EXECUTIVE COACHING: PERSPECTIVES OF EFFECTIVENESS FROM EXECUTIVES AND COACHES

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Master of Education (USQ)
Bachelor of Engineering (1 Honours) (QUT)

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Business (Research)

Faculty of Business
Queensland University of Technology

June 2010
Keywords

Coaching, effectiveness, executive coaching, executive development
Abstract

Over the past two decades there has been a remarkable expansion in the use of executive coaching as an executive development technique. The increasing prominence of executive coaching has been attributed to the emergence of new organisational cultures and the subtler competencies needed by executives in these faster moving organisations.

The widespread popularity of executive coaching has been based largely on anecdotal feedback regarding its effectiveness. The small body of empirical research has been growing but conclusive outcomes are rare. The prominent question for those with the business imperative to implement executive coaching has been what are the ingredients of the process that engender an effective outcome?

This investigation has focused on the factors of executive coaching that contribute to effectiveness. A qualitative methodology facilitated an in-depth study of the experiences of the participants of executive coaching with the perceptions of both executives and coaches being sought. Semi-structured interviews and a focus group provided rich, thick descriptions and together with a process of inductive analysis produced findings that confidently identify the key factors that contribute to coaching effectiveness. Six major themes were identified, each comprising a collection of meanings. These themes have been labelled Executive Engagement, Preliminary Assessment and Feedback, Coaching Process, Coach’s Contribution, Trusting Relationship and Support from the Organisation. One theme, Coaching Process, comprises three significant sub-themes, namely, Encouragement and Emotional Support, Challenge and Reflection and Enhancing Executive Performance.

The findings of this study add value to the field by identifying factors contributing to coaching effectiveness, and providing for the coaching practitioner a basis for enhancing their practice of executive coaching to better meet the needs of executives and their organisations.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIM</td>
<td>Australian Institute of Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICF</td>
<td>International Coach Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROI</td>
<td>Return on investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS</td>
<td>National Health Service</td>
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Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature: __________________________

Date: __________________________
Acknowledgements

There are a number of people who have generously contributed their time, wisdom and support to enable this project to reach completion. To these people, I express my profound gratitude.

My principal supervisor, Dr Amanda Gudmundsson, for your astute academic guidance, and careful attention to the finer details, but mostly for the enthusiastic support and encouragement which always made the task seem achievable.

My initial supervisor, Dr David Robinson, for taking on the project, seeing the possibilities, and continually stretching my thinking and actions.

Dr Fran Finn, for generously sharing your expertise in coaching research, and for so willingly assisting with the supervisory role.

Colin Noyes, my coach-mentor, who launched me on the journey of discovery called executive coaching which has opened wider horizons than I ever imagined, and also for continuing to ask the hard questions as the journey continues.

Peter Evans, who first sowed the idea of undertaking this research degree and whose professional standard has continued to inspire its completion.

Gary Hourigan, who willingly immersed himself in the analysis to assist with the code checking – your time and expertise were invaluable.

Australian Institute of Management for participating as a partner in the project and trusting me with access to their valued professional clients.

The participating coaches and executives who will remain anonymous – your willingness to freely give of your time and share your inner world has made this project possible.

My wife Helen and my family, who have consistently encouraged, supported and believed in me even when I faltered, and made selfless adjustments to enable me to focus on this project.

To each one…thank you!
Chapter 1

Introduction and Overview

The use of executive coaching as a developmental intervention for managers has increased dramatically in the last two decades (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Joo, 2005). The widely reported success of executive coaching and the pressing need for competent executives have prompted many corporations to adopt this strategy to improve executive performance (Paige, 2002). At present the widespread popularity of executive coaching is based largely on anecdotal feedback from executives and coaches regarding its effectiveness. There is a small but growing body of empirical research into this area, however, conclusive outcomes remain rare (Baron & Morin, 2009a; Finn, Mason, & Bradley, 2007) and consistent agreement on the nature of those outcomes is lacking (MacKie, 2007).

Executive coaching is typically viewed as a short to medium-term relationship between an executive and a consultant with the purpose of improving the executive’s work effectiveness (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). It provides practical, confidential one-on-one development for executives within a trusting relationship, where the outcomes are geared to the strategic objectives of the organisation (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Jones, Rafferty, & Griffin, 2006; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007). The executive coaching engagement may be designed to improve executive performance or behaviour, to enhance career progression or prevent derailment, and to work through organisational issues or change initiatives (Hall, Otazo, & Hollenbeck, 1999).

The widespread interest in executive coaching and its increasing prominence are attributed in the literature to the rapidly changing nature of business since the 1980s (Sherman & Freas, 2004). The emergence of new organisational cultures and structures has placed increasing expectations on executives to expand their knowledge base and deal effectively with the many changes that are happening around them. Organisations have become increasingly willing to provide a coach to assist executives adjust to the growing expectations and balance the many competing demands their position may entail (Paige, 2002). Some of the factors driving these
changes have been identified as: greater executive autonomy, new and subtler competencies needed in faster moving organisations (Sherman & Freas, 2004), a shift from command and control management to consultation and empowerment (Wales, 2003), adaptability to rapid change (Kets de Vries, 2005), and a perceived lack of opportunities for executive growth (Kiel, Rimmer, Williams, & Dolye, 1996).

The available literature indicates that the growth in executive coaching is a global phenomenon within western cultures, and this is evident in Australia (Blackman, 2006; Dagley, 2006; Finn, et al., 2007; Jones, et al., 2006). Many of the world’s notable corporations and government organisations utilise executive coaching, and the interest in executive coaching continues to escalate (Finn, 2007). With potentially large financial returns to successful coaches, the field has attracted many practitioners. Estimates of the number of professional coaches in the United States of America (for which figures have been published) have soared from more than 10 000 in the mid-nineties (Astorino, 2002) to in excess of 50 000 a decade later (Joo, 2005).

Coaching is an unregulated field – anyone can label themselves a coach, even a coach of executives (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). The only real entry criterion is the practitioner’s ability to solicit clients (Brotman, Liberi, & Wasylyshyn, 1998; Garman, Whiston, & Zlatoper, 2000). Coaching is not established as a recognised profession in western nations, and moves toward recognition and regulation face significant challenges (Bennett, 2006). There are currently no accepted identifiable and distinct skills for coaches, no consistently defined theory on which coaches base their practice, and no established community of practitioners (MacKie, 2007). Of the various professional bodies seeking to represent coaches, the largest of these – the International Coach Federation (ICF) – can claim membership of less than half the estimated coaches in the world (Bennett, 2006). The absence of regulation and consistency associated with a recognised profession has prompted professionals in related fields to voice concerns about quality and effectiveness in the conduct of executive coaching (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001).

There has been increasing attention given to executive coaching in the popular and professional business press (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001) and in the majority of cases it is viewed positively. From the business practice point of view at
least, there is a rapidly growing body of personal testimonials and case studies that give clear indications that coaching has a positive impact both on people and on organisational results (Dagley, 2006).

Academic literature has also explored the practice, although the majority of published articles present executive coaching from the practitioner perspective (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Thach, 2002) citing vignettes, case studies and own experiences as sources of evidence (Dawdy, 2004; Smither, London, Fluatt, Vargas, & Kucine, 2003). These studies have contributed to the field by differentiating executive coaching from other styles of developmental intervention, defining what takes place in coaching, and identifying the expected outcomes of effective coaching (Feldman & Lankau, 2005).

There are a limited number of published articles which empirically study the practice of executive coaching (these are reviewed extensively in Chapter 2). These various studies have explored aspects of coaching outcomes and benefits, the impact of coaching on executive performance, coaching effectiveness and the experiences of the various participants in the process. There is also a growing body of postgraduate research in this area, much of which remains unpublished to date. Researchers observe that a number of the unpublished studies suffer from design limitations (small sample sizes, no control groups, no random allocation of participants) and/or failure to adequately define the coaching intervention that was employed in the study (MacKie, 2007; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007). Nevertheless, there remains a lack of research which provides systematic data on the impact of coaching on executive performance, what methodology of executive coaching works best, the active ingredients of the process that engender an effective outcome, and under which conditions executive coaching will translate into greater organisational effectiveness (Baron & Morin, 2009a; Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Finn, 2007; Linley, 2006).

The current study aims to address one of those empirical gaps, one which is of particular interest to practitioners in this field. Given the existing anecdotal evidence supporting claims of executive coaching efficacy, practitioners and researchers are interested in empirically identifying the factors that contribute to the effective outcome of a coaching program (Dagley, 2006; Feldman & Lankau, 2005; MacKie, 2007). Some practitioners argue that there is no professional consensus as to what
constitutes effective coaching (De Meuse, Dai, & Lee, 2009). It is the purpose of this research to explore the factors of the executive coaching process that contribute to its effectiveness. This has been the subject of previous research of various designs, often presented from the viewpoint of either the coaching practitioner or, to a lesser extent, the executive. This Australian study will build upon the existing knowledge by investigating the factors contributing to coaching effectiveness from the viewpoints of both the executives and coaches, with data collected from instances of executive coaching in a range of organisations where the outcome has been defined as effective by both the executive and the coach.

**Research Questions**

This study aims to acquire a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to the effective outcome of executive coaching. In the current unregulated field of executive coaching, organisations engaging external coaches for their executives are faced with the challenges of determining the key characteristics of the coaching process that will achieve the desired development in the executives and outcomes in the organisation, and the essential competencies required for an effective coach in the specific organisational context.

This research program will investigate executives’ experiences of coaching within a range of organisations which have implemented similar coaching interventions. It will investigate how executives experience coaching, and which experiences, in their opinion, contribute to effective behavioural outcomes. It will also investigate the coaches’ perspectives of the coaching interventions for these executives, that is, what the coaches perceived were the key aspects of their coaching practice that contributed to effectiveness.

This investigation will explore the answers to two questions:

1. What are executives’ perceptions of the factors contributing to the effectiveness of executive coaching?

2. What are coaches’ perceptions of the factors contributing to the effectiveness of executive coaching?
Significance

This study will add value to the field of executive coaching by identifying factors contributing to its effectiveness for the coach and the executive. With this knowledge, executive coaches may enhance their practice by addressing factors perceived to be more effective for an organisational context; and organisations may be better able to plan and engage in coaching interventions that are effective in meeting their needs and the needs of their executives.

Methodology

Since the theoretical concepts of executive coaching are not currently well defined (Baron & Morin, 2009a; Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001), this study has adopted a constructivist qualitative design. This research seeks to discover the subjective experience of coaching participants, their reality, particularly with reference to coaching effectiveness (Patton, 2002).

The design of the study requires the gathering of rich and complex data from both coaches and executives. Selection of an industry partner who provides coaching to executives in South East Queensland provided access to a population of both coaches and executives whom they had recently coached. Four experienced coaches were available to participate in the study, all of whom use the coaching approach approved by the industry partner. The investigation of the coaches’ perceptions of factors that contribute to coaching effectiveness utilised a focus group discussion. This means of data collection provided the benefit that group dynamics helped to focus the discussion on the most important topics and produced a wide range of insights (Robson, 2002).

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the most appropriate method of qualitative data collection from executives to uncover rich and complex memories and opinions from each individual concerning their experiences of coaching effectiveness (Cavana, Delahaye, & Sekaran, 2001). The coaches proposed candidates from the executives that they had recently coached, and from a population of seventeen candidates a sample of twelve was chosen to maximise variation where possible.
The focus group and interviews were recorded and transcribed. Analysis was performed manually by data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification providing rich perspectives from thorough immersion by the researcher. The emergent themes provide a greater understanding of the factors contributing to coaching effectiveness and the means by which these can be practically applied to enhance the delivery of executive coaching in the future.

**Definitions**

Definitions adopted by researchers may not be uniform so the key terms used in this study are here defined. It is therefore clear what is meant by the subject under study (executive coaching), who is included, and how these can be differentiated from other interpretations.

*Executive* refers to persons who are at the top and upper level of leadership positions or roles of authority in their organisation and lead others who in most instances are managers of teams. They have the potential of making a significant contribution to the mission and purpose of the organisation (Executive.Coaching.Forum, 2004; Kilburg, 1996).

*Executive Coaching* is defined as

a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organisation and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and, consequently, to improve the effectiveness of the client’s organisation within a formally defined coaching agreement (Kilburg, 1996, p. 142).

*Effectiveness:* there are at present no universally accepted criteria for what constitutes effectiveness of executive coaching (De Meuse, et al., 2009; MacKie, 2007). This study will adopt the generally held view that effective executive coaching is that which achieves positive outcomes or impact for both the executive and the organisation (Dagley, 2006; Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Kombarakaran, Yang, Baker, & Fernandes, 2008).
Delimitations and Assumptions

In order to achieve findings of some significance, the researcher has determined the scope of the study to be bounded by the assumptions and delimitations below.

The assumptions upon which this study is based include:

1. Executive coaching is a phenomenon that is socially constructed.

2. There is an essential structure to the participant’s experience of coaching which can be extracted from the participant’s verbal narrative.

3. Participants would provide accurate reports of the experiences of executive coaching.

4. Coaches would utilise a relatively consistent coaching approach across all of the executive coaching engagements included in this study (discussed in Chapter 3).

This study is delimited by the definition of executive coaching stated above which eliminates from inclusion executive development techniques such as mentoring or coaching by an executive’s manager or HR personnel. The aim of the study will not be to prove the efficacy of executive coaching, or to establish the benefits of executive coaching, or to investigate the theoretical models for executive coaching. This study will investigate the factors of the executive coaching process that contribute to its effectiveness and therefore will explore in detail effective executive coaching relationships but not derailed coaching relationships.

The study is further delimited by the context defined for executive coaching being that in which the executive elected or agreed willingly to participate in coaching, the coaching was funded by the organisation, and the coaching was viewed as a standalone executive development process not integrated into a structured organisational leadership program.

The study has been fully conducted within Australia

Outline

The research program is presented as follows: Chapter 2 reviews the literature associated with executive coaching as defined by this study. The current research on
executive coaching is presented with a particular focus on studies based on empirical evidence, both published and unpublished. Relevant studies are reviewed in some detail to determine a collective picture of the currently established factors contributing to coaching effectiveness and what remains to be investigated to be able to state these factors with greater certainty. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used for the study including the qualitative design, the data collection, and the details of the analysis. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the investigation and the interpretation of these based on the context of this study. Furthermore these findings are compared and contrasted with the findings of similar studies. Chapter 5 draws conclusions, identifies practical applications of the findings and recommends areas for future research.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Executive coaching emerged as a leadership development practice a little over two decades ago and is now among the most widely used executive development techniques (McGovern et al., 2001). To critically examine executive coaching research, this chapter commences by presenting an Introduction to the field of executive coaching. Here a definition of executive coaching (as adopted in Chapter 1) is critiqued, the emergence of executive coaching is explored, and its application in relation to other executive development techniques is outlined.

In the next section, Executive Coaching Research, the existing literature on executive coaching is overviewed and critiqued to identify what has been researched, where research is lacking and to ascertain the outstanding questions needing to be answered. Based on the identified gaps in the literature, a focus for the research is selected, that is, the factors contributing to the effective outcomes of executive coaching.

With this perspective established, the major section of this chapter presents a Review of Published Studies Based on Empirical Evidence. These studies are categorised, and then systematically analysed and critiqued to determine the key concepts for the current study. In the following section, Review of Selected Unpublished Theses, this group of literature is also consulted for its contribution to the emerging concepts.

The chapter concludes with a Compilation of Findings, and a Summary of the theoretical framework for the research.

Introduction

The origin of executive coaching is difficult to pinpoint precisely (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001), although it appears to be an outgrowth of corporate executive development programs requiring a more individual focus and flexible structure in a rapidly changing world of business. The term was first used in the late 1980s (Tobias, 1996). Since then its growth has been rapid and widespread, with
many of the world’s most admired corporations investing significant sums in coaching of executives thereby creating a global US$2 billion per annum market (Passmore & Gibbes, 2007; Sherman & Freas, 2004). The corresponding growth of related literature has not been as rapid, so executive coaching is an area where practice is leading theory (Joo, 2005). The growing body of literature has largely taken a practitioner perspective with academic research to date lagging far behind (Baron & Morin, 2009a; Feldman & Lankau, 2005).

**Definition of executive coaching**

A wide variety of definitions of executive coaching exist within the related literature reflecting the diversity of approaches in this field. Two selected examples will be discussed before arriving at the definition which has been adopted for this study.

From a *business perspective* executive coaching may be simply defined as

A process of one-on-one relationship between a professional coach and an executive (coachee) for the purpose of enhancing coachee’s behavioural change through self-awareness and learning and thus ultimately for the success of the individual and organisation (Joo, 2005, p. 468).

The profession of psychology has contributed much to the field of executive coaching, defining the process with greater precision. A leading Australian coaching psychologist Anthony Grant defines coaching in the workplace using *solution focused approach* as

a solution-focused, result-orientated systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of work performance and the self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee (Grant, 2001, p. 8).

Both of these definitions capture some vital elements of executive coaching. The definition by Joo (2005) highlights the coach’s standing external to the organisation, the executive’s learning and behaviour change, and the organisational benefit. Grant (2001) emphasises the systematic process which results in improved work performance. However, neither definition specifically states the significance of the executive role, nor the relation to a defined coaching agreement nor the involvement of the executive in forming the goals of the coaching. These elements
are captured in a comprehensive and widely accepted definition of executive coaching developed by Richard Kilburg who pioneered much of the coaching psychology research in the United States (Kilburg, 1996, p. 142):

Executive coaching is defined as a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organisation and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and, consequently, to improve the effectiveness of the client's organisation within a formally defined coaching agreement.

This definition by Kilburg (1996) includes the strengths of the other definitions and also aspects that were missing. Accordingly, the definition by Kilburg (1996) will be used in this study to define the executive coaching variable.

Executive coaching is seen as a confidential personal learning process that focuses on both interpersonal and intrapersonal issues (Kiel, et al., 1996) in an ongoing relationship that may last from a few months to a few years (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001). Some authors suggest that executive coaching was originally conceived as a remedial intervention for derailed or at-risk executives (Judge & Cowell, 1997; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001). With greater acceptance of executive coaching the predominant current application of this practice has become performance enhancement for high-potential executives (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Joo, 2005; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001).

With executive coaching becoming more clearly defined and widely accepted as a commercial practice, it has become increasingly distinct from other forms of executive development which may be closely related e.g. mentoring, training, consulting and counselling. All of these forms of intervention provide some means of help, support, or capability enhancement for executives; however, they have distinctly different goals and outcomes from executive coaching. The extent and nature of these distinctions have been detailed by a number of researchers (Dawdy, 2004; Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Grant, 2001; Ingram, 2004; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001) and so will be stated briefly here.
Mentoring is the helping process provided typically by a senior, more experienced employee to a younger, less experienced employee to become proficient in his or her role in the organisation (Feldman & Lankau, 2005).

Training focuses on learning the skills, knowledge and attitudes required to initially perform a job or task or improve upon the performance of a current job or task (Ingram, 2004).

Consulting involves the hiring of an expert in order to find a solution to a problem or needed transition (Dawdy, 2004).

Counselling or psychotherapy is conducted by registered psychologists who clinically treat clients for their emotional and behavioural problems. It is a specialised relationship with a remedial client to achieve more effective ways to deal with distress. In contrast, executive coaching is a more collegial relationship with a healthy client to enhance future behaviour and performance (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001).

