



Prof (Executive Coaching)

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## An exploration of the methods used by external coaches when coaching IT professionals

“Do external coaches use an alternative method to their norm when coaching IT professionals?”

### Professional background

I have worked in three main areas throughout my career: teaching, information technology (IT) and coaching. Studying for a Professional Doctorate allowed me to channel my experience in a rigorous way to support both my practice and the coaching profession. I have been coaching for about 15 years, focussing mainly on the IT sector.

### Focus

The research question above emerged from my experience in the areas listed. The objective of this research was to determine if experienced coaches coached in a different way when with this client base. Carrying out this research not only answered the research question but also allowed me to develop an alternate coaching framework using this new knowledge.

### Approach

Data was collected through semi structured interviews with 7 participants who were all experienced coaches of IT professionals.

### Results, Impact and Effects

Thematic analysis revealed four main factors affected the coaching of IT professionals:

- Coaching style
- Coaching relationship
- Client behaviour
- Coaching process

**All participants confirmed that their coaching delivery was different in respect of these factors for IT professionals compared to their work with clients in other sectors.**

Coaches reported a highly directive, challenging and focussed style rather than one which is emotional and non-direct. They also said there was more structure to their coaching with these clients. Equally impactful was their description of a critical moment in the coaching, which combined the emotions of coach and client. These radically changed the client's engagement in a positive way.

An additional finding was that coaches reported traits and behaviours of many IT professionals that were similar to those reported for those with Asperger's Syndrome.

This research will provide support to experienced and novice coaches alike. It will allow professional coaching associations and coach trainers to recognise and promote the legitimacy and benefit of this style of coaching for this client group.

It will provide support for coach supervisors when working with coaches in this sector. Buyers of coaching will be able to select coaches for IT professionals more appropriately.