



2nd GLOBAL CONFERENCE on BUSINESS, ECONOMICS, MANAGEMENT and  
TOURISM, 30-31 October 2014, Prague, Czech Republic

## Coaching Across Organizational Culture

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### Abstract

The study investigates the impact of coaching as a modern method and its connections with the organizational culture. The analysis uses the model of four types of organizational cultures, i.e. the transaction-oriented market culture, the family-oriented clan culture, the tradition-bound hierarchical culture and the innovative adhocracy culture. The study shows that the use of coaching in organization management can gradually model or change the organizational culture. Moreover, it attempts to determine possible directions of the change. It is observed that – in favourable conditions – coaching may enable transformation from the traditional to the innovative culture. The change is possible because coaching brings about changes in people's behaviour, stimulates their creativity, coming up with plans and taking actions. There is a positive impact on the motivation of employees too. Coaching allows for a gradual rather than revolutionary change. The study also shows how the type of the organizational culture influences the possibility to implement coaching. Therefore, it also describes potential problems and barriers.

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Selection and/ peer-review under responsibility of Academic World Research and Education Center

*Keywords:* coaching, organizational culture, management

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### 1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to present conditions of applying a modern management method, i.e. coaching, in organizations differentiated based on their types of organizational culture. Such an issue seems to be worth raising when observing the present organizational environment and increasing need for professional coaches in all kinds and types of organizations. Nowadays the success of an organization depends on the ability of the management to use methods allowing to take advantage of resources of the so called human capital (Edvinsson, Malone, 2001).

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The research problem defined in the above way has determined the structure of the study. The intended analysis applies the commonly-known and versatile competing values framework developed by Cameron and Quinn (2003). In turn, due to the present overuse of the term “coaching”, it has been decided to more comprehensively discuss selected terminology issues and describe the method itself. As a result, a base has been formed for conducting an analysis directly connected with the set goal.

The study is based on the analysis of specialist literature of the discussed field supplemented with full participant observation (Babbie, 2003), owing to the employment of the Author of the study in the position of a coach within the framework of projects carried out by the parent university. The participant observation technique allows to notice actual social events within natural activity in work environment conditions, with gathered data being first-hand materials (Konecki, 2000). Despite the above-mentioned advantage, participant observation is biased by subjective factors connected with the personality and role of the researcher during observation. Nevertheless, in social sciences, qualitative methods get the closest and most directly to human actions, enable to recognize thoughts, emotions and motivations behind human activity (Nowak, 1985). They allow for exploring new phenomena, creating new concepts and categories and, subsequently, putting forward empirically-based theoretical theses which, in turn, may be subject to measurement that employs quantitative methods.

## **2. Coaching – around the Concepts and Assumptions**

Widespread misunderstanding has arisen about the concept of coaching. On one hand, the method is still evolving, changing and developing. On the other hand, the term “coaching” has been certainly overused. In many companies, almost everything is referred to as coaching: the decent treatment of employees, providing feedback, training, explaining motives for decisions made. There has also been a tendency to replace the word “superior” with the word “coach”. Carol Wilson explains that the term “coaching” raises considerable doubt also due to the fact that dictionaries still equate that term with expressions of clear connotations such as “teacher” or “trainer”. In her search for the sources of coaching, the Author gets as far as to the teachings of Socrates and considers him a promoter of the coaching approach: the master used to say that he would not teach anyone anything – he would only make them think (Wilson, 2010). He emphasized that the role of a teacher does not consist in imparting “unshakeably certain” knowledge to another human because the teacher himself has no such knowledge. That brief and clear statement seems to perfectly reflect the essence of coaching.

The overriding aim of coaching is to develop organizational potential through the development of individual employees and whole teams. The path leading to that goal is described by the features of the coaching process. It takes place through the application of established principles and specific techniques. Moreover, the relationship between the coach and the client is of the fundamental importance for the success of coaching. It is based on: authenticity, partnership, trust and responsibility of both the parties.

Coaching is a special kind of conversation requiring such skills as: active listening, asking open questions, skilful use of paraphrase, reflection, feedback, adjusting the tone and pace of speech to the client etc. (Wilson, 2010). In turn, the structure of the coaching process is based on the so called coaching models, with the GROW model being the most popular. It was developed by Sir John Whitmore and described in his book considered the bible of coaches (Whitmore, 2006). The coaching process is also characterized by (Szmidt, 2012): limited duration of the relationship (specified number of coaching sessions); permanent structure and regularity of coaching sessions; short-term coach-client relationship (strictly connected with the number of coaching sessions); orientation towards development and issues related to work, although it may also concern personal topics; focusing on attaining specific short-term goals; and revolving around issues associated with human development at work and beyond. Importantly, the coach need not be an authority in or have experience of the client’s area of activity.

It can be stated that the coach does not “repair” the client, does not resolve any of the client’s problems and does not emphasize his or her own superiority or greater knowledge. The coach reflects – as in a mirror – the client’s actions and helps the client to separate them from their context so that they become autonomous abilities (functions) the client will be able to instrumentally use in specific situations where he or she has not done that before and where it would be desirable (Starr, 2005).

It is important for the coaching process that the client has self-confidence, i.e. trusts that he or she can do something. In order to gain such confidence, it is necessary to build space for mistakes to be made by employees in an organization as mistakes are what taking up new challenges entails. Mistakes should be treated as a source of learning (Wilson, 2010). Another vital issue is to be confident of success: the client can believe in his or her own

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