Executive coaching is distinct from other forms of development by virtue of a confidential one-on-one relationship between an executive and a coach external to the organisation, conducted for a defined time period. Furthermore a holistic or systems perspective is adopted with a view to achieve both individual and organisational benefits. It is generally focused on specific leadership competencies or solving specific problems and includes regular follow-up on progress to monitor behaviour change (Garman, et al., 2000; Hall, et al., 1999; Judge & Cowell, 1997; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001). A unique feature of coaching, unlike other methods of executive development, such as conferences and training sessions, is that behavioural practice is its central component (Kombarakaran, et al., 2008). Through coaching the executive is encouraged to develop new approaches and behaviours, practice them, re-evaluate their impact and try a revised approach for improved effectiveness. A major strength of coaching is that it respects the individual style and the authority of the executive and provides constructive feedback on the impact of the executive’s behaviour (Kombarakaran, et al., 2008).
The practice of executive coaching

The reported outcomes of executive coaching for the executive and the organisation are many, although the support for these claims is often anecdotal. A survey of coaches indicated that executives generally choose to concentrate on leadership development (45%), transitions and change management (25%) and team building (24%) (Grant & Zackon, 2004). Other outcomes of coaching reported by executives included developing specific skills to improve performance on the job, for example modifying interaction style (Judge & Cowell, 1997), organisational goal setting and focus on priorities (Hall, et al., 1999), enhancing career advancement (Smither, et al., 2003) and improved job satisfaction (Thach, 2002).

Some coaches may be contracted by individual executives, although in many cases, executive coaching occurs within a triangular relationship formed among the coach, the executive, and the client who pays for the service (Peterson, 1996; Sherman & Freas, 2004). The client may include the executive’s supervisor and/or the organisation’s human resource manager. The role of the client in the coaching relationship may vary from very little (simply pays for the service) to closely involved in setting desired outcomes and monitoring progress.

Where a program of executive coaching within an organisation is defined (for a tender process for example), this triangular relationship adds the dimension of commoditisation to executive coaching. In such instances the delivery of coaching may require some shift to meet the demands of structured psycho-educational approaches and/or return on investment criteria of the organisation (Dagley, 2006).

While executive coaching is by nature flexible and tailored to the unique needs of the executive, there is general agreement among scholars that the process includes six broad stages: relationship building, assessment, feedback, planning, implementation, and evaluation (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Olivero, Bane, & Kopelman, 1997; Peterson, 1996). Some coaches would expect to deliver this entire process in a relatively seamless fashion, whereas other coaching providers make it a point of difference to have the assessment and feedback performed by a specialist rather than the coach.
Executive coaches

Executive coaching is an unregulated field and the qualifications of executive coaches vary greatly. Because of the increased demand executive coaching has attracted professionals from business consultancy, management, teaching, workplace training, and psychology (clinical, organisational, sports) amongst others. Each of these professions has its own knowledge base and significant contribution to make to the emerging field of executive coaching (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Grant & Cavanagh, 2004). There have been few studies of the qualifications of coaches (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004) and fewer relating to executive coaches in particular (Binstead & Grant, 2008; Brooks, 2007). A survey of 60 executive coaches by Judge and Cowell (1997) identified that the large majority have in excess of two decades of work experience, have postgraduate qualifications in business or social sciences, and are members of a professional association.

With no consistently defined body of theory upon which coaches base their practice, there exists debate among scholars and practitioners about what are the optimum qualifications for the effective practice of executive coaching (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). Some scholars argue that psychologists are most qualified to conduct executive coaching due to their particular skills (Brotman, et al., 1998; Wasylyshyn, 2003). Others see psychology qualifications as less relevant (Garman, et al., 2000), emphasising instead an understanding of business disciplines, management principles and leadership as the critical core competencies of executive coaches (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Tobias, 1996). This spread of opinion is noticeably evident in the executive coaching literature.

With executive coaches coming from such diverse backgrounds each having their own academic and intellectual tradition as well as years of experience, it is little wonder there is huge variety in the approaches taken by coaches to induce behaviour change in executives (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). The approach to executive coaching adopted by any practitioner generally consciously or sub-consciously reflects their professional background (Bluckert, 2005b). Scholars and practitioners from the psychology field typically define coaching in terms of behavioural change (Bluckert, 2005b). Generally, their concern is with identifying and accurately implementing the theoretical foundation which serves to guide the coach/client
relationship and coaching process. A range of approaches are proposed, be it cognitive, behavioural, psycho-dynamic, or solution focused to name a few (Bennett, 2006; Peltier, 2001; Whybrow & Palmer, 2006), although it is acknowledged that few coaching psychologists adhere to a single model (Passmore & Gibbes, 2007). Grant (2001) cautions that it has not yet been empirically established that clinical techniques are applicable to coaching non-remedial clients since these techniques are concerned with identifying and ameliorating dysfunctional issues, a problem-focused approach. He presents instead a psychological underpinning for a solution-focused approach to executive coaching.

Executive coaching scholars and practitioners from a business management background tend to major on the performance theme, seeing coaching as about skills development (Bluckert, 2005b). They are generally less concerned with the theory undergirding their approach to coaching, and in some studies do not even mention this matter. A survey of 59 executive coaches in New Zealand (Brooks, 2007) revealed that 47% used simple rational models without any reference to theoretical frameworks. These approaches included a managerial problem solving model and a basic solution focused model (Whitmore, 2002), both of which reflect a business orientation toward outcomes rather than the psychologists’ orientation toward the intervention. This wide variety of discipline-related approaches to executive coaching presents a major challenge for research since it is difficult to compare across theoretical perspectives (Feldman & Lankau, 2005) or to generalise results from one model of coaching intervention to others.

Executive Coaching Research

*Executive coaching and related disciplines*

The majority of existing literature on executive coaching lies within the broader related field of executive development. This literature clusters within three groups – management consulting, learning and development, and consulting psychology – with each group focusing on their unique perspective of the executive coaching process and outcomes (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001); see Table 2.1.
Consulting psychology has contributed a significant proportion of the academic literature concerning executive coaching making a particular contribution to the techniques and methodologies theme which is of particular interest to this intellectual tradition (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001). Management literature explores executive coaching generally from the perspective of how it contributes to successful changes in managerial behaviours and increases in organisational effectiveness (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). Similarly those with an academic background in the field of learning and development have explored executive coaching from a transformative, developmental paradigm based on the interaction of developmental states of both the executive and the coach (Laske, 1999).

In the current decade another body of coaching literature has emerged; these are studies published by coaching associations. Much of the literature in this sector deals with coaching in a general sense rather than specifically executive coaching in an organisational leadership context, for which a particular defined skill set is required (Mackenzie, 2007; O’Neill, 2000). The coaching association literature while making a valuable contribution cannot be expected to consistently reflect an independent position on the question of executive coaching efficacy, since its purpose is to enhance the acceptance and practice of the field of coaching. Some studies and evaluations which are produced by coaching providers are best treated as marketing materials (Dagley, 2006; Grant & Cavanagh, 2004).

In the interest of depth rather than breadth, this study will analyse literature addressing executive coaching and exclude the broader field of executive development (effectiveness of 360 degree feedback, mentoring, theories of executive learning, models of training and development, behaviour change studies). The selection of literature for this study is illustrated in Figure 2.1 (opposite).

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Table 2.1

*Discipline Based Categories of Executive Coaching Literature*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Focus of the literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>outcomes – executive and organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning and development</td>
<td>developmental states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>process, psycho-dynamic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figure 2.1. Map of relevant fields of literature within executive development.
The literature included in the study will be that in the field *Executive Coaching* including the overlap with other related fields of psychology, training and development, management and coaching associations. Furthermore the literature on “manager as coach” will not be included since a manager with formal authority providing coaching presents a distinctly different dynamic to that of an external executive coach (Feldman & Lankau, 2005).

**Executive coaching in literature**

There are a limited number of published empirical studies that support the anecdotal evidence that executive coaching produces positive outcomes (Dagley, 2006; Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Finn, 2007; Kombarakaran, et al., 2008; MacKie, 2007; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007). The large majority of these studies (forty-one) are listed in Appendix A with some categorisation according to research design and origin of the study. Of these studies, less than twenty have investigated executive coaching with systematic research methods, with only a few of these published in top tier academic journals.

Some of these studies provide limited support for the effectiveness of executive coaching through positive self reported behaviour change (Hall, et al., 1999; Kombarakaran, et al., 2008; Paige, 2002; Stevens, 2005; Wales, 2003). A few of the studies report more detailed longitudinal investigations with data collected from observers other than the executive, and hence establish some conclusive evidence that executive coaching improves aspects of leadership performance (Finn, 2007; Grant, Curtayne, & Burton, 2009; Smither, et al., 2003; Thach, 2002). However most of the published studies to date have been inconclusive in establishing measurable outcomes of executive coaching personally or for the organisation. In a number of cases this has been due to design or reporting limitations of the studies themselves (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007).

There is a growing body of unpublished research in this area, mostly postgraduate theses. The low rate of transition from research to publication in this emerging field is a matter of interest and perhaps some concern. Some scholars observe that a number of the studies suffer from design limitations (small sample sizes, no control groups, no random allocation of participants) and/or failure to
adequately define the coaching intervention that was employed in the study (MacKie, 2007; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007).

**The challenges for executive coaching research**

Researchers in the field of executive coaching face numerous difficulties which are to be expected for an emerging discipline. One of the first steps in useful research is defining what needs to be asked and why this is of value (Linley, 2006). A number of scholars share some agreement that the important questions are (a) what is the impact of coaching on executive performance? (b) what methodology of coaching works best, when and with whom? (c) what are the active ingredients of the process that engender an effective outcome? and (d) under which conditions does executive coaching translate into greater organisational effectiveness? (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Linley, 2006; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007). While there may generally be an interest in answering all these questions, the researcher’s professional background is likely to determine which of the questions they are most seeking to answer and therefore the direction they take in their research.

The primary concern would appear to be question (a) above – executive coaching efficacy, that is, does it work? Establishing credible causal linkages between variables requires longitudinal studies of robust design (large sample sizes, control groups, and random allocation). Such studies regarding executive coaching face design difficulties in determining what is to be measured due to the sheer number of targets for executive development, the most common being performance, motivation, behaviour change or leadership (MacKie, 2007; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007). The model of coaching used for the executives in the study requires some structured consistency to allow comparison of outcomes; however this may shift the emphasis away from the individual dynamic that is inherent in personal coaching relationships with executives (Dagley, 2006; MacKie, 2007). Another consideration is the style of developmental intervention to be provided to the control group to remove the Hawthorn effect (Passmore & Gibbes, 2007). Practical difficulties also arise. These include the impact of organisational change, participant attrition, and unrelated variables affecting executive performance during the period of the study (Stober, 2005). Finally there is the understandable reluctance of business to randomly allocate executives participating in coaching to research and control groups,
especially when there is a general, if unsubstantiated consensus that coaching is an effective worthwhile endeavour (Luthans & Peterson, 2003; MacKie, 2007; Stober, 2005).

With these challenges in view it is understandable that the number of studies providing reliable data on the efficacy of executive coaching is small, although increasing postgraduate research along these lines is promising. It is important that coaching research progress using robustly designed studies to determine objective quantitative outcome measures thus establishing a scientific base (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004; Greif, 2007; Lowman, 2005; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007).

However the question of efficacy of executive coaching is not the issue driving coaching research for some who have greater interest in other questions identified above. Coaching psychologists appear to be more likely to frame research around question (b) what methodology of coaching works best, when and with whom? (Whybrow & Palmer, 2006). Similarly those with a business imperative to make coaching work (practitioners) are likely to be drawn to question (c) what are the active ingredients of the process that engender an effective outcome? (MacKie, 2007). The difficulties in addressing question (d) “impact on organisational effectiveness” are complex; it may be that coaching is too many causal links away from financial performance to demonstrate significant results (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; MacKie, 2007).

It can be seen that in any study, the question to be answered will determine the perspective with which executive coaching is viewed, what literature is seen as significant and the way that literature is interpreted (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006). For example two recently published studies which contribute significant evidence to the case for executive coaching efficacy offer few details concerning the nature of the coaching intervention that contributed to the effective outcome (Evers, Brouwers, & Tomic, 2006; Finn, 2007).

**Focus of the current study**

This study will be developed with the perspective of the practitioner in mind, that is, those with the business imperative to design and implement effective coaching programs, be they managers, HR professionals or executive coaches.
themselves. The main interest of these practitioners is not whether executive coaching is effective, but what makes it so? In a survey of seventeen Australian human resource professionals Dagley (2006, p. 44) concluded:

To be able to comment on whether or not executive coaching is, on average, effective as an intervention is not particularly helpful to those considering establishing programs. A logical extension to the current study would be the investigation of the various factors that influence the success of executive coaching programs.

By adopting this stance, the research can focus more specifically on the questions confronting these professionals, in particular, what are the factors of the executive coaching process that contribute to its effectiveness? (De Meuse, et al., 2009)?

The viewpoint of both the coach and the executive will be valuable in exploring this question (Joo, 2005); therefore both will be included in this study. However, few of the published articles focus in depth on the perspectives of the executives actually experiencing the coaching process (MacKie, 2007; Stevens, 2005). Interpretive research that examines the perspectives of the executives being coached could add significantly to the knowledge of executive coaching (Joo, 2005). Exploring in some depth the perspective of the executive being coached can be especially useful because what the coach or program designer view as most important in a process of change may not be what was seen as most helpful by the executive (Blackman, 2006). The executive perspective has recently become the subject of investigation in a number of unpublished theses (Ballinger, 2000; Bougae, 2005; Bush, 2004; Luebbe, 2005; Olsen, 2005; Seamos, 2006; Sztucinski, 2001; C. A. Turner, 2004).

Thus far, this review of the existing literature has clarified the viewpoint from which this study will be approached (that of the coaching practitioner) and the question to be addressed – what are the factors of the executive coaching process that contribute to its effectiveness? The perspectives of both coaches and executives will be included in the study.

The contributions of previous researchers in identifying these factors will be determined by a detailed review of the literature, in particular studies based on
empirical evidence. The review will commence with published articles and then proceed to unpublished studies.

**Review of Published Studies Based on Empirical Evidence**

Forty-one published research studies which investigate executive coaching based on empirical evidence were identified, including those published by coaching associations. These are summarised in Appendix A.

It is helpful in reviewing these studies to consider the purpose for which they were undertaken – this will determine their significance for the questions being investigated in this study. The studies have been placed into five categories according to their purpose so as to better understand the field and to provide some clear structure for the discussion. The five categories with examples of each are:

1. Investigation of the outcomes of executive coaching, and factors contributing to success, generally by self report data from executives or coaches (Kombarakaran, et al., 2008; Stevens, 2005).
2. Literature reviews to integrate the findings of research to date and propose directions for future research (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Joo, 2005).
3. Longitudinal studies of efficacy of executive coaching with pre and post test of leadership outcomes (Finn, 2007; Smither, et al., 2003).
4. Investigation of executive coaches’ qualifications and practices (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004).
5. Longitudinal studies of efficacy of coaching by manager or expert within the organisation (internal coach) to measure the efficacy of a leadership development initiative (Baron & Morin, 2009b; Olivero, et al., 1997; Sue-Chan & Latham, 2004).

In addressing the research questions regarding the factors contributing to effectiveness of executive coaching, the studies which investigate outcomes of executive coaching and the literature reviews will be most relevant. The longitudinal studies of the efficacy of executive coaching may contribute to the investigation. These groups of literature will be reviewed in detail in the order stated above with
one subsection devoted to each category – *Outcome studies, Literature reviews, Longitudinal studies*.

Some of the studies of coaches’ practices may contribute to the question regarding coaches’ perceptions of coaching effectiveness, these will be critiqued also in the subsection *Studies of coaches’ practices*. Articles which present studies of executive coaching but are in fact studies of coaching by managers or experts are unlikely to be as relevant and will be dealt with lightly.

An initial review of literature in all the categories was conducted to determine what these scholars conclude are the factors contributing to effectiveness of executive coaching. These factors are recorded in table form in Appendix B where each entry denotes a mention of that factor, not the degree of conviction with which it is proposed. Some of the articles did not address this matter in a conclusive way and are therefore not included in the table.

*Outcome studies*

The studies based on empirical evidence which explore the outcomes of executive coaching and factors contributing to these are generally based on self report data gathered at one point in time. These studies may be quantitative (typically surveys) or qualitative (structured or in-depth interviews), or some combination of both. In order to establish generally applicable findings, the studies require robustness in the design of sampling methods, sample size, data collection, and data analysis. Many of the articles reviewed in this category do not provide this detail of the study, perhaps because it was lacking in the design or alternatively it may not have been considered necessary for publication in the particular journal.

This group of thirteen outcome studies will be reviewed by initially considering one early study which was first in the field, followed by three studies which demonstrate more robust design, then the remaining studies will be reviewed as a group of five qualitative studies and four quantitative.

An early study of the outcomes of executive coaching conducted by Hall, Otazo, and Hollenbeck (1999) in USA has made an important contribution to building the knowledge of executive coaching. Even though it has noticeable design limitations (discussed below), it has been quoted and reviewed by a number of
researchers as an entry point for their studies (Evers, et al., 2006; Joo, 2005; Smither, et al., 2003). The study by Hall et al. (1999) consisted of interviews with over 75 executives participating in coaching and fifteen coaches considered leaders in their field. These are significant sample sizes and in a well designed study should contribute to conclusive results.

The study concludes that executives most frequently rated their coaching experience as “very satisfactory” which was point 4 on a 5 point scale. Executives identified factors contributing to “good” coaching as results-oriented, honest reliable challenging feedback, good action ideas, good listening, and clear objectives. Importantly the executives also identified some factors that diminish coaching effectiveness, namely, coach’s personal agenda, feedback that is all negative, and feedback without action ideas.

Hall et al. (1999) noted the different emphasis placed on these success factors by the coaches as compared with the executives. While agreeing with good action ideas and good listening, the coaches were more focused on the importance of the relationship with their clients, and the classic non-directive helping qualities of reflecting, caring, integrity and commitment to client success. Coaches identified the factors that diminish coaching effectiveness as being judgmental and poor timing or impatience regarding executive readiness.

However, the study by Hall et al. (1999) is limited by its general approach to the discussion rather than relating the stated findings specifically to the data. It does not provide details of the methodology or the data analysis, nor does it discuss any limitations of the study which may have included skewing of the sample, variations in the executives’ coaching experience and researcher bias. In some parts of the article it is unclear whether the content is drawn from the results of the research or informed by the practical executive coaching experience of the authors. The article could more accurately be considered a statement of position by the authors with support from their research.

The majority of the twelve remaining published outcome studies demonstrate similar design limitations to Hall et al. (1999). However, three recent studies present more robust designs. These studies by Kombarakaran et al. (2008), Jones and Spooner (2006), and Mackenzie (2007) will next be investigated and compared.
with Hall et al.’s (1999) early findings. A short overview of each will be provided before discussing the findings of these studies.

Kombarakaran et al. (2008) surveyed 114 executives and 42 coaches who had completed a six month coaching program in a multinational company based in USA. The authors present some details of their research design and methodology indicating the thoroughness of their approach. These include the survey instrument design being validated by external “experts”, design of the coaching program for consistent application, high survey response rates (91% and 69%) and data analysis revealing robust instrument reliability and convergence of themes.

The key finding of the study was that the coaching engagement had achieved its goal and effected positive executive change in five areas of performance. The study was focused on exploring and justifying the outcomes of executive coaching and dealt with factors contributing to effectiveness by general statement rather than in relation to specific results.

Some of the success factors identified include coaches knowledgeable of the company culture and business, coaches’ high standards of professional behaviour, executive commitment to behavioural change, and supervisor support for executives. Kombarakaran et al. (2008) do discuss some limitations of the study, for instance it is based entirely on self-report data which is uncorroborated by others and thus participants can tend to be overly positive in favour of the process they have experienced.

