



5 Reasons Why Coaching Supervision Is Vitally Important

The coaching industry has grown at a remarkable rate over the past decade, with people from an array of occupational backgrounds entering the profession. As a result, it has become essential to establish high standards of competence and professionalism in an industry that has few barriers to entry.

Thankfully, many coaches undertake training and qualifications to set themselves apart from untrained individuals who call themselves coaches. However, it seems that after the initial enthusiasm for training, many coaches are not taking their professional development seriously, with reports indicating that only 50% of coaches undertake coaching supervision post-qualification.¹

In any other profession, supervision would be viewed as essential to maintain, sustain, and evolve good practice, and failure to do so would have significant professional

consequences. However, it seems that in the coaching field, there is an inconsistent and lack lustre approach to supervision. Shockingly, recent reports show that, as a method of self-reflection for coaches, supervision came in fifth place behind private reflection, reading, research and peer networking². Whilst these other activities are all beneficial, they do little in terms of regulating the profession and safeguarding standards in the way that supervision does.

But this is not just an industry issue, organisations also need to understand the consequences of failing to provide adequate supervision for their internal coaches because without expert supervision, coaches run the risk of causing more harm than good, which could bring themselves and the organisations they work for into disrepute.

Here, we explain in more detail why coaching supervision is vitally important:

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Due Diligence



Supervision, as part of the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of any coach, is clearly

very important. But for internal coaches, trained within an organisational context, it is of paramount importance. Regardless of whether the organisation has one internal coach or a large internal coaching function, supervision will be key to the future success of coaching inside the organisation. Organisations that don't do their due diligence are taking big risks with their organisation and with the health and welfare of their employees.

Organisations that establish clear measures for their coaching programmes will have a much better understanding of the commercial impact of getting it right and the damage that can be done if they get it wrong. Investing in supervision is a way for organisations to protect their investment and maximise the ROI of coaching in their organisation. By understanding the outcomes of both coaching and supervision, organisations are much more likely to be able to establish and sustain coaching practices in the long term.

Supervision also ensures that standards are maintained, this can be particularly useful for internal coaches who are far more likely to be subjected to bias, pressure, intimidation, isolation, conflict, confidentiality issues, and power games; because their coachees are also their colleagues. Informal coaching relationships, that occur between a coach and their direct reports, also have a complex dynamic which supervision can help to untangle. Organisations that provide supervision programmes secure a degree of reassurance that their internal coaches will be able to overcome these challenges without detriment to the people involved or to the reputation of the organisation.

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Coach Wellbeing

The concept of a 'safe space' is traditionally associated with the field of psychology, and it is from here that the concept of coaching supervision originated. Having the opportunity to debrief in a safe space can be vitally important for the progress of the coaching programme and essential for the wellbeing of the coach.

Supervision sessions give the coach the chance to vent their frustrations and to talk about problems, difficult relationships or awkward situations, in a confidential setting with a qualified supervisor. This can help the coach to deal with the potential stresses and pressures of the job and ensure that they can continue to coach in the most effective way possible.



The practice of coaching is evolving all of the time so it is crucially important for coaches to continue their professional development post qualification.

Reports show that many coaches participate in private research, networking and attending conferences but far less benefit from short courses, formal training and further education. In terms of personal development, it seems that there is much more emphasis on theory than on practical application.

Coaching supervision bridges the gap between theory and practice. A coach can use their supervision sessions to be coached on real and specific issues in order to further their own personal development. Additionally, if a coach reaches an impasse with their coachee, they can refer to their supervisor to learn new tools

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and techniques, or refresh existing skills, and practice them in a safe environment. This is a very individualised and practical way of learning that can happen at the point of need. With this support, the coach can quickly unlock progress, engage and contribute in new ways, and improve the coaching experience.

Being ethical means different things to different people. The line between right and wrong can move dependent upon people's beliefs, morality and understanding of the world. During supervision, the coach can discuss information that is troubling them without breaching the confidentiality of the coaching relationship. For example, the coach may not like the coachee's ethics, or they may feel uncomfortable about behaviours or issues that are raised during coaching.



A supervisor can help the coach to become clearer on how their own perceptions influence how they are approaching a situation and whether that approach is beneficial for themselves, their coachees, the organisations they work for, and whether it adheres to professional coaching standards. Here, the supervisor acts as an independent third party that can help the coach to maintain balance and objectivity, even in difficult situations.



It would be wrong to assume that coaches are immune to developing negative or unproductive habits because of the nature of their work. Coaches are just as susceptible to fall into bad habits and ineffective work methods as people in any other profession. But, even good habits need to be challenged from time to time in order to determine whether they are really adding value.

Supervision plays an important role in helping people to explore how they operate as coaches. A supervisor can help the coach to notice what is happening before it's too late and can offer a reflective space for planning, open discussion, feedback and learning. Supervision can also help new coaches to address any bad habits before they have a chance to become ingrained in their coaching practice, whether they are actively coaching or not.

Ultimately, expert coaching supervision helps to raise standards across the coaching profession and importantly improves the impact of coaching within organisations. For organisations that want to develop a culture of coaching, they must experience consistently positive outcomes. Supervision - including 1-to-1, group, virtual and peer supervision - is a good way to ensure that the organisation has the highest calibre of coaches who are able to deliver excellent results.

Coaching is a skilled discipline, and to do it well, coaches need more than just qualifications; they also need high levels of integrity, self-esteem, quality, developmental readiness and self-awareness. Furthermore, they need to be agile and responsive to unexpected and unique situations. Supervision, with expert supervisors, is vitally important in helping coaches to get into this reflective space, so that they can overcome obstacles, and learn and practice new skills, which enables them to deliver the best possible coaching service into the organisation.

1 Whybrow, A., & Palmer, S. (2006), 'Shifting perspectives: One year into the development of the British Psychological Society Special Group in Psychology in the UK', International Coaching Psychology Review, 1, 75-85
2 EMCC (2017). Executive Report into the state of play in European Coaching and Mentoring

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