



RESEARCH

TRANSFORMATIVE COACHING

Executive Summary

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Roffey Park is an internationally renowned leadership institute based in the UK and Singapore.

We develop people who develop organisations.

With over 70 years' experience of leadership, organisational development, human resources and coaching, we provide executive education and research to many of the world's leading companies and organisations.

We offer tailored development programmes, qualifications accredited by the University of Sussex, management consultancy, coaching and training courses. Our research services provide a unique combination of research, consultancy and development expertise for organisations who are investigating ways of improving their effectiveness and intelligence.

Research at Roffey Park

Roffey Park funds its own research programme with the aim of meeting one of its charitable objectives: namely to conduct and publish research in support of the health and welfare of people at work. Our research improves the world of work and organisational performance by sharing knowledge of good practice in people management, leadership and organisational development.

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Coaching is big business which employs some 53,300 professional coach practitioners worldwide (ICF, 2016). It is also a business that continues to grow. The Corporate Research Forum (CRF) Member Survey found in 2014 that 43 per cent of organisations surveyed had increased their spending on coaching in the *last three years*, and half (49%) of organisations surveyed also expected their organisation's spending to increase over the *next three years*.

Given the continued popularity of coaching, this research, coming 15 years after Roffey Park's last coaching research, '*What makes coaching a success?*' (Kenton & Moody, 2001), aims to explore how the field has changed and adapted to meet today's challenges and how coaching will continue to evolve. In order to answer these questions we spoke to ten notable academics and experienced coaching practitioners, and explored how their perspectives had shifted, how their coaching practice had changed over the last 15 years, and the role that goals now play in their coaching. We also explored with the coaches their perspectives on the future of coaching, in terms of new developments and influences in coaching, and the challenges coaching faces as a field of professional practice.

The research identified a number of trends in coaching which we present in the report in three areas:

- developments in coaching practice
- increasing diversity of coaching influences
- changing trends in the coaching context

We summarise on the following pages the main themes which are developed further in the research.

Developments in coaching practice

Goal-focused coaching

Our research is clear, in order for coaching to remain relevant and for coaches to continue to provide value to clients and organisations, their practice must keep pace with the changing world and embrace new ways of working. Fifteen years ago the starting point for most coaching programmes was likely to be identifying a client's goal, to perhaps become a more confident presenter, a more skillful manager, or to develop greater self-awareness. To a certain extent this hasn't changed. What has changed is the 'lightness' with which the goal is now held by the coach. Coaches have become highly skilled at expanding, molding, challenging and developing goals. Coaches are no longer limited by them.

"The aim of coaching is to leave the client with a more enduring experience, more able to engage with life. Just serving what the client says is not ambitious, the coach is responsible for asking the bigger question." Ian Williams

From performance to developmental coaching

We noted a trend in the focus of coaching moving away from remedial interventions, for example helping clients manage their development gaps, towards developmental coaching that aims to achieve lasting change. Coaches practising today are focused on facilitating a greater depth of learning, by being skilled and agile in their ability to explore beyond the boundaries of explicit goals. The coaches in our research called this *developmental* coaching, characterised by deep self-reflection and the discussion of previously unexplored thoughts, feelings and experiences. This approach, which focuses on breadth and depth of conversation as opposed to goal achievement, is considered more likely to lead to an enduring change for clients, in the way they view themselves, operate at work or even live their lives.

Whose agenda?

Our research also explored what coaching was *not* about, namely helping clients get what they want. The coaching lens is now much broader. We argue that coaches operating today have an increased level of responsibility, not only to the client to explore their *real* needs, but also to simultaneously hold the needs of the client's organisation, wider society, and even the world. Being able to hold and balance the organisational agenda with the client's agenda and a multitude of other initially unknown agendas is fundamental to coaching today.

"Following the financial crash in 2008, when the question was asked, 'where were all the coaches when the banks went down?' coaches began to reflect on whether they had indeed been following the client's agenda at, not just the detriment of the organisation, but to the world." Liz Macann

Self as instrument

Coaching has moved beyond being merely a reflective mirror to the client. Our research identified coaches working increasingly in partnership with their client. Building a partnership based on trust and understanding requires the coach to be authentic, which means sharing their thoughts and views when they have them, rather than withholding them. A coach's careful and considered input of information, knowledge or challenge can be some of the most impactful elements of the coaching, and we argue that, by working in this way, by being a dialogical partner, a coach is able to affect real change in their client.

"Coaching is a relationship between two people, in the moment, where one of them spins meaning out of their life story, and the other holds – and occasionally adjusts – the spinning wheel, and notices the patterns emerging." Ana Karakusevic

We see a less prescriptive (goal-focused), more exploratory approach to coaching having gained greater prominence in the field of coaching over the past few years. Creating both a space and a means to think is critical to effective coaching and a key way to unlocking a client's thinking. Within this reflective space the client is able to explore something or to try something out in a different way and make meaning from that. This requires coaches to be highly skilled to move between approaches when working with clients, providing the appropriate levels of support and challenge, whilst also tiptoeing the boundary between advice and knowledge sharing.