The practice of coaching high achievers in the fields of both business and sport in UK was explored by Jones and Spooner (2006). The aim was to determine the coaching needs of high achievers, and recommendations for coaching them more effectively. The results of the study reveal factors for effectively coaching high achievers, such as a professional respectful coaching relationship, add value quickly, make the client’s goals the central focus and coach who is credible and confident, however these are not presented in any order of ranking. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of fourteen high achievers and seven coaches of high achievers (all from business or sport) selected purposively. Jones and Spooner (2006) do not discuss limitations of their study such as variations in coaching techniques and interview techniques across the sample, and impact of researcher bias.
The outcomes of executive coaching for nurse clinical leaders in Scotland were explored in a phenomenological study by Mackenzie (2007). This approach provides an ideal framework for studying life experiences, in particular describing phenomena in terms of subjective lived experience (Mackenzie, 2007; Patton, 2002). Interviews were conducted with eight nurse leaders from one NHS board who had completed the coaching program each with one of four coaches. Results of the analysis of data were presented as theme clusters including Out and in the comfort zone, Mirror mirror, Unconditional positive regard, Creative conversations, Ripple effect, and I’m OK you’re OK (Mackenzie, 2007). The discussion of these is well supported with reference to relevant literature. Mackenzie (2007) identifies that the specific context of the study limits its broader application but does not discuss other limitations such as the opportunistic sampling method which may select only favourable candidates.

These studies by Kombarakaran et al. (2008), Jones and Spooner (2006), and Mackenzie (2007) contribute further to the identification of factors of the executive coaching process that contribute to its effectiveness, confirming some of Hall et al.’s (1999) findings and identifying further factors. Although Kombarakaran et al. (2008) and Jones and Spooner (2006) both collected data from coaches and executives in their studies neither presents their results specific to each group of research participants or notes any differences between them. The combined results in each of these studies will be treated as perspectives of executives since they represent the majority of participants and their perspective is emphasised by the researchers.

The most significant factor from the executives’ perspective identified by these three studies is the coaches’ intentional development of the coaching relationship. The participants were very clear about the importance of the relationship with their coach, specifically in creating trust and a safe environment (Mackenzie, 2007). The development of the coaching relationship as one of unconditional positive regard was seen as a direct result of the coaching qualities the coach brings. These include psychological mindedness (awareness of self and others) (Mackenzie, 2007); awareness of business and the specific culture (Kombarakaran, et al., 2008; Mackenzie, 2007); coach not bringing their own agenda (Jones & Spooner, 2006; Mackenzie, 2007); and coaches’ professional behaviours – credible, self assured,
confidential, high ethical standards, not trying to be a friend (Jones & Spooner, 2006; Kombarakaran, et al., 2008).

These three studies also identified other factors contributing to effective executive coaching, factors not only related to the coach (as were the findings of Hall et al. (1999)) but also the executive and the executive’s organisation. The executive’s commitment to behavioural change was seen as an important factor in effective coaching (Kombarakaran, et al., 2008). For high achievers this characteristic was recognised as an exceptional drive for mastery (Jones & Spooner, 2006). The organisational contribution was identified in the study by Kombarakaran et al. (2008) as the need for the executive’s manager to be actively involved throughout the coaching engagement. Other success factors relating to the coach were skilful use of questions and listening (Mackenzie, 2007), reflection that enabled changes in executive’s perspective and subsequent behaviour (Mackenzie, 2007), detailed and challenging feedback (Jones & Spooner, 2006), and a focus on actions that will achieve rapid results (Jones & Spooner, 2006).

The factors contributing to effectiveness of executive coaching that have been discovered in the literature so far are presented in Table 2.2, including perspectives of both executives and coaches.
Factors Contributing to the Effectiveness of Executive Coaching: Summary of Four Outcome Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Executives’ perspective</th>
<th>Coaches’ perspective</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hall et al., 1999</td>
<td>Kombarakaran et al., 2008; Mackenzie, 2007; Jones and Spooner, 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hall et al., 1999</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Results-oriented</td>
<td>Focus on actions to achieve rapid results</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest, reliable and challenging feedback</td>
<td>Detailed and challenging feedback</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Good action ideas</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Good listening</td>
<td>Skilful questions and listening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clear objective</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship – connect personally</td>
<td>Relationship – trusting and safe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship – connect personally</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caring, integrity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflection to change perspectives/actions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executive commitment to change</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Involvement of executive’s manager</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment to client success</td>
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</table>

Of the remaining published outcome studies of executive coaching **five studies are qualitative investigations** utilising interviews of executives (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007; Paige, 2002; Stevens, 2005; Turner, 2006; Wales, 2003). There is wide variation among the studies in the number of executives interviewed, the style of coaching intervention they experienced, location, and analysis of results. Notwithstanding these differences, one factor was identified by all these researchers as contributing toward coaching effectiveness (all from the executives’ viewpoint), the **coaching relationship**. This was seen as the coach’s ability to develop a confidential trusting relationship with the executive that is experienced as a place of positive regard and commitment to the executive’s success. This included the aspect of demonstrating familiarity with the executive’s culture and challenges.

The coaches’ ability to **ask questions and to listen effectively**, to what was said as well as what was meant, was also identified in four of these studies as a key to
effectiveness (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007; Paige, 2002; Stevens, 2005; Turner, 2006). The next most common factor identified by three researchers was *executive readiness* – willingness to be helped and open to discovery (Paige, 2002; Stevens, 2005; Turner, 2006). It is interesting that factors emphasised by the executives in these interviews are the personal aspects of the coaching process incorporated in the coaching relationship, how they are listened to, and their own readiness for change.

Unfortunately the above studies lack rigorous definition and therefore the findings will need to be treated with some caution. They do not provide details of sampling methods, justification of design, explanation of analysis (Paige (2002) gives a brief outline) or discussion of limitations (except Gyllensten and Palmer (2007)). Both Stevens (2005) and Turner (2006) provide results anecdotally with little analysis or ranking of findings in order of significance. Wales (2003) concentrates on the actual outcomes of executive coaching with minimal reference to the factors contributing to the effectiveness of the process. Gyllensten and Palmer (2007) discuss their findings and conclusions more thoroughly, however only four of their nine participants were in a managerial role and the impact of this on the results is not explored. The study by Paige (2002) is based on interviews of only five executives (a small sample) with no details of the coaching intervention they experienced, nevertheless Paige’s (2002) discussion of results contributes to the field by linking the discussion of coaching effectiveness to a model of evaluation for professional development programs.

The **four quantitative studies of executive coaching outcomes** approach the subject from the executives’ perspective (Armstrong, Mesler, & Tooth, 2007; Blackman, 2006; McGovern, et al., 2001; Wasylyshyn, 2003). The first two are Australian studies and the latter two are from the United States of America. The most significant factor identified as contributing to effectiveness was again the *coaching relationship* in all four of the studies. This includes the aspects of ability to form the connection, safety, understanding the executive context, and professional attributes such as honesty, confidence and objectivity.

The findings of these four studies individually acknowledge the factors previously identified in this paper although there is little consistent agreement among them on any particular factor. Other than coaching relationship, the only factor with
some commonality is the importance of the 360 degree assessment and feedback at the commencement of the coaching as a contributor to coaching effectiveness. This was identified by the two American studies (McGovern, et al., 2001; Wasylyshyn, 2003), both of which exhibit a noticeable prominence of researcher opinion which may have assisted the discussion to arrive at this outcome. Since both these articles are authored by promoters of executive coaching this is to be expected and provides the current study with another factor which can be attributed to a coaches’ perspective.

Armstrong et al. (2007) make a valuable observation from the findings of their study that the factors that contribute most to coaching effectiveness according to executives were those that promote coaching as a space for reflection in which assumptions and constructions of self and relationships to the world are tested. In comparison, factors which emphasise coaching as conventional learning, skill development, or direct help with the work organisation were ranked lower. This observation is indirectly supported by other studies which note the value executives place on the outcomes of coaching referred to as mirror mirror (Mackenzie, 2007), self awareness (Blackman, 2006), identify my blind spots (Turner, 2006), and reflection (Stevens, 2005) – all aspects of reflective personal development.

The lack of congruence among the findings of the quantitative studies compared with the qualitative studies is a matter of interest. This may be due to the iterative nature of interviews driving the findings toward that which is of importance to the executives whereas the outcomes of surveys are more dependent on how well the instrument was constructed and validated. This lack of consistency among researchers in defining key variables for surveys indicates the infancy of executive coaching research and the necessity of studies such as the current one to more clearly define the key factors contributing to effectiveness.

These four quantitative studies should be viewed with caution also. There is minimal information on design, validation of survey instruments, analysis or limitations in any of the studies. The makeup of Blackman’s (2006) sample is unclear – with less than 10% identifying as “business” there may be a large portion from non-managerial roles. In addition Blackman’s (2006) results are presented as lists of combined response scores with little analysis to uncover trends. Questions
concerning objectivity attach to the other three studies in this group. In Wasylyshyn’s (2003) study all of the participants were coached by the researcher herself and the possibilities of bias and skewing of sample are not discussed by the author although nonetheless are relevant concerns in evaluating the outcomes. Both McGovern et al. (2001) and Armstrong et al. (2007) are produced by organisations providing executive coaching services and may be considered a form of marketing as well as research.

One further outcome study of executive coaching presents a unique perspective – that of the human resource professionals who purchase executive coaching for their organisations (Dagley, 2006). This survey of seventeen HR practitioners in Australia is mostly concerned with efficacy, benefits and drawbacks of executive coaching. Regarding the effectiveness of individual programs of coaching, practitioners rated 11% of programs outstandingly effective, 47% very effective, 28% moderately effective, and 14% not effective. Practitioners were unable to consistently relate the effectiveness of a program to how the program objectives were defined. Three practitioners commented that coaching effectiveness depended more on the executive than on the program objectives (Dagley, 2006). This study provides a valuable perspective of how coaching programs are viewed by practitioners; however it does not address factors contributing to the effectiveness of coaching.

A summary of the factors of the executive coaching process that contribute to its effectiveness identified in the thirteen published empirical outcome studies is presented in Table 2.3 – Dagley’s (2006) is excluded. Salient points from this summary are the overwhelming importance of the coaches’ ability to build relationship, and the significance of the executive’s contribution in readiness to change. The lack of importance placed on 360 degree assessment and feedback, and on a clear objective for the coaching are also points of interest.
Table 2.3
Factors Contributing to the Effectiveness of Executive Coaching: Summary of Thirteen Outcome Studies (* indicates mentioned as significant from coaches’ perspective)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Executives’ perspective</th>
<th>Coaches’ perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of studies identifying this factor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Coaches’ ability to develop relationship including</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trust, safety and positive regard</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interested in executive’s business and challenges</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Professional attributes – honest, objective, respectful, confident, caring</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Listens effectively and skilful use of questions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communicates well</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Challenges assumptions and comfort zone</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focuses on actions to gain results quickly</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Helps executives view complexity in new ways</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Executive’s readiness for change</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Active support from executive’s manager</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Coach provides just-in-time skills</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. 360 assessment and feedback</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Clear objective of the coaching</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Literature reviews

For executive coaching, literature reviews may assist the integration of multiple theoretical perspectives, identify significant variables in the study of executive coaching (pre-requisites, approaches, success factors, outcomes, etc.) and suggest directions for future research.

The nine literature reviews of executive coaching available (De Meuse, et al., 2009; Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006; Garman, et al., 2000; Greif, 2007; Joo, 2005; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; MacKie, 2007; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007) range in style and content. For example, from a media perspective Garman et al. (2000) reviewed 72 articles to gauge perceptions of executive coaching, however, most of the articles were written by journalists, with none being academic research. Alternatively, adopting a structured human resource development approach, Joo (2005) detailed his data-base searches, selected 78
available relevant articles and categorised these for study – noting that only eleven of these were research articles. The literature review by Greif (2007) includes literature on life coaching and manager-as-coach which reduces the relevance of his findings for this study. The most comprehensive literature review is that by Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson (2001) which includes reviews of the empirical studies existing at that time as well as related books. It includes a well informed discussion of executive coaching – history, process, outcomes and future research – carefully referenced to the reviewed articles, books, and other relevant literature. However it has little to say about factors contributing to coaching effectiveness.

Regarding the factors contributing to effectiveness of executive coaching, none of these literature reviews provide distinct clarity between what can be considered to be specifically the perspective of coaches and that of executives. As a result, these findings will be treated generally and later aggregated with the data from the previous section of this study.

The literature reviews identified the quality of the coaching relationship as the significant factor contributing to effectiveness of executive coaching (Greif, 2007), although various aspects were emphasised. The relational aspects of trust, empathy, rapport, and alliance were noted (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; MacKie, 2007) as was the contribution of the coach’s professional attributes including integrity, confidence, experience, credibility, and congruence (Joo, 2005; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007). Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson (2001) highlighted the concept of the coach bringing their own unique signature presence as the most important principle of executive coaching; this is referred to as using the relationship as a tool by other researchers (O’Neill, 2000). These aspects of the coaching relationship will be grouped under the headings of relational aspects, professional attributes, and relationship tools.

Four of the literature reviews shared agreement on the importance of executive readiness, variously referred to as client receptiveness, openness to feedback and willingness to change, and voluntary participation (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Greif, 2007; Joo, 2005; MacKie, 2007). A supportive environment within the organisation was also acknowledged by four authors as vital for effective coaching, one even specifying the requirement for face-to-face HR involvement (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Joo, 2005; MacKie, 2007; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007).
A summary of the factors identified by the literature reviews is presented in Table 2.4.

**Table 2.4**

Factors Contributing to the Effectiveness of Executive Coaching: Summary of Nine Literature Reviews and Coaches’ Studies (* indicates mentioned as significant from coaches’ perspective)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Executives’ perspective No. of studies identifying this factor</th>
<th>Coaches’ perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Coaches’ ability to develop relationship including</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trust, safety and positive regard</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interested in executive’s business and challenges</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Professional attributes – honest, objective, respectful, confident, caring</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use relationship as a tool</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Executive’s readiness for change</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Active support from executive’s organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Adaption for client individuality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 360 degree assessment and feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Clear objective of the coaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Longitudinal studies*

The longitudinal studies in this category differ fundamentally from the outcome studies reviewed earlier. These longitudinal studies are concerned with establishing the efficacy of executive coaching as a leadership development technique; that is, proving it really does make a difference. The typical research design incorporates experimental and control groups of executives, with random allocation to these groupings in some cases. The performance of the executives in some aspects of leadership behaviour was measured at time one and again at time two, during which period the experimental group experienced executive coaching.

Only one study in this group achieved an inconclusive result regarding the impact of executive coaching and this was one of the more rigorous designs (Smither, et al., 2003). In this study the improvement in executive performance was measured by multi-source feedback. The other studies in this group all claim a conclusive result concerning the efficacy of executive coaching in enhancing one or more facets of executive development (Evers, et al., 2006; Finn, 2007; Grant, et al.,
One has stated courageously:

We believe to have shown that coaching is not an expensive fad: for the first time empirical facts suggest that coaching is effective. (Evers, et al., 2006, p. 180)

A notable feature of these longitudinal studies is that while establishing that coaching is effective, with varying degrees of rigour and generalisability, they rarely address what actual “coaching” has proven to be effective and what factors contributed to that effectiveness (Baron & Morin, 2009a). Some of the variable aspects of executive coaching may include the coaching model, characteristics of the coaches, consistency of the coaching across the sample, and the impact of varying executive characteristics and organisational arrangements. Examples of some of these aspects are presented in Table 2.5. One researcher commented that in their study they knew very little about the nature or content of the executive coaching conversations (Smither, et al., 2003).

Table 2.5
Some Variable Aspects of Executive Coaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Some examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of organisation</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointment of coach</td>
<td>By organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>Involvement of executive’s supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of coaching</td>
<td>Short: 2-3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection to other initiatives</td>
<td>Coaching connected to training program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Developmental – targeted on 360 degree report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior assessment</td>
<td>Conducted by specialist and given to coach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear that sheer practicality prevents all these aspects of executive coaching being addressed in any one study. However, the conclusion that the efficacy of executive coaching as an executive development technique has been empirically established would benefit from an accompanying statement that qualifies what type
of coaching, by whom, in what context (De Meuse, et al., 2009; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007).

Regarding the factors of executive coaching that engender effectiveness, some of these studies are silent, focusing rather on the role of coaching itself as an executive development technique (Evers, et al., 2006; Finn, 2007; Jones, et al., 2006; Luthans & Peterson, 2003; Moen & Allgood, 2009; Wasylshyn, et al., 2006). The study by Thach (2002) does present some factors critical for effectiveness of executive coaching which are drawn from literature but these are not addressed in her findings. Smither et al. (2003) while not exploring what may have contributed to the effectiveness or otherwise of the executive coaching propose well constructed options for future research which address these factors, such as the impact of longer term coaching relationships, individual differences in executive readiness, and possible impact of the coaches’ style and background.

The longitudinal studies identify no further information on factors contributing to coaching effectiveness that can be added to the information already included in Tables 2.3 and 2.4.

**Studies of coaches’ practices**

Coaches’ ideas of the factors contributing to the effectiveness of executive coaching are not difficult to find, they are published widely in books and a vast number of practice articles and case studies. There are however, limited published research studies that explore coaches’ practices in a systematic manner.

Of the four available studies of coaches’ practices, three explore the practical aspects of coaches’ performance including credentials, experience and training, delivery of services, and profiles of clients. They do not address the actual performance of coaching or coaches’ perceptions of factors contributing to effectiveness of executive coaching (Binstead & Grant, 2008; Brooks, 2007; Grant & Cavanagh, 2004).

The remaining study was undertaken by Judge and Cowell in 1997, early in the growth of executive coaching as a leadership development technique. The researchers conducted a survey of 60 executive coaches including demographic data, education,
processes, outcomes of coaching, and fees. The article provides no information on methodology so the applicability and generalisability of the findings are limited.

Judge and Cowell’s (1997) discussion refers to some factors contributing to coaching effectiveness although it is not clear how these were extracted from the survey data. The authors state that coaches place a high value on assessment of executive strengths and weaknesses. They acknowledge that this may be an informal process, although it is stated that “the best coaches” implement a 360 degree assessment. Judge and Cowell (1997) also note the importance of support for the coaching from the executive’s organisational structure and culture, in particular agreement from the executive’s supervisor for the changes they are seeking to make.

The coaching relationship was identified as important with the aspects of good rapport, compatible match and parallel expectations being highlighted. This is noticeably different from executives’ perceptions which have emphasised the aspects of relationship safety such as trust.

Judge and Cowell’s (1997) findings present a coach viewpoint more attuned to effectiveness of the process than that of executives which places a greater prominence on aspects of relationship safety and reflective space. These findings have been included in Table 2.4.

Review of Selected Unpublished Theses

It is encouraging that there is a growing body of unpublished research in the field of executive coaching, mostly postgraduate theses. However the bulk of the research findings remain unpublished despite the passage of some years. The low rate of transition from research to publication has been attributed by some scholars to design limitations and/or failure to adequately define the coaching intervention that was employed in the study (MacKie, 2007; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007).

From the growing number of available theses that deal with the subject executive coaching a selection was made of those that (a) primarily explore executives’ experiences of coaching (Ballinger, 2000; Bougac, 2005; Bush, 2004; Luebbe, 2005; Meneghetti, 2008; Olsen, 2005; Seamons, 2006; Sztucinski, 2001; C. A. Turner, 2004), (b) explore coaching effectiveness in a general sense (Dawdy, 2004; Gegner, 1997; Sullivan, 2006; C. E. Turner, 2003), and (c) explore coaches’
perceptions (Gonzalez, 2004; Kappenberg, 2008; Liljenstrand, 2004; McCleland, 2005). These are predominantly outcome studies investigating qualitatively or quantitatively the outcomes of the coaching process at one point in time.

Regarding executives’ perceptions of the factors contributing to effectiveness of coaching, the factor most commonly identified by these studies may be broadly termed the coach-client relationship. Some studies present the aspect of the client’s bond with the coach, or chemistry (Bush, 2004; Sztucinski, 2001), others highlight the aspects of trust, vulnerability, safety and acceptance (Bougae, 2005; Luebbe, 2005; C. A. Turner, 2004). The contribution of coach professional attributes (experience, credibility) to the relationship is noted (Bougae, 2005; Bush, 2004) as is the coach’s awareness of executives’ needs and feelings (Sullivan, 2006). While the majority indicate that the coach’s relationship skills are paramount, it is noted that two studies did not place relationship in their identified factors contributing to coaching effectiveness (Olsen, 2005; Seamons, 2006). This confirms the necessity of further research to establish the significant factors contributing to coaching effectiveness with greater certainty.

