven leaders being shadow coached. The participants found shadow coaching a highly efficient coaching intervention to improve their behaviour.

The research gave rich and in-depth knowledge of the peoples' experience on the benefits and critical success factors of shadow coaching. There were four main benefits leaders experienced from being shadow coached: First, a "direct impact" on the leaders performance: for example increase in awareness, growth in confidence, positive shift on leadership approach, and raising blind spots. Second, "reflection/feedback/ debriefing" in the moment when information is still fresh and all details can be remembered and because the leader and the coach reflect together the learning out of reflection might be significantly higher than self-reflection only by the leader. Third, "learning on-the-job", because it is real, it is factual, the possibility to reflect on the spot and be able to practice the learning immediately, it is how leaders prefer to learn. Fourth, the wealth of verbal and non-verbal information ("data"), behavioural aspects and blind spots, allowing the coach to see what is really going on, in real-time to be used as a basis for reflection, debriefing and coaching for performance enhancement.

The critical success factors of shadow coaching include feedback and reflection directly after the meeting, number of sessions to see patterns and build relationships, contracting that goals are set and that everybody is aware what shadow coaching entails, trust and the setting. Other success factors contain the quality of the coach, the readiness of the client as well as the support of the sponsor.

Thus, leaders found that shadow coaching helps them, their teams and their companies they work for, to improve their performance in real-time on the spot. And because of their performance improvement through shadow coaching they are able to stay on top of the ever-changing business environment.

Limitations

Since the researcher conducted shadow coaching with nine out of eleven participants himself, it was imperative to reduce bias during the interviews with them and maintain an outsider's perspective, excluding their own experience.

Another limitation of this study was that seven participants only had one or two shadow coaching sessions, and because of this it could have limit their experiences and outcomes. An additional restriction could have been the short interview time of several participants. They had merely 30 minutes available for their interviews, while others had 60 minutes at their disposal. Consequently, the in-depth understanding and the reflection of the subject might vary significantly due to the focus on time management.

Opportunities for Future Research

Further research on shadow coaching over longer time spans might give more information, patterns and data, useful for reflection, awareness creation and behavioural change. In addition, it would be interesting to explore perceptions of the evolution of behavioural change through follow up observations and interviews after six or nine months following the last shadow coaching session. Because the client and coach take both risks in shadow coaching it would be fascinating to know, if their personality type plays a role in readiness for coaching. Also, it would be important to know, how many sessions or days of shadow coaching are optimum for reaching a client's goals

and what factors influence that. Another interesting study would be whether video recording could substitute for the coach in the room and be used for shadow coaching as well.

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About the authors

Bernardus Roelofs is a senior learning and development manager and award winning executive coach with 27 years of global leadership experience. He holds an MSc in Coaching & Behavioural Change (distinction) from Henley Business School, University of Reading, an MBA, and creates bespoke coaching and development solutions that effectively help leaders, teams and organisations to grow in real time, on the job, with immediate and measurable impact on their goal achievement.