



DPROF (Business Coaching)

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What is the effect of long-term coaching engagements on the business coach's process and approach?

Professional Background

I have been an independent business coach for more than 31 years. Prior to becoming a coach, I held various executive positions for 20 years in different organizations, including those of Comptroller, Senior Vice-President, and President and have owned several businesses. In addition to operating a thriving coaching practice, I am a life-long learner with a strong commitment to making a positive difference where I can. This doctorate process provided me with an opportunity to combine my love of learning with contributing to the coaching industry.

Focus

The research question above emerged from my personal client experiences within my practice. Over the years, I have worked with many longevity clients and it was instructive to learn the best practices of others who also work with clients over a long period to determine how I can apply them to my own practices. Conducting the research not only answered this question and contributed to the coaching sector but has broadened my knowledge and understanding of coaching itself.

Within the coaching industry there has been a reified assumption that long-term engagements were not and should not be happening. It is an assumption that this research has illustrated as inaccurate and untrue.

Approach

A mixed-method approach was used for data collection, which included a survey with 325 participants and 22 semi-structured interviews.

Results, Impact and Effects

Thematic analysis revealed evidence that **the coach's initial process or model often changes when working with a 'longevity client,'** though the foundational premise of being fully present and asking targeted questions does not.

Most coaching participants who examined their own practices with long-term clients reported that when a process is used to coach within, it is often abandoned over time and if not abandoned, the process itself evolves. **Universally, all coaches asserted that their approach changes in long-term coaching relationships.**

An unsought finding which will undoubtedly influence future research is the substantiation that **long-term business coaching engagements are not an anomaly, but rather an organic development within coaching dyads that occurs regularly around the globe.** In this study, over 200 coaches from 33 countries had or have long-term clients.

These findings provide an opportunity for professional coaching bodies such as WABC, EMCC, COMENSA, and ICF to develop and expand competencies, standards, and ethical guidance specific to a practitioner with long-term clients. They may also influence training and education for the many facilities offering development of coaching skills.

The effect on my coaching practice for me has been to acquire a richer, deeper understanding of my own coaching techniques. This rigorous and distinctive journey of being a practitioner researcher has been possible because of the uniqueness of the DPROF program which serves, and challenges seasoned professionals such as myself.