The engagement of the executive with the coaching process was also identified as an important factor. This is variously termed client commitment, openness to learning, ownership, and personal effort (Ballinger, 2000; Bush, 2004; Olsen, 2005; Sullivan, 2006). These ideas highlight the importance executives place on their choice to be coached, their ownership of the process and control of content, and their commitment to necessary change.

The support of others in the organisation was recognised as an important factor in some studies (although this may be significantly affected by whether the study was conducted entirely within one organisation or across a number). One researcher identified support by the executive’s supervisor as the major factor contributing to coaching effectiveness (Seamons, 2006). Other studies did not attribute this same prominence to support by the supervisor but identified the various aspects such as support from the organisational culture (Sullivan, 2006), the human resource function (Luebbe, 2005) and by intentionally including others in the coaching process (Bush, 2004).
Other factors identified by executives as contributing to coaching effectiveness were *direct and challenging feedback, use of insightful questions and listening to create reflective space for the executive, coaching relevant to executives’ agenda*, and the *coach themselves* (experience, knowledge, and insight). These findings are presented in Table 2.6 in an approximate order of ranking. It is not possible to attribute any numerical frequency of mention to these factors since there is no consistency across the studies in the way their outcomes are presented. Whereas the results of the published studies were more succinct and focused, the unpublished theses present results that are more general and conceptual, thus limiting the specific conclusions that can be drawn from them.

An area of research noticeably lacking in the published studies is the coaches’ perceptions of factors contributing to the effectiveness of executive coaching. Three of the selected theses explore the coaches’ perceptions in qualitative studies, although all from differing viewpoints so the findings are quite diverse.

Table 2.6
Factors Contributing to the Effectiveness of Executive Coaching: Summary of Selected Unpublished Theses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Executives’ Perspective</th>
<th>Coaches’ perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coaches’ ability to develop relationship including</td>
<td>Coaches’ ability to develop relationship including</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust, safety and positive regard</td>
<td>Trust, affinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach’s professional attributes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive’s engagement with the coaching process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support of others in the organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct and challenging feedback</td>
<td>Direct and challenging feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of insightful questions and listening to create reflective space for the executive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching relevant to executives’ agenda</td>
<td>Shared collaborative dialogue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is some basic agreement among the three studies that coaches perceive the *coaching relationship* as a major factor contributing to effectiveness, although particular aspects are emphasised, namely, *affinity* (McCleland, 2005) and *client-coach fit* (Kappenberg, 2008). Two other factors identified by two of the studies are *candid feedback* and the *shared collaborative dialogue* which dynamically shapes the
coaching process (Gonzalez, 2004; McCleland, 2005). One extensive two-stage study based on interviews of 44 coaches (Kappenberg, 2008) identified executive engagement and support from management as important factors. These results are also presented in Table 2.6.

Compilation of Findings

A summary of the contribution of the existing literature to the research questions has been compiled by aggregating Tables 2.3, 2.4, and 2.6. While it is acknowledged that this is an inexact process, the aim is to identify the key factors or factor groupings upon which to build the current study. Five key factors have been identified with some subheadings to provide further clarity. These are presented in Table 2.7. It has not been possible to assign a composite ‘order of importance’ to these factors based on the range of views in the literature. However, the differing emphases placed on these factors by executives and coaches have been indicated.

Table 2.7
Factors Contributing to the Effectiveness of Executive Coaching: Compilation of Findings of Current Literature Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Executives’ Perspective</th>
<th>Coaches’ Perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coaching Relationship</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches’ ability to develop relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trust, safety and positive regard</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Professional attributes – honest, objective, respectful, confident, caring</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coaching Process</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Listens effectively and skilful questions</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communicates well</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Challenges assumptions and comfort</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Coach creates reflective space</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focuses on actions to gain results</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Helps view complexity in new ways</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Coach provides just-in-time skills</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Executive Engagement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Executive’s readiness for change</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Coaching to executive’s agenda</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support from the Organisation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preliminary Assessment and feedback</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

Executive coaching is a rapidly growing and widely used technique for executive development (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Joo, 2005). Much of the popularity of coaching can be attributed to anecdotal reports of its effectiveness and widespread promotion in practice literature. However, the published academic research on this topic is limited and a number of the published studies suffer from design and reporting limitations (MacKie, 2007; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007). The noticeable increase in post graduate research into executive coaching this decade is promising; although few of these studies are making their way to publication.

Research in the field of executive coaching is complicated by the as yet undefined nature of the practice. There are a variety of discipline-based approaches to executive coaching and a wide range of targets for executive development (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; MacKie, 2007), as well as many factors unrelated to coaching which may affect executive performance (Stober, 2005).

The questions being asked about executive coaching will determine the direction of the research (Linley, 2006), be it a question concerning efficacy, method, factors contributing to effectiveness, or organisational impact. Given the widespread acceptance of executive coaching (even though anecdotally based); one of the major challenges facing coaching practitioners (that is, those with the business imperative to make coaching work) is determining the factors that contribute to coaching effectiveness (Dagley, 2006). In response to that need, this study will address the two questions:

1. What are executives’ perceptions of the factors contributing to effectiveness of executive coaching?

2. What are coaches’ perceptions of the factors contributing to effectiveness of executive coaching?

The need for further exploratory study in this area is highlighted by the lack of clarity in existing studies about the key factors in the executive coaching process.

Limitations of previous outcome studies will be addressed by exploring the perspectives of both the executives and their corresponding coaches. The findings of some existing studies are limited by the context of the study. This may be due to an
undifferentiated sample of executives or organisations, unverified coaching consistency across the sample, and/or executive coaching being significantly shaped by attachment to a corporate development program. The current research will explore as near as possible executive coaching in a typical form in the Australian marketplace. This study will gather data from executives from various organisations all of whom choose to undertake executive coaching as a standalone intervention, not integrated with a corporate development program. In each case, the coaching will be funded by the organisation and delivered almost entirely face-to-face. The organisations will include both small and large, both private and government. The coaches will be external professionals, active in the marketplace, maintaining a basic consistency of coaching model offered through one provider. All of the coaching interventions will commence with a standardised assessment and feedback process conducted by the one psychologist.

**Purpose of Current Study**

This study will add value to the field of executive coaching by identifying factors contributing to its effectiveness, for the coach and the executive. With this knowledge, executive coaches may enhance their practice by addressing factors perceived to be more effective for their organisational context; and organisations may be better able to plan and engage in coaching interventions that are effective in meeting their needs.

The next chapter will outline the method adopted for the research program. It will describe the research design, the context in which the research was conducted, the data gathering processes, and subsequent analysis.
Chapter 3

Method

This study examines questions within the growing field of executive coaching. In particular, this investigation seeks to address the two questions:

1. What are executives’ perceptions of the factors contributing to effectiveness of executive coaching?
2. What are coaches’ perceptions of the factors contributing to effectiveness of executive coaching?

This chapter reports the design and methods of data collection and analysis of the investigation. First the design of the study will be explained including the qualitative approach and the constraints posed by the context. This will be followed by a discussion of the context, the method of sample selection and the method of data collection. The process of qualitative analysis of the data including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification will then be reported.

Qualitative Research Design

**Context**

The definition of executive coaching selected in Chapter 2, namely,

Executive Coaching is a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organisation and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and, consequently, to improve the effectiveness of the client’s organisation within a formally defined coaching agreement (Kilburg, 1996, p. 142).

is broad enough to include a wide range of practice which varies in approach, implementation and desired outcomes. The conclusion by some researchers (Evers, et al., 2006; Finn, 2007; Jones, et al., 2006) that the efficacy of executive coaching as an executive development technique has been empirically established would benefit from an accompanying statement that qualifies what type of coaching, by whom, in
what context (Passmore & Gibbes, 2007). Some existing studies have drawn conclusions about executive coaching as a practice based on designs that lack either consistency (for example, inconsistent coaching model among the various coaches) (Sztucinski, 2001) or necessary variation (for example, all executives in the sample coached by one coach) (Wasylyshyn, 2003). The outcomes of some other studies are limited by using coaches who are not practising professionals external to the organisation (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007; Sue-Chan & Latham, 2004), studying coaching as a segment of a structured leadership development program (Bush, 2004), or drawing the sample of executives mostly from one organisation or one style of organisation (Olsen, 2005).

It was determined that this study would address some of the limitations of previous studies by incorporating a variety of styles of executives, across a range of organisations, with all executives experiencing a consistently similar coaching approach, by their own choice, where the coaching was not associated with a structured organisational executive development program. In seeking factors that contribute to coaching effectiveness this study explored instances of executive coaching which both coach and executive defined as effective. Perceptions of both executives and coaches were included to enhance the validity of the findings by data triangulation (Silverman, 2000).

**Value of qualitative approach**

Since the theoretical concepts of executive coaching were not currently well defined (Baron & Morin, 2009a; Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001), this study adopted a constructivist qualitative design. Qualitative research studies “things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a, p. 5). Furthermore, adopting the constructivist paradigm, this research assumed that there are multiple realities and accepted that the researcher and respondent co-create understandings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003b).

Confidently identifying factors that contribute to effective coaching was difficult as the current lack of conclusive research indicates (Thach, 2002). There were opinions available from coaches, from HR supervisors, and from the executives
themselves. However, to establish findings with some empirical strength, it was necessary to gather only the data from respondents which they could provide from their experience. Rather than seeking an objective reality, this constructivist research sought the subjective experience which becomes a person’s reality (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002).

Executives were not necessarily aware of the nature or extent of the coaching practices being implemented, and therefore could not comment authoritatively on factors that contribute to coaching effectiveness. They were, however, aware of how they experienced the coaching process and what experiences (their realities) they believe successfully contributed to positive outcomes. These realities were co-created through the interactions between the research participants and the researcher (van der Mescht, 2002).

Interviewing was selected as the most appropriate method of qualitative data collection from executives for several reasons. Face to face interviews provided the opportunity to uncover rich and complex information from an individual (Cavana, et al., 2001; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Through use of semi-structured interviews executives were encouraged to divulge deeply held opinions, hidden tacit knowledge and previously unthought-of memories from the unconscious mind (Cavana, et al., 2001). While not explicit in the prepared questions, this search for hidden knowledge and memories occurred in the process of probing by the interviewer. This desired richness of data could not be obtained by survey methods. Focus groups were also unsuitable since they did not provide a personal forum for expression, nor were they practical for gathering together executives from different business organisations.

Partially structuring the interviews ensured that the key concepts from the relevant current literature were addressed, and this also helped to improve consistency across multiple executive interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In contrast, limiting the structure ensured the interviews were flexible enough to provide opportunity for the executive to raise issues that may not have been canvassed and to frame those issues in their own terms (Barnes, 2001). Ample opportunity was provided for the executive to “elaborate through language, metaphor, anecdote and symbol to give meaning to their reality” (van der Mescht, 2002, p. 5).
Collecting qualitative data on the coaches’ perceptions of factors that contribute to coaching effectiveness was achieved by means of a focus group rather than individual interview. A focus group has the benefit that group dynamics help focus on the most important topics (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Robson, 2002). The focus group also encourages synergy, producing a wider range of insights and ideas than the culmination of separately secured responses (Zikmund, 2003).

**Industry Partner**

One of the challenges for data collection was that of gaining access to a population of both coaches and executives meeting the selected criteria who had recently participated together in the executive coaching process. A suitable coaching provider who was willing to participate as a partner in the research study by providing access to both coaches and executives was located; the industry partner was Australian Institute of Management – Queensland & Northern Territory with head office in Brisbane (hereafter AIM).

AIM is a not-for-profit entity which promotes the advancement of education and learning in the field of management and leadership for commerce, industry and government. AIM adds capacity to managers by providing opportunities to learn, develop know-how and better understand practical management. Their range of services includes business and management training, events and seminars, coaching, research and publications, and a specialist management bookshop. AIM’s membership base in Queensland and the Northern Territory is made up of 5000 managers and 1000 company members.

The population of coaches and executives available through AIM was located in Brisbane and surrounds. This determined the business context for the study to be that of a state capital city of Australia experiencing rapid population growth and economic expansion of business and government services fuelled largely by a commodity boom. The agreement with AIM for their participation in the study was formalised by a Memorandum of Agreement which is included in Appendix C.
**AIM coaching model**

AIM provides a range of coaching programs targeted at corporate, government and small business clients. Some are “open” programs for a cohort of like-minded executives from various organisations, and others are individual or group coaching engagements within an organisation.

AIM’s coaching programs utilise the skills of an established group of similarly resourced coaching professionals external to their organisation who are engaged as required for specific projects. AIM implements a two-stage process for each executive coaching engagement. The first stage is an holistic assessment process which is provided to the executive by a coaching psychologist, usually including a McQuaig survey, a career mapping tool and 360 degree assessment, for details see Appendix D. The same coaching psychologist provides this assessment for all executives. The second stage is a series of one-on-one coaching sessions (between four and nine) delivered by one of the external coaches. These coaches utilised with relative consistency the AIM coaching model which is a basic solution focused model based on the work of Australian coaching psychologist Dr Anthony Grant. This model provided the basis for all the coaching engagements in this study (as distinct from multiple other models which are available), though each coach was not limited from utilising their own unique style. Appendix D provides further details of AIM’s two-stage coaching process including the means by which the executives are allocated to specific coaches.

**Ethical considerations**

Once the agreement had been established with AIM providing access to a population of coaches and executives, the ethical considerations of the proposed research design were detailed and approval sought. The ethical considerations were outlined in detail in the National Ethics Application Form, some pages from this application are included in Appendix E. These ethical considerations included the need for identifiable data; measures for confidentiality, storage, limited access and disposal of data; informed consent by all participants; identification of risks and benefits of the research; and ownership and reporting of outcomes (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). A copy the ethics approval is included in Appendix F.
Method of Data Collection

Data collection was a staged process in order to obtain the perceptions of both coaches and executives as defined by the research questions. Since the industry partner was the point of access, the process was determined to be firstly the selection of coaches provided by the industry partner, and subsequently the selection of executives provided by the coaches.

Selection of coaches

Forming an agreement with AIM as the industry partner determined the population available for sampling. The AIM Coaching Co-ordinator selected a small group of leading AIM coaches (four) to participate in the study. This sample size was determined by the number of available experienced coaches who had recently worked with executive level clients in various organisations. These four coaches were all independent professionals who provided coaching services to AIM as required. One was female. All were over 45 years, and had broad management experience as well as proven experience in applying the AIM coaching model competently.

After AIM made contact with the coaches to inform them of the research project, they were all contacted by the researcher directly, first by phone and then via a personal meeting to discuss what their involvement in the project would entail. All four coaches selected by AIM agreed to participate and an outline of the project was confirmed with them by email (Appendix G). The selection of executives will be detailed in a later section of this chapter.

Procedure

It was determined earlier that collection of the coaches’ perceptions regarding coaching effectiveness would be by focus group. Once the sample of coaches had been finalised a suitable date for the focus group discussion was negotiated with all four coaches and the AIM Coaching Co-ordinator. In preparation for the focus group discussion, the coaches were each invited to another individual meeting with the researcher to discuss in some detail the arrangements for the research project. The communication regarding these individual meetings and the agenda for the meetings are also included in Appendix G.
At the individual meeting with each coach the researcher explained the process of informed consent, working in some detail through the draft Informed Consent Form for Coaches. As a result of these discussions the form was revised, the final version is included in Appendix H. The coaches were informed of the criteria for selection of suitable candidates – only coaching relationships which had concluded or almost concluded within the last nine months were considered recent enough for the executive to recall with some degree of accuracy what they had experienced. They were asked to provide some details of the candidate executives; these details were recorded by the researcher using an appropriate table (Appendix G). This provided a population of seventeen candidate executives from which the sample would be selected. The coaches were also shown the Informed Consent Form for Executives and asked to make the initial contact with the selected executives once the sample had been determined.

A matter of some concern to the coaches became evident as the researcher met with each one individually. They sought reassurance about who would be attending the focus group, and if the AIM Coaching Co-ordinator was to attend and have access to the transcript, how this would be used. Understandably the coaches were hesitant about discussing their practice in an unguarded and reflective way and this being documented and stored by an organisation. It was agreed by all parties that the AIM Coaching Co-ordinator would participate in the focus group discussion and that the transcript of would be sent only to the coaches for verification.

At these individual meetings the coaches were provided with the question prompts that would be used at the focus group to launch discussion of the coaches’ perceptions of factors contributing to effective coaching. These prompts were formulated from the issues identified as significant in the relevant literature (refer to Table 2.7). The coaches were also presented with a simple survey of factors contributing to coaching effectiveness drawn from the literature for them to complete. They were asked to return their responses to the researcher for compilation before the focus group so that these concepts from the literature could be tested in the discussion. Both the question prompts and the survey are included in Appendix G.
**Selection of executives**

This qualitative enquiry was designed to focus in depth on a relatively small sample of executives selected purposefully. “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases…from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (Patton, 2002, p. 230). These cases were chosen to yield insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalisations (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002).

Of the various strategies for purposefully selecting information rich cases, the principle of maximum variation sampling was embraced in this study. This strategy aims to capture common patterns that emerge from great variation which are of particular interest and value (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Instances of uniqueness are also treated as valuable. The aim in selecting a small sample of greatest available diversity is to yield detailed descriptions documenting uniqueness as well as shared patterns that are significant from having emerged out of diversity (Patton, 2002).

Practically, the population of executives available for sampling was limited to seventeen, that is, those who have recently experienced the AIM coaching process with the four coaches. A sample size of twelve executives was determined to be the maximum achievable within the practical constraints of this study’s time and means (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Selecting twelve from a population of seventeen does not provide sufficient scope for applying maximum variation sampling. However, some variation among the twelve executives selected was facilitated by creating a matrix where each executive in the sample was chosen to differ from others (Patton, 2002), although they shared the aspects common to the one coaching process. Some of the dimensions of variation of the sample included the executive’s age, gender, and executive experience, type of organisation, how the coaching was initiated (by executive or organisation), the coach’s perception of the executives engagement with the coaching process, and the organisation’s structural and cultural support for coaching (Judge & Cowell, 1997; Thach, 2002).

The sampling matrix showing the demographic data of the twelve selected executives is included in Appendix I. The sample of executives included five females and seven males, all were over 30 years and only two over 50 years. Prior to commencing coaching, all had been in their role for less than five years. Whilst these
dimensions show little variation, greater diversity was achieved on the dimensions of organisation characteristics, the initiator of the coaching, executive’s engagement level and organisational support.

The sample of executives comprised people operating at executive level of authority in their organisations. However, since AIM used the term “managers” in their communication regarding the coaching program, the same term was also used in the data gathering process of this study.

**Data collection – coaches**

The focus group of coaches was facilitated by the researcher whose role was to create a supportive environment and ask focused questions to encourage discussion and the expression of diverse opinions (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). One coach was ill on the day, so the focus group consisted of three coaches and the AIM Coaching Co-ordinator. It lasted for almost 80 minutes and included enthusiastic contributions from all three coaches present. After the prepared question prompts had been utilised, the combined responses to the coaches’ preliminary survey were also presented in the form of bar graphs for easy comparison – see Appendix J. The coaches’ views on these factors drawn from the literature did not vary significantly from that already expressed in response to the scripted questions.

The discussion was recorded and later typed by a transcription assistant. In order to complete the data collection of coaches’ perceptions of factors contributing to coaching effectiveness, an interview was conducted with the coach who was unable to attend the focus group, as much as possible using similar question prompts.