Increasing diversity of coaching influences

Growth of tools and techniques

The field has seen a massive growth of tools and techniques which have given coaches a broader repertoire of interventions and created a greater depth and breadth of coaching on offer to organisations and individuals. This variety in coaching philosophies and approaches has helped develop the professionalism of coaching. It has also made coaching accessible to practitioners from a number of different professional backgrounds. We note, however, that in the findings of academic and practitioner research (irrespective of the tools and the psychological models used by coaches) the most important factor that determines success of a coaching process remains the quality of the client-coach relationship.

Adult development

Our research recognised the increasing influence of understanding adult development stages when working with a client. Psychologists believe that as well as the pre-determined childhood development stages, we can, as adults, also move through a number of logical development stages throughout our lives. Coaches, by

understanding these development stages, are better equipped to help the client explore their connectedness with the wider world.

“The coach helps the client experience the world in a new way. Helping the client ask bigger questions about themselves and their lives allows for the possibility that a developmental shift will happen, through practice, which also opens a wider set of possibilities for both relationship and action for that person.” Justin Wise

Neuroscience

We explore the influence that the field of neuroscience (study of brain activity, its interactions, interconnections and integration with the body) is having on coaching. A number of scientific discoveries in this field have an interesting application to coaching, namely ‘neuroplasticity’ and ‘somatic markers’. Coaches, working with clients who repeat patterns of behaviour that are not helpful, can draw on neuroscience to offer an explanation for their behaviour and can work with the client to help them pay attention to how they are feeling in situations, thus building awareness and understanding. With deliberate practice, attention and support clients can start to change not only their felt response but also their brain.

Somatic approaches

Coaches are also being influenced by somatic approaches and working with clients on a physical and emotional level. Somatics are based on the view that useful learning comes from paying attention to what is happening in our bodies. In society we pay attention to being rational human beings, yet who we are needs to include our complete bodily experience of being alive, including the brain.

“The answer doesn’t lie in rational thoughts and our head, but in our emotions and our bodies. Our emotions tell us what we care about.” Pete Hamill

Team coaching

Our research identified an increasing demand for team coaching which reflects the findings of other research studies. As this field expands a clear definition is emerging, one which focuses on collective capability, which sets it apart from other group interventions, such as action learning, group facilitation and team building. Team coaching requires the coach to make the important shift away from focusing on the individual members, towards treating the team as an entity as the client.

“It’s trying to find the things that connect us, rather than the things that separate us.” Aboodi Shabi

How the team performs and relates to the wider system in which it operates is the crucial focus. In order for coaches to become effective team coaches, they need to have the ability to stand back from the presenting issues and see the repeating patterns in the wider system.

Changing trends in the organisational context of coaching

Increasing organisational sophistication

We found that organisations and commissioning stakeholders (HR departments and hiring managers) are more knowledgeable about coaching and are having increasingly sophisticated conversations with coaches about their needs. Whilst this is not the case for all client organisations, we identified in our research a number of organisations which had very sophisticated ways of classifying their coaching requirements. In addition, our research identified that line managers were also becoming highly articulate about what they expect the *difference* to be as a result of the coaching. This is very beneficial as it drives very healthy conversations with the individual and their organisation.

We predict that as the coaching profession matures we are likely to find an increasing number of organisations becoming more sophisticated in articulating their coaching requirements and expectations, thus opening the doors to more genuine conversations about the type and outcomes of coaching.

Increasing professionalisation of coaching

In 15 years the field of coaching has become increasingly more professional. A number of professional accreditation bodies have entered the field and flourished, alongside an increase in academic interest and the rate of published research on coaching. Organisations are becoming more sophisticated about identifying the credentials they seek when selecting coaches, and coaches are being increasingly required to demonstrate that they are an accredited member of a professional body. We believe that accreditation provides a good foundation, although we believe there is still work to be done to standardise the various programmes. Our research asks the question whether it would be beneficial, or even possible, for coaching to move towards one well recognised standard route into coaching, one body that is clear about what it takes to be a coach, one code of ethics, rather than a whole range of different routes through different associations. This research shares the conclusion of Professor Lane et al (Cox, et al., 2014) that coaching should strive for professionalism in coaching rather than professionalization. The coaching field with its variety of backgrounds and fields of knowledge, would, we believe, make it very hard to standardise the role of a ‘chartered coach’, and striving for a chartered status could make the process overly academic, rather than focus on the practical and unique set of skills and experience each individual brings to coaching.

