

PROLOGUE BY CAROL KAUFFMAN



THE 7
MOMENTS
OF
COACHING

STORIES
OF INNER JOURNEYS

EDITED BY ALBERTO RIBERA
CO-EDITORS: ALAN McFARLANE, NIA PLAMENOVA AND ESTÍBALITZ ORTIZ

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The 7 Moments of Coaching

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MOMENT 2

I've never talked about this to anyone before

A coaching process is designed to enable the client to discuss what is going on around them in a way in which they have not done so before with anyone. The coaching provides a safe space that enables the clients to talk about a problem in a specific and focused way, with a person who is 'on their team'. Even more critical, is the role of the coach as a supporting figure – a person who is solely interested in understanding the client and helping them find the resolution of the challenge at hand.

Thus, the conditions of the process allow clients to bring up and discuss matters they usually avoid or deny. Here's Lars' story.

**“Curing the negatives does not produce
the positives.”**

Martin E. P. Seligman

Before starting the coaching process with Lars, I had had the opportunity to review the 360 Degree Report⁷ that Lars had received. Lars's colleagues gave him a very positive evaluation overall with two areas that were considerably less affirmative: creativity and decision-making. Overall, though, his colleagues didn't observe much variation among the different areas while his own self-assessment showed quite a few fluctuations.

Lars joined his present organization right after finishing his university degree in engineering and has been in the organization for around 20 years. It's a family business with companies in different areas, mainly in the fishing industry, but also in the real estate sector. He's held a number of diverse roles with increasing responsibility and he is currently director of services, reporting to the CEO – a family member – and is responsible for two companies, one of them recently created with an external partner.

'Hello, Lars, it's a pleasure to meet you in person!' I welcome him into the room. 'Thanks again for your time on the phone the other day, when you shared your background and career to date. Just to make sure I got it correctly, now you're undertaking a senior management course to help prepare you to be a general manager in the near future.'

Lars nods his head to affirm, he's hardly moved since sitting down. The prospect of becoming GM doesn't seem to excite him greatly.

'And since we spoke,' I persevere, 'we've now had a chance to review your 360. I'm wondering where you'd like to begin our work today.'

⁷ The 360° evaluation is a questionnaire answered by the client themselves, as well as by their superiors, peers and collaborators who note their impressions on how often they observe the client exhibit certain behaviours or competences in the strategic, interpersonal and personal areas. The 360° outcome enables the client to have an indication of how others see them in comparison to how they see themselves.

'Well, it's pretty clear from the 360 that I need to work on delegation, networking and stress management.' It was a short and sharp response. He doesn't mention the many strengths that are clearly appreciated by his work colleagues.

'I notice that your colleagues gave you very positive feedback on a whole range of areas, indeed, more than you gave yourself. What do you make of that?' He shrugs his shoulders. It was the first animation I've seen in him.

'Well, I don't know... I've always worked in this company and I've just been learning everything little by little. I don't feel I'm an expert in anything very much.'

'So, when all your colleagues say you are... let me see... "highly committed with business vision, rigour, ambition, intellectual and work ability"... what else did I note... as well as being "honest and humble with a real interest in developing your team", what do you think?' Lars sits up and clasps his hands on the table. 'I don't know... it's just normal, I suppose... what's expected... I know the family trusts me but, in my view, I'm just doing my job.'

'I sense there's something else...'

Lars takes a deep breath and looks me in the eye. The pause that follows seems never-ending. At last, he gathers himself. 'I've never told anyone this before, but I think I've really messed up... it shows, I'm sure, that I can never be fully trusted to be a general manager.'

'What's happened?'

'It's like this... in one of our new investments, we're working with a new external partner and we made some risky decisions. The CEO knew about them and still gave the green-light but I wasn't comfortable.'

'What did you do?'

'I didn't do or say anything, really out of respect for the CEO, but I saw clearly that there was a risk of significant loss and,

eventually, I stopped the project. But, by then, losses had already been incurred and couldn't be recovered. I feel terrible, I've never lost the company money before. I've never made a mistake like this and, now, when I'm tested at this level, I do.'

'Tell me more... who decided to embark on this project? How did you notify the CEO that you had doubts? What happened when you warned them? How important was the loss in terms of the volume of business of the company?'

'Both the CEO and the external partner were very enthusiastic about the idea without making a very rigorous analysis. I almost immediately saw the risks coming and warned them, but they told me not to worry, that it was a good project and we would see what happened. It was only at the end, when I saw that the outcomes of the project would have very negative consequences, that I was able to get them to listen to me and stop it.'

'Do you take photographs?' I ask. Lars furrows his eyebrows.

'Yes... why?'

'What kind of camera do you use?'

'You'll laugh! One that's not on my phone! It's a Nikon DSLR.'

'So, it has an interchangeable lens?'

'Yes.'

'Imagine you are looking at all these events through the lens you have on the camera at the moment. Given everything you've told me just now, what would you call that lens?'

'What would I call the lens?'

'Yes.' He gets up and walks to the window to look outside. 'I don't know...' He has his back to me, but I know he's looking up into the sky.

'What's coming into your mind?' He looks down at the floor.

'I'd call it the 'blame' lens.'

'The 'blame' lens', I let him hear his own words. 'What did the family say when they found out about the losses?'

'Oh, they were all very good about it. They said we all went into it with our eyes wide open, knowing the risks, and that it was worth exploring as the rewards were potentially so great. They completely exonerated me.'