**Data collection – executives**

Conducting a semi-structured interview with each executive in the sample provided the means of gathering a wealth of rich data concerning their perceptions of the factors that contributed to coaching effectiveness. The main issues to be addressed in these interviews were drawn from those identified as significant in the relevant literature (refer to Table 2.7).

The key aspects were identified as: significance of the coaching relationship, coaching process, executive engagement, support from the organisation and
preliminary assessment and feedback. Other issues suggested by the literature included the goals for coaching and how successfully they were achieved, factors that have contributed to the effectiveness (or otherwise) of the coaching process (McGovern, et al., 2001); coaching techniques and practices best suited to the particular executive (Executive.Coaching.Forum, 2004); and issues of importance to the executives (Hall, et al., 1999).

From these issues identified in the literature a set of question prompts for the executive interviews was developed. This set of prompts was tested at a pilot interview conducted with the researcher’s supervisor taking the role of a research participant. Debriefing the pilot interview provided valuable insights into effective interviewing technique as well as further refinement of the question prompts to more effectively surface the executives’ experiences without leading. The set of question prompts prepared for the executive interviews is included in Appendix K. As would be expected with a staged process, different emphases and further clarity of themes emerged as the interviews progressed (Miles & Huberman, 1994). On this basis minor changes were made to the question prompts as the interviews progressed. These changes are detailed in the three versions included in Appendix K.

Once the twelve executives were selected the coaches were asked to make contact with the executives requesting their participation in the process. All the selected executives responded positively to the request to participate.

The researcher initially made contact with each of the selected executives according to the preference indicated by their coach. This was generally by email, a copy of which is included in Appendix L, followed by a phone call to confirm their readiness to be interviewed and agree on a suitable time and location. Once the appointment was made the executive was sent a confirming email with the Informed Consent Form for Executives attached. These are included in Appendices L and M respectively.

All of the interviews with executives were conducted in person by the researcher, at the executive’s premises or a suitable location nearby. Each interview of around 60 minutes was recorded in full with the participant’s permission. The researcher concentrated primarily on eliciting the lived experience of the executive regarding their coaching (Cavana, et al., 2001), however the researcher also made
brief field notes of salient points. This assisted the researcher to help identify trends and perhaps explore rival hypotheses which may emerge (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The interviews were conducted as close together as practical over a period of three months to assist the researcher to maintain a consistent frame of reference. The researcher’s personal closeness to the situation was not ignored. In order to reduce the effect of bias, the researcher maintained regular liaison with his supervisor, and kept an audit of adherence to objective criteria (Cavana, et al., 2001). These criteria are included in Appendix L.

Analysis of Data

The data was analysed by means of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

Data reduction

In the first stage of analysis, the recordings of the interviews and focus group were transcribed in full by a transcription assistant. The entire transcript of each interview and focus group (that is, twelve executive interviews, one coach focus group, and one coach interview) were then carefully checked by the researcher against the recordings, and also against the researcher’s field notes where visual clues were recorded. This editing of the transcripts by the researcher was necessary to prepare the data for coding (Zikmund, 2003). It included the steps of correcting inaccuracies in the transcription, carefully inserting punctuation to clarify meaning of extended word strings (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), and making decisions about indistinguishable words – the options being to use the most likely word when this seemed appropriate or alternatively to simply leave a blank. Each edited transcript was sent to the corresponding participant by email seeking verification of the correctness. Copies of the emails are included in Appendix G (coaches) and Appendix L (executives). Only one alteration was suggested for the focus group transcript by a coach and this was incorporated. Replies received from executives were in agreement with the transcripts they received, although not all of the executives responded.

The quantity of data gathered in this study was deemed by the researcher manageable by manual coding rather than applying a computer technique. This
allowed the researcher to personally immerse himself in the entire data set in search of collective meaning and sets of relationships. An inductive approach to code creation was taken, so codes were not developed before the data collection and editing, thus allowing greater sensitivity to context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The concepts derived from relevant literature and included in the Preliminary Survey for Coaches (Appendix G) provided some starting ideas for codes and categories (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

All of the executive interview transcripts were assigned pseudonyms to allow easy de-identified reference. Four of the executive interview transcripts that represented a range of executive styles and coaches were selected as the basis for initial code development. This represented a little more than twenty percent of the data set as suggested by Zikmund (2003). In reading and re-reading this subset of data, the researcher developed and assigned codes as units of meaning that were related to the research questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Continual review was necessary in forming these codes to achieve categories that were internally consistent but distinct from one another (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). This search for “subjective” units of meaning regarding coaching effectiveness that can be related to “objective” factors or processes reflected a realist approach to making sense of participants’ responses, which was appropriate for a study seeking findings that will be of value to practitioners in the field (Silverman, 2000). The initial set of codes (Version 1) is included in Appendix N.

The codes were checked by engaging another rater to also code a portion of the data and discuss the outcomes. The goal was to achieve sharper code definitions and greater reliability in the analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 2000). The rater chosen for this task (who will be known as Gary) was an experienced coach of executives and trainer of coaches with a detailed current knowledge of the subject being studied. Gary was briefed on the process and provided with Version 1 codes, one executive interview transcript coded by the researcher as an example, and two un-coded executive interview transcripts to be coded by him (those belonging to Kirsty and Larry). After Gary had coded these two transcripts, a comparison of independent coding by Gary and by the researcher provided valuable information regarding clarity of the codes and protocols by which they could be applied more
consistently. A record of this discussion and the resulting code revision (Version 2) are included in Appendix N.

Following the code checking, the researcher once again coded the Kirsty transcript this time using Version 2 codes and the agreed protocols. This revised coding of the Kirsty transcript was sent to Gary for checking and suggestions for variation. Gary agreed with the re-coding without alteration. This communication is also included in Appendix N.

Coding of transcripts was facilitated by pasting the text into a table with a coding column at the left. Separate colours were assigned to the five bolded headings in Version 2 code table and the codes beneath them. Codes were then assigned to phrases or monothematic chunks of text (Miles & Huberman, 1994) which were highlighted accordingly (e.g., all the coaching process codes were green). In assigning codes the researcher utilised some basic techniques of conversation analysis for greater consistency in identifying meaning and strength of meaning (Silverman, 2000). First, trace the trajectory through which a particular outcome was produced (was the participant responding directly to a question, offering an associated idea, or musing in a series of reflections?) Second, identify sequences of related talk that reinforce meaning or establish connections among themes.

After six of the executive interview transcripts were coded in this manner, the researcher was gaining some idea of the emerging themes, patterns or constructs in the data on executives’ perceptions. These were summarised into a set of pattern codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In order to assign terms for these pattern codes that were relatively consistent with existing research, a summary of themes and terms identified in existing research was constructed – see Appendix O.

The transcript of the focus group of coaches was also coded to discover other codes and themes which may be specific to the coaches’ perspective. On the basis of the evolving cognitive map gained by the researcher from the interaction of both existing research and data analysis to date, the codes and pattern codes were revised to more accurately represent the emerging patterns of meaning related to the perceived effectiveness of the coaching for both executives and coaches combined (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Version 3 of the codes is also included in Appendix N.
**Data display**

Once Version 3 codes had been established, the entire set of transcripts for both executives and coaches were coded or re-coded and emerging pattern codes and major themes were identified. Some patterns were observed in how often the participants in the interviews or focus group brought the responses back to the same themes of significance to them in relation to coaching effectiveness. In order to gain some indication of the relative emphasis placed on each theme by the respondents, the frequency of use of each code was determined. It is clear that the interviewer’s questions would also have a marked affect on the content of responses and therefore coding frequency; however this process did give further clarity about the themes of greater significance to the respondents. The themes, pattern codes, codes and coding frequency were displayed in table form, see Appendix P. The coding frequencies for executives and for coaches are shown separately.

**Conclusion drawing and verification**

While these three streams of analysis – data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification - have been presented linearly they were in fact interwoven in parallel before, during and after data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Conclusions may have been clarified after the data was displayed; however they had often been prefigured from early in the process and constantly subjected to verification by review and seeking further evidence.

Some initial conclusions were drawn from the display of data in Appendix P. Firstly some codes occurred much more frequently than others, and linked to this was the researcher’s awareness from field notes that some themes were also spoken of much more enthusiastically than others. Second, the emphasis placed on various themes by the executives was quite different to that of the coaches for a few themes as evidenced by the variations in code frequency. Finally, the realization that the two dimensional display is quite inadequate to represent the multi-dimensional matrix of inter-connected and inter-dependent themes that contribute to the phenomenon that is executive coaching.

The next stage of drawing conclusions from the coded data involved capturing the richness of meaning of each theme and pattern code, while maintaining an overall
cognitive map of how the themes flowed together. The researcher read through each transcript again selecting from the coded data the sections of text that best illustrated the participant meanings associated with each pattern code, and in some cases the variety of participant meanings. This provided multiple quotes listed under each pattern code, some by executives and some by coaches, which represented as closely as possible the depth and variety of meanings expressed by the participants. An example is included in Appendix Q.

Selecting the particular quotes to associate with each pattern code from a wide range of possibilities was crucial since the “findings” would be based on these selections. The researcher sought to base these choices on a critical investigation of all the data and resist the tendency toward anecdotalism or depending on a few well chosen “examples” (Silverman, 2000). The temptation to jump to easy conclusions based on evidence that leads in an interesting direction was tempered by consistently seeking to refute assumed relationships (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 2000). The techniques utilised by the researcher to apply refutability included constant comparison – always attempting to find another case to test out a provisional hypothesis; comprehensive data treatment – the full set of transcripts were included in the search for quotes; and deviant case analysis – actively seeking out and addressing deviant cases (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2000). Consistently applying these techniques gave greater confidence that the selected quotes represented an objective position and enhanced the validity of the findings of the study.

An example of this process of refutability occurred for the finding that the coach’s contribution of emotional support was an important factor in coaching effectiveness which is discussed in Chapter 4 in the section titled 3a Encouragement and Emotional Support. This finding emerged quite strongly from some executives and suggested an assumed relationship. A thorough search of the data for negative instances (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) or disconfirming evidence (Silverman, 2000) revealed that there was no occurrence of the codes related to emotional support for seven of the executives, and that the majority of occurrences of these codes were associated with one of the four coaches. This suggested that a relationship between the coach providing emotional support and coaching effectiveness could not be
construed as representative for the sample of executives in this study. It may be that this factor was significant for a small group of these executives, or that the style of one coach in particular enabled executives to feel open enough to acknowledge the value of this support.

The selected quotes by both executives and coaches listed under each pattern code provided a further rather lengthy display of data. In addition to this document, the researcher through extensive immersion in the data was aware of multi-layered relationships among the themes and subtle nuances of meaning which could not be adequately committed to print (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Both the displayed data and the researcher’s insights contributed to the final stage of conclusion drawing and verification, interpretation, which involved going beyond the descriptive data. Interpretation includes drawing conclusions, attaching significance to what was found, extrapolating lessons and making inferences (Patton, 2002). The results and the interpretation of those results are presented in Chapter 4.

Summary

The investigation of executive coaching sought to determine the factors which contribute to coaching effectiveness. The research was of qualitative design, exploring the perceptions of both coaches and executives, attempting to interpret coaching effectiveness in terms of the meanings brought by the participants. The research sample included four coaches and twelve executives whom they had coached effectively using a consistent coaching model. Data was collected from coaches by focus group discussion and from executives by semi-structured interviews. The data was coded and analysed manually producing a set of emerging themes which represent the perceptions of this sample concerning factors that contribute to effectiveness in executive coaching. These themes are reported and interpreted in the following chapter.
Chapter 4

Results and Discussion

There is a small but growing body of empirical research which establishes the efficacy of executive coaching as a leadership development technique although to date conclusive results remain rare (Baron & Morin, 2009a; Finn, et al., 2007). However, based largely on feedback from executives and coaches, there is widespread anecdotal evidence supporting claims of executive coaching efficacy (Dagley, 2006). Practitioners in the field of executive development are understandably interested in what contributes to effective executive coaching (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; MacKie, 2007). This investigation seeks to determine the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of executive coaching, as perceived by both executives and coaches.

Overview

The findings of the study are presented in detail in this chapter in both tabular and narrative forms. First the six major themes and three sub themes are outlined and some general trends are noted. This chapter then proceeds with an in-depth discussion of each of the nine themes and sub-themes which have emerged in this study. Each section explores the meanings associated with that theme in the analysis and provides quotes from research participants as examples. The relationship with previous research is also explored as well as the contribution of the particular theme to coaching effectiveness. A summary of key findings is provided at the end of the chapter.

Results

In answer to the research questions:

1. What are executives’ perceptions of the factors contributing to effectiveness of executive coaching?

2. What are coaches’ perceptions of the factors contributing to effectiveness of executive coaching?
six major themes emerged from the combined analysis of executives’ and coaches’ perspectives. Most of the themes were a composite of several collective pattern codes that had been derived from the data analysis. It is important to note that these themes are not separate elements of effective coaching, since they include a mosaic of process, behaviour, context and personal attributes. These themes cannot be separated but co-exist, holistically integrated into the phenomenon that is executive coaching. It is only for the purpose of analysis that these themes will be discussed separately.

The six emergent themes and sub-themes are presented in Table 4.1. The names used for these themes have been selected to be consistent with existing research in this field where this has been possible.

Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Themes emerging from the current study</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergent Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Executive Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Preliminary Assessment and Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Coaching Process including</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a. Encouragement and Emotional Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b. Challenge and Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3c. Enhancing Executive Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Coach’s Contribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Trusting Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Support from the Organisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The theme *Executive Engagement* embraced the executive’s commitment to the coaching process. It included the keenness they brought to the coaching sessions and their willingness to continually implement change and new behaviours throughout the process. The contribution of the *Preliminary Assessment and Feedback* process was captured in the theme of that name. This included the value of this process to the executive and how it functioned as a starting point for the coaching.

*Coaching Process* was the name applied to what actually happened in the coaching sessions. Here three sub-themes concerning the coaching process were identified. In practice these sub-themes are related parts of the seamless coaching
process which are concurrent and co-active. The first, *Encouragement and Emotional Support*, included the coach’s impact on the emotions of the executive, initially to encourage greater emotional connection with the process and additionally to enhance the executive’s emotional state as appropriate. Second, *Challenge and Reflection* concerned the coach’s challenge to the executive to reflect deeply, think differently and see complex situations in new ways. Finally *Enhancing Executive Performance* was the process of addressing the executive’s agenda, dealing with issues, developing skills and achieving results.

*Coach’s Contribution* captured the contribution the coach personally brought to the coaching process, their skills, professional attributes and actions. It included the impact of the coach themselves on the executives, which was in each case positive. The theme *Trusting Relationship* was clearly the most significant. Some of the many elements contributing to this theme were the coach’s ability to develop relationship, rapport, safety, positive regard, personal interest and care. Finally *Support from the Organisation* reflected the role of the executive’s supervisor and organisation in supporting the process and outcomes of the coaching.

The pattern codes and codes contributing to each theme are presented in Appendix P. This also includes the frequency of occurrence of each code for both executives and coaches. The coding frequency gives some indication of the topics that the respondents raised more frequently when interviewed and therefore were more significant to them.

A study of factors contributing to coaching effectiveness requires effective coaching to have actually occurred. In the current study, there was no explicit questioning surrounding whether the executives had progressed toward their goals, though it was assumed that they had done so. The fact that the executives raised this topic so often in their interviews (this was the most frequently occurring code) confirmed that these were indeed instances of effective coaching which produced significant positive outcomes for the executives.

There was some minor variation in the perspectives of executives and coaches regarding the factors contributing to coaching effectiveness. The bulk of the data was drawn from executive responses, and when considered in parallel, the data from coach responses generally reflected similar trends. Some indication of this is evident
in the coding frequencies presented in Appendix P. The variations in perspective were observed in the themes *Encouragement and Emotional Support* and *Coach’s Contribution*. The former the coaches emphasised as a matter of high importance in their approach, the latter the coaches did not mention at all in their focus group. These observations will be discussed in the relevant sections of this chapter.

A comparison of the findings of this study with other relevant literature is presented in Table 4.2. This comparison includes both published studies based on empirical evidence and unpublished theses, in particular those studies that focus on the executives’ or the coaches’ perceptions of the coaching experience.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Study</th>
<th>Executive Engagement</th>
<th>Preliminary Assessment and Feedback</th>
<th>Process (a) Encouragement and Emotional Support</th>
<th>Process (b) Challenge and Reflection</th>
<th>Process (c) Enhancing Executive Performance</th>
<th>Coach’s Contribution</th>
<th>Trusting Relationship</th>
<th>Support from the Organisation</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hall, Otazo, Hollenbeck, 1999</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Challenging feedback, good listening</td>
<td>Action ideas, pointers, no personal agenda</td>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Connecting personally, Caring</td>
<td></td>
<td>Clear objective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paige, 2002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Challenge and move out of comfort zone</td>
<td>Familiar with organisation culture</td>
<td>Unique, personalised, trusting, respect</td>
<td>Trusting relationship,</td>
<td></td>
<td>Specific clear goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevens, 2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grounded in business reality</td>
<td>Professional relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones &amp; Spooner, 2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coach add value quickly</td>
<td>Continually challenge and stretch</td>
<td>Credible, confident, lack of ego</td>
<td>Professional relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td>Be flexible with agenda</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gyllensten &amp; Palmer, 2007</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coach listens well</td>
<td>Advice, problem solve</td>
<td>Trust, empathy, confidentiality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackenzie, 2007</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reflection, executive see in new ways</td>
<td>Executive’s own agenda</td>
<td>Unconditional, positive regard, trust, safety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armstrong, Melser &amp; Tooth, 2007</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gives me support</td>
<td>Reflection, challenged assumptions, sounding board</td>
<td>Monitor learning, brainstorms ideas</td>
<td>Understands my situation</td>
<td>Safe place</td>
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*Comparison of findings with published studies based on empirical evidence – none of these studies identified a suite of definite themes.*
Table 4.2 (continued)

Factors Contributing to Coaching Effectiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Study (n)</th>
<th>Executive Engagement</th>
<th>Preliminary Assessment and Feedback</th>
<th>Process (a) Encouragement and Emotional Support</th>
<th>Process (b) Challenge and Reflection</th>
<th>Process (c) Enhancing Executive Performance</th>
<th>Coach’s Contribution</th>
<th>Trusting Relationship</th>
<th>Support from the Organisation</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ballinger, 2000</td>
<td>Personal effort and drive</td>
<td>Encouragement from the coach</td>
<td>Chance to try new behaviours</td>
<td>New knowledge, new skills</td>
<td>Behaviour modelled by the coach</td>
<td>Support from boss and from organisation</td>
<td>Support from co-workers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sztucinski, 2001 (7)</td>
<td>Ownership, Path to achievement</td>
<td>Confrontation with self</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>Organisation savvy; Resourcefulness</td>
<td>Trust-worthiness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unique to self; Array of emotion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luebbe, 2004</td>
<td>Analyse and synthesise data</td>
<td>Candid direct feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bush, 2004 (6)</td>
<td>Committed client</td>
<td></td>
<td>Results that benefit the client</td>
<td>Coach’s contribution</td>
<td>Rapport and relationship</td>
<td>Including others; Structured process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olsen, 2005 (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coach helps increase creativity</td>
<td>Executive agenda is important</td>
<td>Coach offers different perspectives</td>
<td></td>
<td>Development plan to use as a map</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sullivan, 2006</td>
<td>Executives open to learning</td>
<td></td>
<td>Learning relevant to their work</td>
<td>Chemistry, coach sensitive to needs and feelings</td>
<td>Organisation-al culture supports transformation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Seamons, 2006</td>
<td>Client adherence</td>
<td>Reflective space, Coach challenges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Support of boss</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kappenberg 2008 (4)</td>
<td>Client engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coach objectivity as sound board</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b Comparison of findings with relevant unpublished theses – where the study identified a suite of definite themes, this is shown thus (7)
The column headings in Table 4.2 are the themes which have emerged in the current study. Themes or factors identified in other studies have been listed under the related heading where possible using each author’s actual terms. Since there are many ways to collect and label meanings, there are cases where no specific correlation was possible; these are listed under “Other”. Some of the theses in the comparison identified a definite suite of emerging themes in a similar manner to this study. In other studies the findings were not as clearly stated as a definite suite, so for these studies the themes were extracted from the discussion.