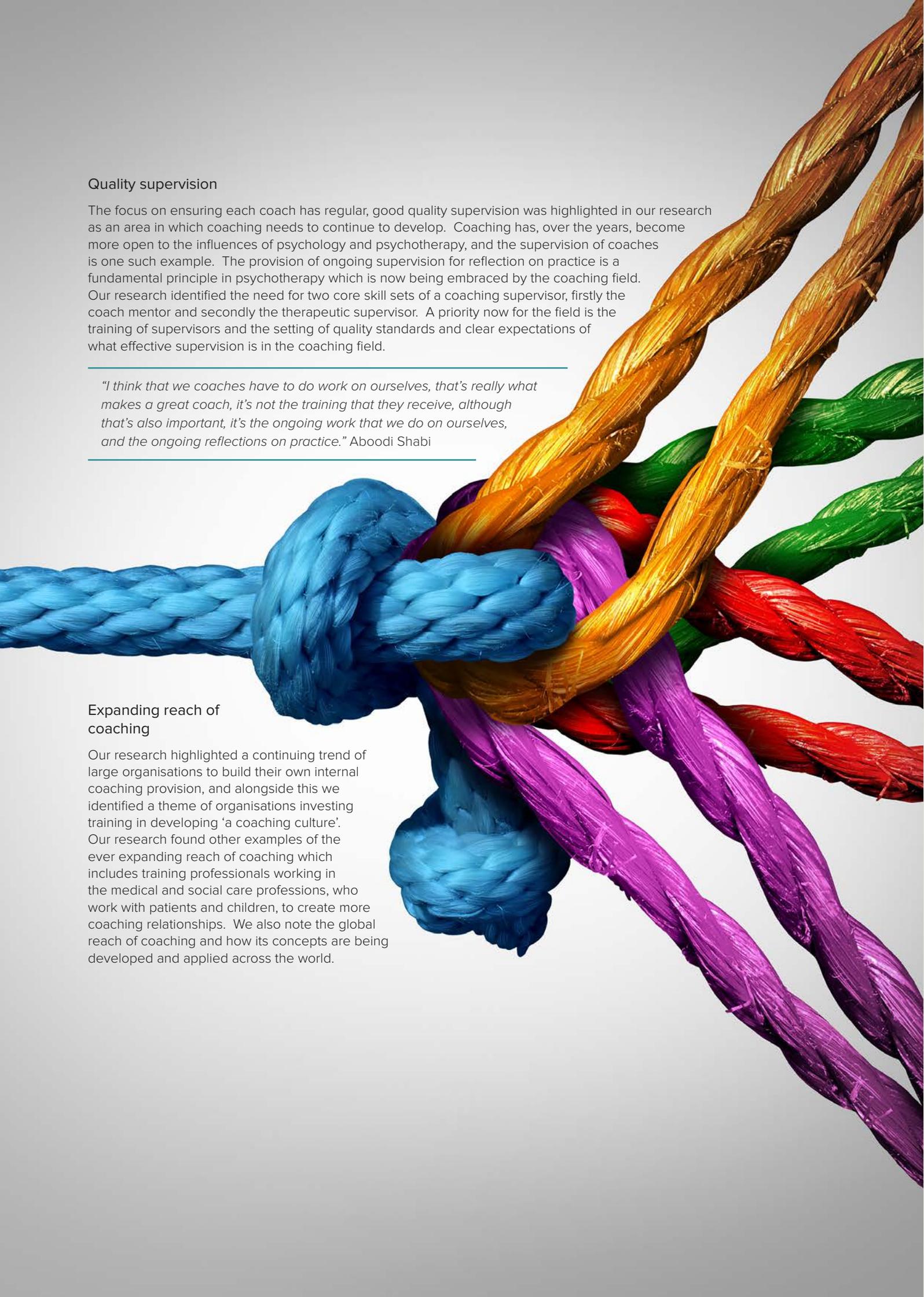
Quality supervision

The focus on ensuring each coach has regular, good quality supervision was highlighted in our research as an area in which coaching needs to continue to develop. Coaching has, over the years, become more open to the influences of psychology and psychotherapy, and the supervision of coaches is one such example. The provision of ongoing supervision for reflection on practice is a fundamental principle in psychotherapy which is now being embraced by the coaching field. Our research identified the need for two core skill sets of a coaching supervisor, firstly the coach mentor and secondly the therapeutic supervisor. A priority now for the field is the training of supervisors and the setting of quality standards and clear expectations of what effective supervision is in the coaching field.

"I think that we coaches have to do work on ourselves, that's really what makes a great coach, it's not the training that they receive, although that's also important, it's the ongoing work that we do on ourselves, and the ongoing reflections on practice." Aboodi Shabi

Expanding reach of coaching

Our research highlighted a continuing trend of large organisations to build their own internal coaching provision, and alongside this we identified a theme of organisations investing training in developing 'a coaching culture'. Our research found other examples of the ever expanding reach of coaching which includes training professionals working in the medical and social care professions, who work with patients and children, to create more coaching relationships. We also note the global reach of coaching and how its concepts are being developed and applied across the world.



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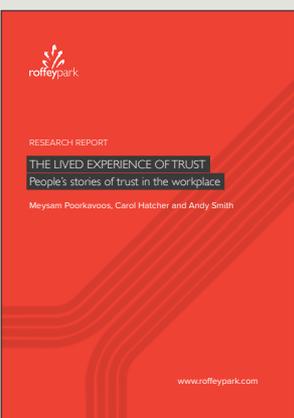
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