'If you were to see it their way, what lens would you pull out of your camera bag and put in the camera.' Another pause.

'I suppose I'd call it the 'experiment' lens.'

'What do you feel when you look at the whole thing with the 'experiment lens' in place?'

'It actually feels quite good!' 'You know, I suppose it would have been great if it had come off, so it was definitely worth exploring by taking the extra steps we took. And when it did become clear it wasn't going to work, in this case, I called it in time before we took a really big hit.'

'What else are you thinking?'

Lars laughs, 'That my original analysis was actually better than the CEO's – that he makes mistakes too! Maybe I should trust myself more and speak up more strongly!'

'So, what are you taking away for today?'

'Many things!' He walks briskly back to his chair, pulls out his notebook and begins to write as he speaks out loud. 'One – accept what others say about me – they're not making it up – it's based on what they see, real evidence. Two – trust myself and my experience so, speak up! Three – throw the 'blame' lens out of my camera bag!'

'Anything else?'

'Maybe I can be a GM!'

'Maybe?'

'I *will* be a great GM!'

'Shall we close there?'

'Yes, thank you. It's been great to talk about this – I've never had the chance before.'

Patricia Ferrando

Key Points

A safe space full of trust and rapport

Opening and holding a safe space where the client has the sense they are met as themselves, just as they are in every aspect, is fundamental for a good coaching process. Creating psychological safety and fostering rapport are all key to this second Moment of Coaching – I've never talked to anyone about this before. The client always owns the boundaries of the coaching space and must never feel pressured into talking about or answering any questions they do not wish to, but the coach will seek to create trust and rapport through warmth, the expression of understanding and, often humor.

Active listening III: behind the words

Active listening means that the coach uses all of their sensitivity to hear and see the client. This means going beyond the words and connecting at the deeper level with what the coach senses from the client and often reveals further points for the client to be aware of. Here, the coach simply offers back the reactions that the client has caused in them, including thoughts or senses stirred, for them to consider and explore.

Discarding the positive

People tend to take for granted what they do well, and usually have the distorted view that what comes easily to them, comes easily to everyone else as well! In his book, *Core Qualities*, Daniel Ofman⁸ explains our tendency to

⁸ Ofman, D. (2001). *Core qualities: A gateway to human resources*. Schiedam: Scriptum.

play down our natural strengths, when in fact it's probably what's most appreciated by those around us, and what makes us an asset at work. Coaches can guide the client to finding evidence of their positive characteristics and their importance. Before we can work with our strengths, we must be able to see and appreciate them.

Internalise the views of others

Further to the previous point, the tendency to minimize the true worth of their competencies can be observed in how clients often self-deprecate or deflect praise - 'Oh, I'm not bad at that I suppose', 'I was just doing my job', 'I was lucky', 'It's all down to my team'. Sometimes, others may have a more positive view of us than we do ourselves. There can be a natural modesty, inhibiting clients from fully maximizing their worth - they see it as boastful or an exaggeration. Maximisation has nothing to do with exaggeration - it's about honoring talents and allowing clients to act with confidence from a solid platform. Internalizing the good views of others is to truly believe them and allow one's frame to fill up as if breathing it all in deeply.

Curing the negatives does not produce the positives

There is a natural tendency to focus on the negative which increases as we grow older. It's important to recall and consider how to leverage the many strengths the client has that brought them successfully to the point of their journey they are at. It is useful for the client to *acknowledge, embrace and exploit* their strengths to fully maximize themselves and their positive impact.

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Prologue

Carol Kauffman Ph.D. is on the faculty at Harvard where she is the Founder and Co-Chair of the Institute of Coaching. She is known globally as one of the top leaders in the field of coaching. She has been named the #1 Leadership coach in the world by the Marshall Goldsmith group. Thinkers 50 shortlisted her as one of the top 8 coaches for her contribution as a thought leader and coach. She also was the Founding Editor of the first academic peer-reviewed journal dedicated to coaching, *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*.

Authors

Martin Bettels is the founder and director of SUCCEEDERS GmbH, where he is a senior executive coach, as well as a consultant for several companies. His coaching focuses on the growth and effectiveness of people and companies. He has extensive experience as a Sales Director and has been vice-president in an international consultancy.

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PRAISE FOR “THE 7 MOMENTS OF COACHING”

“...I’ve seen a lot and I’m not easily impressed but I’ve learned more from this small book than I have from any other book in years. In addition, due to the way this book is written, it is equally beneficial for the new coach or a leader interested in getting to see what coaching is about...”

Carol Kauffman,

Faculty at Harvard Medical School, McLean Hospital
Faculty and Co-Chair of the Institute of Coaching
Named the #1 Leadership coach in the world
by the Marshall Goldsmith group



**An essential read for executives, human resources
managers, and anyone interested in excellence,
both in life and in business.**

What can executive coaching offer managers? What exactly takes place in a coaching session? And the key question: what is the value of coaching? To answer these questions, 12 experienced coaches and collaborators with the Executive Coaching Unit of IESE Business School take you on a journey exploring different key moments of the coaching process. They touch upon some of the central themes of executive coaching: resilience, motivation, leadership, difficult relationships, decision-making, happiness and more. With an easy-to-read, humble and enjoyable writing style, the book combines real-life cases with explanations of simple and efficient coaching tools and concepts.