The comparison in Table 4.2 reveals some general trends. There is broad agreement that the main factors contributing to effectiveness of executive coaching include *Executive Engagement, Challenge and Reflection, Enhancing Executive Performance* and the *Coaching Relationship*. There is however little consistent agreement among researchers concerning how these terms are stated and what aspects are emphasised. This lack of agreement reinforces the need for the current study exploring both coaches’ and executives’ perceptions in conjunction.

*Context*

The themes which emerged in this study have been affected in some measure by the particular context in which the executive coaching was conducted, and therefore may differ from other studies of executive coaching in slightly different contexts (Lowman, 2005). This study gathered data from executives from various organisations all of whom chose to undertake executive coaching as a standalone intervention which was not integrated with a corporate development program. In each case, the coaching was funded by the organisation and delivered almost entirely face-to-face. The organisations included both small and large, both private and government. The coaches were external professionals, active in the marketplace, maintaining a basic consistency of coaching model offered through one provider. All of the coaching interventions commenced with a standardised assessment and feedback process conducted by the one psychologist.

The findings of previous empirical executive coaching studies were similarly affected by their context. Bush (2004) drew executives from only two organisations for her study, both of which integrated coaching into an executive development
program. This environment could contribute to her findings determining \textit{structured process} to be an important factor. Similarly the study by Olsen (2005) was based on only one organisation, so with this singular focus of one group all participating in the same program, it is not surprising that respondents indicated that forming a \textit{development plan to use as a map} was a priority factor. The sample in the study by Seamons (2006) included only coach-executive-supervisor triads which produced a finding that the \textit{support} of the executive’s \textit{supervisor} was significant. The study of coaches’ perceptions exclusively by Kappenberg (2008) determined \textit{coaching practices} to be an important factor, which differs from many of the studies which are based on executive responses. In Ballinger’s study (2000) the survey did not present \textit{coaching relationship} as an item for response, hence it does not appear as a factor contributing to effective coaching.

\textbf{Discussion}

This chapter will now proceed with a detailed discussion of each theme and sub-theme. Each will be referenced by the number associated in Table 4.1 to assist with clarity and linking.

Since interviews and focus group were the means of data collection, the respondents’ actual words have been used when presenting quotes, without grammatical correction. Executives are referred to by pseudonym. Coaches are referred to as “coach” without distinguishing among the four participating coaches and all personal pronouns for coaches are masculine to preserve the confidentiality of the one female coach. Where a dialogue among coaches is quoted, they are differentiated as coach A, coach B, etc. Where a generalised personal pronoun is required for an executive, a feminine gender has been adopted.

1 Executive Engagement

The engagement of the executive with the coaching process was a significant factor contributing to effectiveness in the opinion of both the executives and the coaches. It would be expected that for any of the busy executives in this study to complete six months or more of the coaching process, a notable level of own engagement would be necessary, otherwise they would simply discontinue the process. It is important to remember that the executives in the current study had
either sought out the coaching themselves or been offered the opportunity and accepted it willingly. None had been required to undertake the process without their own willing agreement, so their engagement with the process was expected to be high. However, their attitudes at the start of the coaching were quite varied and not all executives were equally eager about commencing the activity. Some were looking forward to the coaching opportunity and seeking it out.

_I’ve always thought to myself if I ever get the opportunity I won’t say no. So when they offered ... I really, really took to it... Ted_

Others had a more try it and see approach.

_I was highly sceptical right from the beginning... when it was put forward that you were going to go and have a chat to an individual, I thought it was a bit of a waste of time to begin with... so, sceptical at first but really enjoyed it towards the end... Mal_

One acknowledged that a previous bad experience with coaching had prevented her even considering it until now.

_is why I never looked at coaching...from that first experience, cause I hated it so much and it was imposed on me I never looked at it again, until this major issue that I just couldn’t get past... Karen_

Irrespective of their initial attitude at the commencement of the coaching, the attitude of all the executives, by the completion of their coaching experience was positive and the level of engagement with the process was high.

_I’m grateful I did it, at the time I didn’t want to do it obviously. At the time I just thought it was another thing that I didn’t probably need and yeah... It’s just been invaluable really, as a tool here for me in this cultural change agenda. Absolutely invaluable... Carol_

The findings of the importance of executive engagement in this study correspond with previous empirical work. Many researchers in this field have recognised the importance of executive engagement as one of the critical components of coaching effectiveness. This theme encompasses the executive’s openness, commitment, dedication and willingness to be coached. This has been variously termed adherence (Seamons, 2006), personal effort and drive (Ballinger, 2000),
exceptional drive for mastery (Jones & Spooner, 2006), willingness to be influenced by the coach (Stevens, 2005), committed client (Bush, 2004) and client engagement (Kappenberg, 2008). Sztucinski (2001) does not mention this concept directly although under *Path to Achievement* she explores the reasons why executives choose to undertake coaching, alluding to the idea that when the choice is compelling the engagement with the process will be strong. The concept of engagement is also included under *Ownership* where her study establishes the importance of the executive feeling that the process was their own.

Previous research acknowledges the importance of executive engagement with the coaching process, that is, helping executives to recognise the value of making development a priority (Gegner, 1997; Kiel, et al., 1996; Peterson, 1996). One author expands the concept slightly and discusses the issues contributing to executives discontinuing their coaching programs (non-adherence) (Kilburg, 2001). However there has been little exploration by researchers of what contributes to greater executive engagement. Here the current study is able to add to that body of knowledge.

The executives and the coaches acknowledged a number of factors which contributed to the executives’ engagement with the coaching process. These are *timeliness of the coaching, recommendation by an associate, and willingness to change*. The factor that was most prominent in the comments by the executives was the *timeliness of the coaching*. They recognised that the coaching program had occurred at seemingly just the right time when they may have been more open to it and benefited most. The timeliness of coaching as an important contributor to effectiveness was identified by one other researcher (Paige, 2002).

For some executives, the timeliness of the coaching was due to progress in their career to a point that required change, perhaps some further learning for self development or a growing capability to better fulfil their role.

> the coaching... was an opportunity to either go forward or make a very big decision in my life to make a break from the company because that was where I was at. I wasn’t getting any learning and growing...I got to a point where there was no one that I worked directly with that I could learn from...Kirsty
For other executives, the coaching was timely due to a change in their role.

*I was going through a change of job...I guess that change was coincidental to the coaching starting at the same time so it’s not to say that was the only reason that it had been beneficial but I guess it did give it... it’s a good coincidence, a happy coincidence that it happened at that time... Fay*

A couple of the executives found the coaching timely because of a major unresolved issue in their workplace.

*I just didn’t have anyone else to help me solve this issue; it just came along at the right time... Karen*

Even though timeliness of the coaching was a major item to the executives, only two indicated that they actively sought coaching as a means of addressing their situation. Most did not seek coaching because they thought this was the right time for it, rather in hindsight, they saw the coaching process itself had revealed just how timely it was. This could be stated as coaching was the support they needed to have even though they did not realise it at the time.

*The fact that I probably was at a cross roads in my job and really was looking for a way to process how I was feeling about it. This was an opportunity... it wasn’t like I went out seeking the coaching. It was given to me by my boss...it just came at a time when I needed to take a step back and actually look at how I was feeling about everything... Freda*

Some of the executives acknowledged that a *positive recommendation from an associate* that they knew and trusted contributed to their engagement with the coaching. Sztucinski (2001) identifies this positive recommendation as a compelling reason why executives choose coaching although its impact on engagement was not elaborated in her study. In a related effect, positive recommendations by others also contributed to rapidly developing trust with the coach which is discussed in more detail in section 5 *Trusting Relationship*.

*I’d heard good things from my general manger, who also had Coach, about his own ability to open up to Coach, so I just went that’s great. That will do me... Mal*
The third contributing factor to the executive’s engagement with the coaching process was their willingness to change, seemingly stemming from their need to achieve differently in their role. Willingness to change in the executives is termed by other researchers open to learning (Sullivan, 2006) and need to achieve (Sztucinski, 2001). Sztucinski (2001) discusses need to achieve as a motivation for executives to choose to undertake coaching. This current study makes a further contribution by linking willingness to change with growing executive engagement.

In the current study, five of the twelve executives expressed a ruthless openness to be confronted with any necessary change throughout the coaching process.

I’ve really got to change these longer term habits and behaviours that aren’t doing me any favours in the workforce. And we set about achieving that together in that there was nowhere really that we left unturned in terms of being ready to go… Brian

The attitudes and actions of the coaches also contributed to the executives’ engagement with the process (Orenstein, 2002). The coaches agreed together on the importance of executive engagement.

If the client is not really committed to it, then it’s not going to work… if they’re not convinced, it’s a waste of time. I think it’s probably the critical factor in the whole process… I reckon … the basic ingredient is really the client’s attitude towards what we’re doing… So long as the individual sees the value in it and is prepared to run with it…

The coaches saw that one of their primary tasks early on in the coaching process was to connect with the executive’s underlying agenda in a way that generated deeper engagement. In the following extract from their discussion in the focus group, they acknowledged their commitment to work hard at “striking on” the executive’s agenda.

…but there is the emergence of willingness to do some work or some stuff… if you’ve struck on something in one of your sessions, then, it all falls into place. (Coach A)

That’s almost the magic ingredient for me, if you can strike on something personal there…If you can find the agenda underlying what they want to talk about then you’ve got a chance of turning it into something. In which
case, what you said about us working hard to try to undercover that is really what it is about. (Coach B)

As a result the coaches consciously adapted their process according to their perception of the executive’s engagement (discussed in section 3a Encouragement and Emotional Support), and sought to develop in the executives their sense of ownership of the agenda (discussed in section 3c Enhancing Executive Performance).

The coaches also discussed at some length the difficulties associated with executives who were “sent” to a coaching program, and therefore exhibited low levels of engagement, although this was not the case for any of the executives in this study. The coaches identified ways they challenge reluctant executives to embrace the reality of what is going on for them so that they would engage personally with the process. The coaches saw this step of developing executive engagement as essential for effective outcomes of the coaching.

Summary of 1 Executive Engagement

Factors contributing to coaching effectiveness: The engagement of the executive with the process was considered very important by both the coaches and the executives. The coaches recognised their role in developing executive engagement. A major aspect of engagement identified by executives was timeliness of the coaching, although they were aware that the influence of timeliness may not be apparent at the early stages of the process.

2 Preliminary Assessment and Feedback

The role of the preliminary assessment and feedback in the coaching process provides an example of the vastly different perspectives with which coaches and executives may view any of these themes. The executives saw only what they experienced of this as a discrete process with certain steps - assessment, feedback, and integration into coaching. The coaches held a broader view since they were much more aware of how they were intuitively utilising these steps to create the overall coaching experience.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the assessment process consisted of completion of an array of assessment tools (e.g. McQuaig survey, a career mapping tool and 360
degree assessment) followed by one-to-one feedback of the findings. Both of these activities were conducted by the same coaching psychologist for all executives. The assessment summary and psychologist’s feedback were provided in each case to the coach who engaged the executive in the subsequent steps of formulating an agreed action plan and setting defined goals based on the data. This process is explained in more detail in Appendix D.

The preliminary assessment and feedback process is typical of many coaching programs (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; McGovern, et al., 2001; Thach, 2002; Wasylyshyn, et al., 2006) and considered a critical part of the executive coaching process by many scholars, particularly those with a psychology background (Judge & Cowell, 1997; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Kiel, et al., 1996; Saporito, 1996; Tobias, 1996). Of the studies which explore factors contributing to coaching effectiveness, most are relatively silent on the impact of the assessment and feedback process. This may be because it does not emerge as a significant factor or perhaps for some it is taken as a standard arrangement and therefore included in their concept of structured process which is considered important in coaching (Bush, 2004).

As can be seen in Table 4.2, only one study mentions preliminary assessment and feedback as an important factor (Luebbe, 2005). Closer investigation reveals that the researcher was actually reporting the importance that executives placed on the coach’s expertise in analysing and synthesising data from the preliminary assessment process. The executives were valuing the way the coach used the data rather than the process itself. Responses from the coaches in the current study support this finding. The coaches indicated that while they saw assessment and feedback as an essential structure, this was not a critical factor contributing to the effectiveness of the coaching. What was more important to them was the way in which they used the outcomes of the assessment and feedback process to engage the executive.

*the initial action plan is a bunch of themes really. It’s a living, breathing process and by 25% of the way through our work in the coaching phase it’s evolved into the next step…It’s not a static thing… Coach A.*

*No, but it’s a necessary starting point…it starts the languaging and it starts the relationship… Coach B.*
it creates a place for them to open up and to get to places where they didn’t even realise they needed to go... Coach C

It seems that, generally speaking, the coaches utilised the outcomes of the assessment process as a platform to commence identifying issues and targets of high importance to the executive. They also sought to surface additional issues of which the executive may not have been aware. They saw the assessment and feedback as a necessary mechanism or platform for creating the essential living process of creative discovery and development with the executive. Although what is not clear in the comments by the coaches is whether, in their opinion, the same process could in fact be effectively created even when the mechanism of assessment and feedback was not employed.

The executives had varied views on the process of assessment, feedback and integration of the data, possibly because for some, their remembered experience was of the mechanism which didn’t fully connect with them, while for others their remembered experience was of a “living, breathing process” seamlessly flowing into the coaching. The different perspectives are highlighted in the following two quotes:

*It was the start of the process of being open and honest ...I think it was the most critical... well the critical set up of the whole coaching process...*  
*Kirsty*

*It didn’t really do much for me. It wasn’t a key thing and I don’t think it probably fell into place after I’d started doing one-on-one coaching sessions...Freda*

There were a large majority of positive responses from executives when asked about their experience of the feedback process, most indicating that this was a valuable eye-opening time for them in preparation for the coaching phase.

*I found Psychologist exceptional. For such a small amount of time, he really hit the nail on the head, if you like, was able to really see what the situation was... Karen*

Some of the executives interviewed saw forming an agreed action plan based on the feedback data as an important part of the process. Others could not clearly recall this occurring.
we would take those areas that were identified as being what we’d want to talk about going forward... We touched on a number of issues where we could immediately start to improve... Mal

Furthermore, some executives valued the clear framework provided by the defined goal/s for their coaching and thrived under this arrangement. Others however seemed entirely satisfied for their coaching direction to have little reference to the feedback data and no definite goal at all for the process.

*His analysis was fed to my coach and on the first session, my coach and I went through that and then worked out how do we now progress this?... It actually formed the foundation as to the way forward... We actually reviewed them on a regular basis. Every month that we’d meet we’d look back as to what we’d set out to achieve... Andy*

*I can’t even remember what my goals were. For me the coaching process was very much a, me and coach having a rapport, just got on with talking about things... Freda*

The assessment and feedback process was seen by both the coaches and the executives as a valuable step in an effective coaching relationship, although not critical to its success. Its value to the coaches appears to be as a basis for engaging the executive with the living process of creative discovery and development. For some executives it was simply a starting point which was quickly left behind. However for other executives the implementation of an apparently objective assessment, feedback and goal setting process contributed strongly to their confidence in and reliance on the coaching process.

**Summary of 2 Preliminary Assessment and Feedback**

Factors contributing to coaching effectiveness: Preliminary assessment and feedback was valuable but may not be essential for coaching effectiveness. What did emerge as essential was the coaches’ creation of a living process of creative discovery and development which was appropriate to the executive preferences; this will be discussed in sections 3b Challenge and Reflection and 3c Enhancing Executive Performance.
3 Coaching Process

Coaching process typically includes the approaches and practices employed by the coach to create and advance the coaching engagement toward its desired goals. The discussion of coaching process will proceed as follows: first this section will explore some of the significant factors that influence the process adopted by the coach. The next three sections will discuss in detail the themes regarding coaching process and coaching effectiveness which have emerged in this study.

The coaching process adopted by the coach will be determined in large measure by the goals or objectives of the coaching engagement, how these are defined and how progress toward these goals will be measured. Before discussing the findings of this study regarding the coaching process, it is expedient to explore what the study has revealed about the shared expectations of the executives and the coaches regarding defining goals of the coaching engagement and measurement of progress.

Much of the relevant literature is in agreement that effective coaching requires defined goals based on the assessment and feedback report (Hall, et al., 1999; Judge & Cowell, 1997; Kappenberg, 2008; Paige, 2002; Smither, et al., 2003) or distinct expectations regarding results (Thach, 2002). This would be expected particularly where the coaching engagement was part of an organisation sponsored development program or associated with training workshops, or where the executive’s supervisor was actively involved in the coaching process.

The standalone executive coaching context explored in the current study appears to have a major bearing on how the defined goals of the coaching process were viewed.

In this investigation the responses of the executives did not support these assertions made in the majority of the literature. The findings of this study agree with those of Sztucinski (2001) who observed that the literature placed more emphasis on the need for specific goals than the executives actually experienced. Her study determined that setting specific goals was not as important as responding to a new challenge facing the executive, that is, the goals themselves often needed to be adjusted without losing sight of the larger developmental picture (De Meuse, et al., 2009; McCleland, 2005; Meneghetti, 2008).
This latter approach proposed by Sztucinski (2001) and supported by the findings of this study has implications for the way that coaching process is determined. Some questions that arise are: If goals for the coaching are not specifically defined, how does the coach then determine the “big picture” objective and the process to be employed? What form should an objective take – does it need to be a measurable performance objective for the executive, or can it be developmental, perhaps in the realm of self awareness/self efficacy, or can it be both? Is it appropriate for the coach to formulate and steer the process toward an objective which has become clear to him but which the executive may not have awareness of at first? Is it sufficient for the executive to complete the coaching journey with the coach and afterward celebrate the achievement of outcomes the executive would not have been able to define at the beginning?

At this point many of the themes which have emerged in this study intersect, so the question of defining an objective and determining a process cannot be considered one dimensionally. At the first meeting of the executive and her coach, accepted practice as described in the literature would suggest that defined goals based on the feedback report should be agreed and the coach should commence an appropriate coaching process that will lead to achievement of those goals. In fact, a multi-layered matrix of concurrent and interdependent processes is active during the initial encounter.

The range of themes which has emerged in this study suggests that during the initial coaching encounter some or all of the following may be occurring. The coach and executive are both aware of building on the data in the feedback report, and the coach is also aware of the need to create the living process of discovery (discussed in 2 Preliminary Assessment and Feedback). The coach is intuitively adapting the process to strike on an issue of value to the executive, something which will connect her emotionally to the process, so she feels “this is right” (discussed in 3a Encouragement and Emotional Support). At the same time the executive may be fiercely guarding her sense of ownership of the coaching agenda which she feels is hers to determine (discussed in 3c Enhancing Executive Performance). The coach will be building a perceptual understanding of the executive’s role in order to develop an innate sense of what needs to be addressed, the larger developmental
picture (discussed in 4 Coach’s Contribution). The executive will be hoping for some early wins - key ideas that really work – that make the process seem credible (discussed in 3a Encouragement and Emotional Support). The coach will be building rapport and developing trust, seeking to establish the likeability link, while ensuring the executive experiences genuine personal interest and care, without which some executives may dismiss every other aspect of the process (discussed in 5 Trusting Relationship). With this range of subtle emotional influences intersecting at one point, it is understandable that some executives did not seize upon a clearly defined objective they wished to achieve.

In the current study which investigated standalone coaching engagements with a high sense of executive ownership, more than half of the executives interviewed were clear that a defined objective for the coaching relationship was not required and in some cases not desired. Two were quite emphatic using the terms “It certainly wasn’t…” and “It certainly has never been…”. While not explicitly stated, the executives seemed to indicate that a defined objective was not preferred due to: their desire not to be controlled by this, or their preference for a more creative free spirited experience, or they realised that they did not have the capability at the start to define their specific objective.

I think that’s what made it enjoyable to me. A bit of that free spirit, instead of today we’re going to talk about... and having it all laid out in front you. You could go off on a tangent but at the end of the day it would all come back to where you were...but the message was still there and the message was clear... Mal

Rather than saying this is what I wanted at the start, this is what I got at the end...nine out of ten... it was more of a process for me or a journey. Rather than having outcomes that I wanted starting the coaching process, I didn’t have that skill set of sitting down and saying O.K, this is what I really want out of it and this is how I’m going to measure what I get out of it...Merv

Of the twelve executives, only two (Brian and Andy, both quoted in the previous section) clearly spoke of the value they placed on defined objectives, that is, measurable performance outcomes. Most of the executives saw their coaching as a creative learning journey with the coach, charted apparently intuitively by the coach’s
skill and the executive’s own needs or issues which arose in their role within the organisational imperatives (Witherspoon & White, 1996). Generally, the celebrated outcomes were fresh perspectives of complexity, perceived enhanced skill or capability in their role, a personal developmental milestone or a career goal; all of which would bring valuable results that would hopefully be measurable to the executive.

There was a sense from the coaches that the objective of the coaching process was more about growing through the journey than arriving at a pre-determined outcome. The objective would emerge during the journey. In a related study of coaches’ perspectives, this was seen as “walking together in collaboration until there is readiness to fly” (Gonzalez, 2004, p. 108).

So by careful questioning and challenging, they then come to an understanding of their own situation and a realistic assessment of what’s possible and what can be achieved...but ultimately the goals that we seek, may not be the ones that in hindsight might have been the best ones to choose when they first started the process...coach

One coach explained their approach which incorporated working with the executive’s specific steps of achievement, and at the same time enlarging the executive’s conceptual abilities. The literature identifies these as cognitive and developmental outcomes which can be addressed concurrently in an effective coaching process (Bush, 2004; Joo, 2005).

...one of the things I’m trying to leave them with is a process so that after I’m gone, if they’re confronted with something, they can say alright, well let’s sit down and think about the reality of what it could be like and what are the steps and what are the adaptive strategies as well as the normal technical ones...coach

The perspectives of the executives concerning the goals of their coaching relationship naturally affected the way they measured their progress toward these goals. Only one of the twelve outlined an approach that included a measured checklist and monitoring of progress.

The various stages between that month is to take a rain check, what are the milestones? How am I progressing against that? And then start to document
as to...ok how did it work? What didn’t work? To actually facilitate the next coaching session is to develop a checklist or some form of reporting back mechanism...Andy

The other executives discussed progress toward their goals in terms of self assessments of abilities, unsolicited comments by peers, other staff behaving differently toward them, and own sense of confidence/assertiveness/optimism. For two executives progress was measured by achieving a new role with increased pay. These are of course quite subjective assessments of progress however in most cases the executives were deeply convinced of the transformation they had experienced. Sztucinski (2001) similarly noted the intensity and scope of the executives’ articulation of their sense of achievement.

Predominantly with my assertiveness and my articulation of what I really wanted, that was definitely an area that I achieved quite a bit...Freda

They’d even noticed a change which again, that is great feedback for me in that they’d seen that the strategies that I’d been trying to implement actually are working or having an effect. Passing comments at the water cooler, down in the lunch room stuff like that was all, positive reinforcement...Mal

Well I was sort of like a wreck at the start. And by the end of it I was flying high with a pay rise! Karen

The coaches also held the view that measurement of progress was a matter to be determined in discussion with the executives; it was for the executives to identify meaningful indicators of transformation in their world.

Measurable, I don’t really go down that path other than from the client’s perspective, so how will you know that things have changed for you? What will others be doing? What will they be saying?.. What have you been doing that is different? What have you noticed? What are people saying? To me, that’s the measurement, that it’s not a calculated, quantitative thing. It’s their qualitative measure that seems to work best and then if it’s a manager that has referred them, then there is some follow up there where I ask them, what have you noticed that’s different? Coach

In this study, the expectations of both coach and executive were to create an “executive owned” journey of discovery, development and achievement with targets
and measures determined in conjunction with the executive and in response to their challenges, during the course of the journey.

**Summary of Coaching Process**

Factors contributing to coaching effectiveness: The objective of the coaching engagement and the method of measuring progress toward the objective should be determined according to the context and the executive preference. It is often beneficial to allow the objective to develop during the course of the coaching in response to challenges which arise and the executive’s expanding capacity to determine their desired destination.

**Discussion of sub-themes 3a to 3c**

With a clearer understanding of how the objectives of the coaching were defined and progress measured, the discussion of the various components of the coaching process will now proceed. From the responses gathered in this study, three sub-themes were identified in relation to how coaching process contributed to greater effectiveness. In practice these sub-themes are related parts of the seamless coaching process which are concurrent and co-active.

The first, 3a Encouragement and Emotional Support, includes the coach’s impact on the emotions of the executive, initially to encourage greater emotional connection with the process and additionally to enhance the executive’s emotional state as appropriate. Second, 3b Challenge and Reflection, concerns the coach’s challenge to the executive to reflect deeply, think differently and see complex situations in new ways. Finally 3c Enhancing Executive Performance is the process of addressing the executive’s agenda, dealing with issues, developing skills and achieving results.

**3a Encouragement and Emotional Support**

The discussion of this sub-theme Encouragement and Emotional Support will include five pattern codes which emerged from the responses. These are developing the executive’s emotional connection with the process, the positive impact of early goal achievement, how the executive experienced encouragement and validation, and the impact of coach’s self disclosure.
Both the executives and the coaches identified the importance of developing the executive’s emotional connection for coaching to be effective, that is, the sense that the executive feels “this is right” and has embraced the process. One practitioner refers to this as the “credibility assessment”, the executive determining whether the coach has anything to offer (Natale & Diamante, 2005). This was one of the two points in this study where the data from coaches differed noticeably from that from executives. The coaches viewed this as aspect as developing the executive’s emotional connection with the process, while the executives responses conveyed their sense of the positive impact of early goal achievement.

The coaches discussed at some length the practical reality of maintaining consistency with the solution focused model, while at the same time adapting the process to the unique needs of the executive. They agreed on the importance of adaptation so that the executive’s emotional connection or “buy in” was established, this was referred to as “struck on something”, as already discussed in section 1 Executive Engagement. This intentional, almost intuitive adaptation of the process by the coach through astute listening and observation was emphasised by the coaches, it was acknowledged as the “magic ingredient” without which the coaching process could “flounder”. From a psychological perspective, the coach was engaging in a continuous process of self-scrutiny to identify what was being invoked in himself so as to appropriately make choices about the process (Orenstein, 2002).

If you’ve struck on something in one of your sessions, then, it all falls into place… (Coach A).

That’s almost the magic ingredient for me; if you can strike on something personal there….If you can find the agenda underlying what they want to talk about then you’ve got a chance of turning it into something. In which case, what you said about us working hard to try to undercover that is really what it is about… (Coach B)

This intuitive adaptation of the coaching process at the early stages to develop greater executive emotional connection with the process is not explored in other empirical studies, although it does receive a brief mention (McCleland, 2005; Meneghetti, 2008). One researcher suggests beginning with a strong psychological contracting process (Seamons, 2006) although the recommendation is focused on
procedures and objectives. Another highlights the need to find goals important to the executive (Gonzalez, 2004). The concept of the coach intentionally developing the executive’s emotional connection early with the process is a contribution by the current study.

Generally the executives were not aware of how the coach was working early in the relationship to adapt the process to their individual situation since skilled coaching is nearly invisible to the eye of the executive (Mackenzie, 2007). The executives experienced the adaptation of the coaching process from the receiving end, and to some this appeared to be a very open flexible process centred on their own requirements.

It wasn’t as though it was a rigid pattern that we followed anywhere, obviously coach had his methodology that he followed but it was very, very open, very easy to fit into…Larry

At this early stage of the coaching, while the coaches were seeking to “strike on something”, the executives indicated that their emotional connection with the process was based in part on their experience of early goal achievement or as some have termed it “early wins” (Berman & Bradt, 2006). To the executives an “early win” was taking a step that worked very well, discovering a way to solve the pressing problem, or an obvious sense of personal benefit. This positive impact of early goal achievement also receives little coverage in relevant literature. One study of coaching high achievers in business and sport identified a major theme as “find out how to add value quickly” (Jones & Spooner, 2006) which agrees with the findings of this current study. Another mentions the coach’s role of “providing an experience of behavioural mastery or cognitive control over the problems and issues” (Kilburg, 1996, p. 139), although the positive emotional impact for the executive is not discussed.

The executives identified these early wins as key to their growing confidence and trust in the coach. For some this was very significant, it became almost the salient aspect of the coaching, they acknowledged they were getting so much personal benefit that they did not much care what else the coach was doing.

it was probably the first few sessions were probably where the most impact was initially, which I think helps to build trust…Yeah I think obviously if
you can get a couple of big wins under the belt first, it builds credibility which also gives you more confidence in the remainder of the program...Matt

The positive contribution of the coaching to their emotional state (e.g. inspired or encouraged) was identified by some of the executives in this study, although less than half. It may be that these five executives particularly needed support of this type, or alternatively it may be that they were the ones who felt open to acknowledge the value of this support. However these executives saw this emotional support as an important contributor to coaching effectiveness. Emotional support as a significant factor was similarly identified by two previous studies (Armstrong, et al., 2007; Ballinger, 2000) while yet another study explored the broad array of emotions involved in executive coaching revealing that effectiveness depends on much more than cognitive elements (Sztucinski, 2001).

Of the five executives who identified this theme, some recognised the coaching as being inspiring, bringing greater confidence and self belief, while others commented on the importance they placed on being encouraged. This supports the suggestion that effective coaching appears to focus more on strengths than on weaknesses (Gonzalez, 2004; Lowman, 2005).

It’s confidence building, it’s empowering. It makes you feel that the potential that you have inside of you that you might self doubt a little bit but with guidance and support that actually enables you to think “ok, well yes I can do that”... You always saw the positive every time that you went...

Kirsty

Of particular importance for a few executives was the message of validation that they received, a sense that “I’m ok, I’m doing ok”, or “these feelings I’m having are ok”. These executives appeared to lack safe and reliable feedback in their workplace that would validate them and their performance. In these instances the coach filled a vital role with regard to validation.

I guess I kind of reaffirmed talking with coach about certain things. I had a gut instinct that I was going ok but...to step outside and know that you’ve got transferable skills and you’re on the right track, it’s good...Freda
How the coaches actually went about identifying the executive’s need for emotional support and implementing that was not clear. One coach commented on the personal priority they gave to celebrating small victories. However it seemed that the positive, inspiring validating components of their coaching were a result of the coaches’ professional demeanour rather than their techniques.

Some executives did identify the positive emotional impact for themselves of appropriate self disclosure by the coach. While this was little mentioned by the coaches, some executives indicated the significant impact this disclosure had on the beliefs they had about themselves as well as their impression of the coach. This aspect of coach behaviour may be considered part of building relationship. However, it is included here to highlight the emotional impact on the executive of appropriate self disclosure by the coach, a perspective which has not been found in other studies.

Coach shared their own experiences as well which made you feel, oh I am human…Kirsty

Summary of 3a Encouragement and Emotional Support

Factors contributing to coaching effectiveness: The coach’s sensitive adaptation of their approach in order to develop the executive’s emotional connection with the coaching process is an important factor. The executives place a high value on experiencing early wins in building their confidence in the process and their trust in the coach. The coach’s contribution to the executive’s positive emotional state by encouragement, affirmation, and appropriate self disclosure was also identified as important by some executives.

3b Challenge and Reflection

There is widespread agreement among researchers that effective coaching requires well developed skills in listening and asking probing questions (Armstrong, et al., 2007; Berman & Bradt, 2006; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007; Stevens, 2005), creating a reflective space for the executive (Gonzalez, 2004; Mackenzie, 2007; Seamons, 2006) and challenging the executive’s thinking (Jones & Spooner, 2006; Kappenberg, 2008; Luebbe, 2005; Paige, 2002; Sztucinski, 2001). These factors also emerged clearly in the current study with some additional insights. The discussion
will follow the path of challenge, reflective space, communication skills, and exclusive space to talk.

There was recognition from virtually all of the executives of the essential role challenge played in the effectiveness of the coaching process. Their comments revealed that they valued the opportunity to be challenged by the coach, they expected it to be confronting but non-threatening, and that this experience was generally not available from others in their workplace. There was also a sense from their responses that they valued the coach’s relentless challenge – it was always there as part of who the coach is – provided this did not undermine the sense of validation they enjoyed from the coach (discussed in previous section).

So that’s where the not relenting comes in. Every time you sort of have a discussion, coach just brings it back around onto, well, this is for you and I understand that you’re busy but come on, we need to get this done because the quicker we get this done, the less you’ll be busy…Brian

This agrees with the existing literature which discusses the importance of the coach bringing challenge continually that will stretch the executives (Jones & Spooner, 2006) out of their comfort zone (Paige, 2002). It is noted that the executives value candour, not just support (Luebbe, 2005) and that they were aware this can be both hard work and painful (Sztucinski, 2001).

The current study has revealed further insight on the way the executives experienced challenge. The responses indicate that the executives experienced a sense of challenge inherent in the coaching relationship (that is, by who the coach was) as well as by what the coach said and did.

This inherent challenge resulted in what appeared to be unsolicited commitment to honest and transparent disclosure by the executives. Their comments indicated that this was their initiative, obviously based on their sense that trust was sufficiently developed, to make their coaching experience as effective as possible. For the executives, this commitment to honesty was perceived as critical for effectiveness.

I really was honest as I’ve ever, ever been ...I really made sure I gave adequate information so someone could get a clear snapshot, who Ted is...

So I could get maximum out of the coaching... Ted
The executives were also challenged explicitly by the coaches to take personal responsibility for their situation, their role in it, and making changes to it. This specific on-going challenge to take ownership of their attitudes and actions and to find the solution was seen as a vital element in behaviour change (Kappenberg, 2008; Meneghetti, 2008).

*It was well how do you think you might do that? You know, how do you think might be able to achieve that? He just let me come up with a plan... basically it was back on me...it was quite clear that the solution had to come from within...Brian*

Another factor contributing significantly to the effectiveness of the coaching process concerned creating space for the executives to reflect deeply, see complexity in new ways, and test new ideas. The frequency and nature of executive responses indicated that they valued highly the opportunity to reflect on self, issue and role as well as to use the coach as a sounding board to test new ideas. This opportunity for deeper learning through reflection was not usually otherwise available in executives’ work context, so is seen by some as one of the greatest benefits of executive coaching (Seamons, 2006).

*Probably more the reflection...you don’t tend to sit back and reflect on how things went and tend to do “lessons learned” exercise on everything you do. Whereas if ...someone says to you, “well, think about how that went”, you’ve actually got a bit of time to think about it, whereas you wouldn’t normally do that...Matt*

Other researchers have explored this vital aspect of coaching seeing its value as time out from the business grind or stepping off the treadmill to look at themselves and their leadership differently (Mackenzie, 2007; Seamons, 2006). Furthermore a skilled coach can facilitate reflection by the executive not only on their own attitudes and actions, but also on the coach’s reflections on the executive’s reflections. This encourages double-loop and triple-loop feedback which is a key process in transformational learning (Gonzalez, 2004).

A further step built on the reflective space was the executives’ willingness to view the complexities and challenges of their role in new ways, to open their mind up to think and act from a fresh perspective. The executives and coaches saw this as an
important factor for effective coaching, moving beyond solving the current issues to operating from a different perspective.

Fundamentally coach made you try to always keep focus on the big picture. Always look beyond your initial problem now, although that’s important and you’ve got to come up with a solution on it but if you fix it now does it really add anything or contribute anything to the bigger problems....coach was always stimulating the bigger picture approach...Ted

helping them to envisage what it will be like is creating the vision, it’s helping them to create the vision of what’s going to be different. I think is a really critical part of the process in coaching effectiveness ...coach

The importance of executives being assisted to view complexities in new ways has been documented by other researchers. This expands the executive’s view to be more robust and encompassing with a greater capacity for making sense of complex ambiguous affairs (Blackman, 2006; Stevens, 2005). This step to greater objectivity has also been described as moving from seeing self as a subject to viewing self as an object (Seamons, 2006).

The coaches’ communication skills in creating the reflective space and exploring the broader perspective were recognised as vital by the executives, and have been well documented in other studies (Berman & Bradt, 2006; Gegner, 1997; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007). These included listening, attentiveness, skilful questioning, paraphrasing and refraining from giving the solution.

In other words coach’s concentration and ability to reflect what it is you were saying meant that we got to the crux of the issue very quickly... attentiveness, understanding... are critical factors...Andy

The coaches’ commitment to these expert communication skills reveals the high value they placed on executive reflection and embracing of broader perspectives as foundational aspects of the coaching process. As discussed in the section 3 Coaching Process, the coaches’ aim was to leave the executive with a process of learning and the ability to think about reality accurately in the midst of complex demands.
Creating the available space for the executives’ reflection and testing ideas was certainly dependent on the coaches’ consistent and sensitive application of the communication skills. The executives identified two other factors that contributed positively to this space – availability and exclusivity. Practically the executives were noticeably buoyed by the coaches making themselves available anytime; this appeared to convey a sense of privileged access even though it was little utilised by the executives. The executives’ value of coach availability has been recognised by other studies also (Hall, et al., 1999; Sztucinski, 2001). All four of the coaches in the current study had at least one of their executives report the coach had made themselves available “anytime”.

> can email coach anytime I feel like it... but just to know that you can email him anytime or ring him anytime...Kirsty

> (speaking of coach)...anytime you want to ring me for a conversation or flip me an email or do whatever, happy to hear from you...Mal

The reflective space was also enhanced by the sense that the executives had an exclusive place to talk. This was spoken of by the executives with affection and a sense of high value. They appreciated someone being there, someone with whom they could be themselves and had permission to talk about anything. The value to the executives here seemed to be that they did not have to justify the reason for making the contact with the coach nor how they were performing; the sense was of sharing a journey through dialogue where someone really understands their current experience in the midst of overwhelming demands.

> more as a...sort of a familiar face in the chaos. To go, coach I’m tearing my hair out you know, what am I going to do here? We’d talk about lots of things...Carol

One other study identifies the value of this sense of exclusivity that elevates coaching to a special place separate from the rest of the executive’s work (Sztucinski, 2001). The intensity of the executives’ positive emotion when discussing exclusive place to talk in the current study suggests this is worthy of further exploration.
Summary of 3b Challenge and Reflection

Factors contributing to coaching effectiveness: Challenge and reflection were seen by executives as some of the most vital parts of the coaching process. Coaches’ references to these were minimal, probably because these are assumed to be coaching foundations. Particular factors contributing to coaching effectiveness were identified as coaches’ expert communication skills, safe and relentless challenge, creating a reflective space, seeing complexity with fresh perspectives and the availability of an exclusive place to talk.

3c Enhancing Executive Performance

This sub-theme incorporates the business side of the coaching process, actually addressing the executive’s agenda, dealing with workplace issues, developing executive’s skills and achieving the desired results.

The matter of the agenda for the coaching process, or the defined objective was discussed in some detail in the section 3 Coaching Process. The responses concerning how that agenda was addressed highlighted some factors important to executives.

Some executives indicated that it was important that the coach was committed to their success, that is, the coach was focused their welfare rather than the coach’s preferences or program outcomes. One executive was able to explain the transition of this aspect from initial anxiety “is he working for them or me?” to finally “no, he’s in it for me”. The determining factor for this executive was the way the coach continually pushed him to take personal responsibility for change, he realised the coach was investing in the best result for him.

 Coach manages to get across that he is there working for me… Coach is interested in my welfare and my development and things like that…Fay

This delicate balancing arrangement for the coach occurs particularly in stand-alone coaching arrangements – the executive may be checking out whether the coach is there for “them” (the organisation) or “me”. It was clear in the relationships in this study that the coach conveyed their priority focus on the executive and their agenda. This balance is little discussed in other studies, many of which relate to
organizational coaching programs where the priority focus is by definition on both prescribed organisational goals as well as the executive’s agenda (Stern, 2004; Stevens, 2005). In either case, the preferred outcome would be skilful coaching of the executive as a whole person rather than a one dimensional employee, with the goal of bringing the best results for both executive and organisation (Bush, 2004). This will include close attention to the links between the issues brought by the executive and the organisational dynamics, and the executive’s growing capacity to influence the organisation in their leadership role (Hieker & Huffington, 2006).

A factor many of the executives identified as contributing significantly to effective coaching concerned their sense of ownership of the agenda. Their comments indicated that they embraced the process because they were in control, there was no meddling from the organisation, and they did not feel the coach interfered with that autonomy. This is closely related to the discussion in the section Executive Engagement where the importance of the sense of ownership in contributing to executive engagement was identified.

*I felt completely, 100% ownership... I felt completely in control the whole way through...Freda*

It is widely recognised that the executive’s agenda should be the clear and central focus of the coaching. The executive should not feel that they are being pushed where they do not want to go, or that the coach has an agenda to “change me” rather than to accept them for themselves (Gonzalez, 2004; Jones & Spooner, 2006; Mackenzie, 2007; Sztucinski, 2001). Bush (2004) reports that the factor with the most significant agreement among executives in her study concerned focusing on the agenda that benefits the executive, both personally and professionally.

In the current study, similar importance was placed by the executives on the coach being responsive to their current *workplace issues*, helping to solve the “now” problems. The value to the executives here seemed to be the ability to deal with pressing challenges in the coaching session, solve them and learn from them, rather than being constrained to a set agenda.

*It’s not just a matter of... performance against your action plan and then advancing onto that as the way forward, I think a very important component that coach was very good at was “what’s happening in your world?”*
because what’s happening in your world can influence what challenges
you’ve got in front of you at that point in time...Andy

The coaches spoke only a little of this factor, probably once again because it
was intuitive for them. One identified his approach as:

*What can I help you with today? Because in virtually every case there is
something that has come up and they need guidance on how to address it
and its bugging them...coach*

When asked about the significant aspects of the actual coaching process, the
executives did not refer to a set framework or consistent procedures. The main factor
contributing to effective coaching process identified by the executives was the
coaches providing them with *appropriate skills*, models or advice that were
immediately useful and relevant to their situation. The executives were impressed by
simple, memorable, clear models, diagrams or suggestions that clarified their
situation and their way to move forward. From their perspective the coaches were
aware of their valued role in providing resources, and also of the need to balance
providing suggestions with facilitating executive discovery.

*His worked examples and I suppose for want of a better term, templates or
simplistic ways forward were beneficial. His ability to relate and relay
management theory in a practical context with simplistic diagrams I think is
one of his greatest assets...Andy*

While providing the “answer” for executive dilemmas is not the purpose of
executive coaching, the findings of this study and others reveals that there is a great
need and openness among executives for clear and simple models and approaches
which can be applied quickly to organisational challenges. The coach’s
resourcefulness in providing the right idea/model/pointer at the right time can help
the executive to open their eyes in another way (Ballinger, 2000; Gyllensten &
Palmer, 2007; Hall, et al., 1999; Luebbe, 2005; Meneghetti, 2008). Only one study
was not in agreement with this finding due to reports of “naïve or daft ideas” from
the coaches (Seamons, 2006). This concern suggests the need for the selection of
coaches with appropriate experience as discussed in the following section 4 Coach’s
Contribution.
Another part of the process executives saw as contributing to effectiveness was the focus by the coach on *actions that would achieve results* (Joo, 2005; Thach, 2002), and in the case of high achievers, rapid results (Jones & Spooner, 2006). While this study has recognised the importance the executives placed on both the loosely defined coaching objective and the shared journey of discovery and development, the executives also expected practical results of the coaching sessions in terms of actions to do differently. For some these were written actions that were later reviewed, for others they were simply remembered and acted upon.

> There was always a follow up in terms of what am I going to do to make this effective? ... so that what I’ve just talked about or gone through benefits me? There was always, I wrote something down on paper and took it back with me to execute it, personally and professionally...Merv

A few of the executives also commented on the benefit they gained from the coach following up on their action plans.

> And coach coming through and checking up that it’s working and it’s working the way we expected it to...sort of holding the feet to the fire. Just not relenting in terms of making sure that you’re moving that forward every day in every way...Brian

The coaches also discussed the importance of this monitoring process.

> ...there’s always some monitoring afterwards. How did you go? What did you do? It gives me an excuse to follow up, to either phone them or email them. How you going with...whatever it might be; so that’s crucial for me in what I do...coach

However the responses of the entire sample of executives and coaches did not indicate that the monitoring of the executive’s progress by the coach was particularly significant in contributing to coaching effectiveness.

**Summary of 3c Enhancing Executive Performance**

Factors contributing to coaching effectiveness: Concerning the actual coaching process, the factors identified were the significance of their sense of ownership of the agenda, the responsiveness of the coach to address workplace issues and the coach’s focus on actions to achieve results. The coach’s ability to provide appropriate skills,
models or suggestions that were immediately applicable was highly valued by the executives.

4 Coach’s Contribution

The theme Coach’s Contribution emerged from the executives’ responses that identified how the coach personally contributed to the effectiveness of their coaching experience. Under this theme has been included the coach’s professional attributes and actions, that is the impact of the coach themselves. This does not include the relational attributes and skills which are discussed in the following section 5 Trusting Relationship, this distinction being based on the content of the executive responses.

The theme Coach’s Contribution did not arise in discussion with the coaches, which is an observed variation in the perceptions of coaches and executives. It is understandable that due to modesty the coaches did not consciously attribute high impact in the coaching to their own personal attributes.

Some studies have identified the importance of the coaches’ personal character qualities – honest, genuine and ethical (Blackman, 2006; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007; Stevens, 2005) and the coach as a model of behaviour (Ballinger, 2000). In the current study, the executives’ responses about the coaches personally included only a few comments about honesty, fairness, and objectivity. It appears that these were not raised in the interviews because there was no reason to do so. The executives fully expected the coaches to demonstrate these qualities in abundance which indeed did occur, thus no comment was warranted.

The bulk of the responses related to the coaches’ experience and skill both in management and in coaching. It is acknowledged that experience and skill in management is different to experience and skill in coaching, however, it was not considered possible to differentiate between these aspects based on the executives’ responses. For example, the behaviours an executive attributed to the coach’s management experience and insight could have in fact been artful coaching expertise.

An appreciable number of executives’ comments indicated that they valued what they saw as the coach’s background and experience in management. They attached credibility to the fact that the coach “had been there”. Executives observed this experience in the coach’s ability to understand their situation quickly, to
contextualise events, and having an innate sense of what was happening e.g., “hit the nail on the head”. This clarity and insight by the coach increased the level of confidence the executives felt toward them.

...with coach you got a wealth of experience from things that he had done in the past...that’s where coach’s expertise came in, that’s what I suppose were his core skills, his expertise...Matt

This blend of experience, skill and insight in the coach has been documented by other studies. It seems executives value not just business experience, but a coach who is grounded in their business reality and the challenges they face, with an in-depth feel for their lives (Meneghetti, 2008; Stevens, 2005). This requires understanding of business, political astuteness, organisational systems and the effect of cultural environments on the executive (Berman & Bradt, 2006; Hall, et al., 1999; Luebbe, 2005). Furthermore expert coaches are expected to bring disparate ideas, knowledge and insight to bear on problems, connecting previously unrelated notions in ways that yield novel solutions (Berman & Bradt, 2006; Brotman, et al., 1998). This coaching expertise was reported in the current study.

He was a great listener, he was very empathetic, he could contextualise the situation very easily, didn’t require a lot of explanation. He had a sort of innate sense of what needed to be done and what needed to be said. He had a very strong, I think, perceptual understanding of all of us in terms of how we were working and what was going on. He was fantastic...Carol

The executives also commented on the coach’s experience and skill in their practice of coaching. The executives valued the experience of the coach bringing their whole self to the relationship, the coach’s engaging presence demonstrated by listening, verbal skills and non-verbal skills. Some skills in particular identified by the executives were adapting the coach’s style to that of the executive, unpacking the 360 degree report or profile data, and sharing insights about the styles and motivations of the executive. However, the sense from the executives was not that they particularly valued the technique the coach was demonstrating, it was that they saw this as an example of the coach bringing their whole self to the coaching. The executives relished this personal encounter with a fully present highly skilled coach.
I think he probably summed that up straight away. The profile he used... his profiles... obviously had a lot of experience in the different profiles and how to bring out the people with that profile so that’s just the degree of professionalism that I think he had. That was just obvious. He would talk your way through it and you’d see it was just a natural way for him to behave...Larry

The coach utilising their skills and experience in management and in coaching created important moments of personal insight and perspective for the executives, which they recalled with affection. These moments of deep learning may be referred to by some coaches as “aha” moments.

*Coach was very professional, all about helping you. His eye contact, his body language, the way that he structured his...you know articulation, his voice, it was all about the fact that you could really just engage with him. And, you know, you just got a sense of him that the moment that you walked in that it was cone of silence and a safe place...you’re going to get some growth out of here and you just knew...and I think that you have that as a person and that’s what coach has...Kirsty*

These responses from executives provide clear examples of the coaches using self as a tool (Bush, 2004). A study of coaches’ perspectives by Gonzalez (2004) saw this as authenticity, that is, coaches working from their core, using all of self, following a calling which was entirely consistent with their person. Authenticity creates a self imposed consistent standard of genuine behaviour and high quality performance (Gonzalez, 2004). This theme was clearly evident in the level of engagement, mood and expression of the coaches during the focus group discussion conducted for this study, and has been recognised by the executives in their coaching experiences.

*I know that it really has helped me and I’ve really enjoyed having coach along for the ride. It’s been good.... It was all good. This stuff with psychologist was just fantastic...Mal*

When asked about their experience of the coaching all of the executives responded positively, which would be expected from this sample of executives who have completed an effective coaching program. The nature and intensity of their
positive comments however was notable, with the majority of the executives engaging in superlatives to describe their experience of the coaching and the coach himself. In reviewing these numerous comments, there was a sense emerging that the coaching experience and the coach personally became interchangeable in the executives’ minds, that is, this peak experience came to be represented by the person themselves. This contributes to the sense that the executives experience of the coach themselves is an important factor in coaching effectiveness. One executive commented that rapport with the coach was the main thing and that if this was absent the process would have been miserable.

*It was a great experience and I’d recommend it to anybody...coach was outstanding...I mean he was great...Kirsty*

**Summary of 4 Coach’s Contribution**

Factors contributing to coaching effectiveness: The coach themself was a major contributor to the coaching outcome. Coaches cleverly utilised their experience and skills in management and coaching to facilitate important moments of personal insight and perspective for the executives. The executive experience of the coaches fully investing themselves in the process created memorable learning points for the executives.

**5 Trusting Relationship**

The relationship between the executive and coach attracted more responses from the executives than any other topic, thus indicating its significance in the coaching process. The coaches’ responses also heavily favoured this topic. This finding agrees with other studies which place the coaching relationship as the critical factor for coaching effectiveness (Bush, 2004; Kappenberg, 2008; Luebbe, 2005; Sztucinski, 2001). The coaching relationship will be explored by discussing how this relationship was developed, trust as the primary pillar, and what contributed to the healthy trusting relationship.

When discussing their application of the solution focused model of coaching, the coaches acknowledged that well developed relationship building skills were assumed as a foundation for their role. While not stated in the model it was essential
that coaches be skilled at building relationships in almost any context quickly and effectively.

*it’s presumed that people like us will walk in the door and will contribute to building that relationship so that we will be able to understand what’s being said and we’ll have something to contribute to a relationship....coach*

When asked to actually define this skill of building relationships, the coaches were less clear. They began the discussion speaking in terms of some of the processes they do – establish confidentiality, listen, reflect, use metaphors that match the client – and also some they do not do – take someone else’s side in discussions with the executive. They discussed the importance of creating partnership with the executive, that is, a feeling that they were on the executive’s side. One coach stated:

*I believe that I’m walking in partnership with them and that they know that... but I’m their partner in a process to try to understand what’s going to try to generate options and ideas and I think somehow that’s very important to me that they know that I’m on their side...coach*

Quickly realising that these processes were necessary but inadequate to define the concept, the coaches began to wrestle with terms such as chemistry, charisma, meta-mix of skills, and finally came to “don’t really understand it”. The inconclusive outcome was that relationship building skills were intuitive, not easily defined, and needed further study.

Some researchers refer to this relationship as the bond between the coach and the executive (Bush, 2004; Sztucinski, 2001). It is seen as a unique and personalised relationship with the most commonly associated characteristics being trust, mutual respect and chemistry (Brotman, et al., 1998; Luebbe, 2005; Mackenzie, 2007; Stevens, 2005; Sullivan, 2006). In addressing building trust, one coaching practitioner states coaches must learn how people view the world and what they care about, that is, to step into someone else’s frame of reference (Peterson, 1996).

The coaches agreed that the executives would be unaware of the coach’s actions at building the relationship and would simply experience the outcome of their efforts. This was performed expertly by all the coaches in this study which was confirmed by the positive executive responses. Of interest were the executives’
comments that the coaching relationship seemed “like we just clicked”, they felt “we were the sort of people who would get on”. To the executives it seemed like they were pleased their coach suited them so well, whereas this feeling may have been a result of the coach gauging the executive’s preferences and behaving in a manner that would connect well that is, establishing the likeability link (Natale & Diamante, 2005).

*We were both probably quite flexible...we probably suited each other a bit, both sort of flexible people.... you sometimes wonder if it was more of an individual sort of thing, you find people you can work with and you can share things with, coach seemed to fall into that category I suppose...Matt*

When asked about the relationship with their coach, all the executives made some response concerning trust and rapport. While these are two different attributes of relationship, they were so intertwined in the executives’ responses they were not possible to separate in the coding; this is discussed in Appendix N. Trust and rapport were considered essential by the executives; a majority of them commented they could not have proceeded without this.

*if I didn’t trust coach completely, I would never have grown in the coaching. He just unpacked and just, I guess drew down onto the main things that he knew I needed to fix, grow, reflect or whatever the words are... If I didn’t trust him, it wouldn’t have worked...Kirsty*

How trust is established in the coaching relationship is not clearly articulated in empirical studies available to date. Characteristics associated with trust in these studies are credibility, respect, unconditional care, support, genuineness, empathy and confidentiality (Bush, 2004; Kappenberg, 2008; Luebbe, 2005; Mackenzie, 2007; Sztucinski, 2001). These constructs are seen in Rogers’ person-centred therapy and Mezirow’s transformational learning (Kleinberg, 2001). It is acknowledged that trust in a coaching relationship may develop almost instantaneously, or over a longer period of time (Meneghetti, 2008). One researcher has explored the psychoanalytical components of the therapeutic coaching alliance, however, this is well beyond the scope of the executive coaching relationships in this study which lacked a therapeutic basis (Huggler, 2007).
In the current study the executives were questioned specifically as to how the coach contributed to their perception of trust and rapport in the relationship. The executives’ initial responses reflected the coaches’ actions that executives identified as being associated with trust building. These are summarised in Table 4.3. Pressing for deeper responses in the executive interviews yielded three attributes they associated with trust – *positive regard, safety (confidentiality), personal interest (care)* – each of which will now be discussed in turn, with the awareness that these attributes are intertwined in practice.

For just a few of the executives, their level of trust with the coach was initially significantly influenced by the recommendation of an associate they knew and trusted. However this was soon surpassed by their own experience of the coach themselves, a finding established by similar research (Meneghetti, 2008).

Table 4.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Executive Perceptions of How Coaches Contributed to Trust</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style of voice, tone, certain words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demeanour, manner, approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body language, smile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put at ease, felt comfortable, non-threatening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment (away from work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations from others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An open book between us, transparency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unconditional positive regard, a term first introduced by Carl Rogers in 1961 in relation to counselling has been identified by three studies as a vital aspect of the coaching relationship (Kleinberg, 2001; Luebbe, 2005; Mackenzie, 2007). Coaches demonstrating this characteristic convey a high level of objectivity, non-judgement, safety and acceptance (McKenna & Davis, 2009).

The majority of the executives in the current study commented on the sense of *positive regard* they experienced in the relationship. They were not at all tentative in their words, freely using upper limit statements such as “very safe”, “really relaxed”, and “never under threat”. The executives’ definiteness indicated that they valued highly the elements of unconditional respect and acceptance which allowed them to
say anything, be emotional, or fall to pieces if they wanted. This resulted in feelings of safety, comfort, and being very relaxed – no need to “measure up to anything”.

*I feel very comfortable with coach. I’ve never had any discomfort about talking about particular issues or raising anything...Fay*

*He never belittled you once, not what you’d expected, his demeanour, his comments, his attitude was the professional consultant but genuine. I tell you, his input and his interest in me I detected and valued as being really genuine...Ted*

One executive’s comment that this was “really refreshing”, supported by the tone of the others’ comments gave the impression that this experience of unconditional positive regard in a relationship in the workplace was something the executives didn’t experience elsewhere, and they treasured this opportunity. There was also the sense from their comments that the executives felt much freer about throwing themselves recklessly into self disclosure and reflection because they were deeply confident in the “never once did he judge” and “he never belittled you” behaviour of the coach.

*it just felt really comfortable. Whether or not he was working overtime to keep up with the way I was thinking, I don’t really know because of the flow and the feel and just the way that we interacted...That was really being able to put myself at ease... It was just. really made you feel relaxed...Mal*

Creating the experience of unconditional positive regard was the result of a professional and practiced approach by the coaches. One coach stated “*I strive to be totally non judgmental about what happens. It really gets down to how you establish yourself as a trusted advisor*”. Another acknowledged the importance of creating a process where the executives felt safe. This effort by the coaches appears to be a dynamic mix of skills carefully tailored to each unique engagement.

The concept of *safety* was many facetted in the executives’ responses. As well as the safety from judgment aspect associated with positive regard above, a couple of the executives had come into the coaching quite wounded from workplace conflicts and sought safety in terms of validation and nurture (see the section 3a Encouragement and Emotional Support). One executive had a very direct relational style which he was aware of. He gave the impression that this coaching felt safe
because he could cut the pretence, here was a relationship that would be both direct and authentic. Another executive conveyed the message that he felt safe being able to test new ideas, here he had permission to step outside the forms and freewheel with new approaches.

Similar studies have identified the value of safety (trust) in the coaching relationship. Executives value safety to bring up challenging issues and problems, to speak candidly, to receive coach’s feedback, and to risk trying new behaviours (Armstrong, et al., 2007; Kappenberg, 2008; Mackenzie, 2007). Correspondingly, coaches seek a safe relationship to be able to successfully give challenging feedback (Paige, 2002).

Most of the executives also commented on the aspect of confidentiality and its importance to the sense of safety in the relationship. There was no hint of concern in these comments since in all cases confidentiality was carefully observed. It did seem valuable for the coach to make this explicit.

he’s always been quite clear about the confidentiality aspect and what he’s there for and who’s he working for all sort of stuff like that...Fay

The coaches were intentional about confidentiality, and that this was directed to the executive first before anyone else.

But the confidentiality is supreme, that irrespective of who is paying for this, the client is them. That’s very important...coach

A third attribute associated with building the trusting rapport was personal interest and care. The executives commented here on the human element, the personal feel, it was not always about work; the coach was interested in them as a person. This appears closely linked with the 4 Coach’s Contribution in the previous section, the executives welcoming the coaches injecting themselves personally into their role bringing care, empathy and genuine interest (Brotman, et al., 1998; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007; Sullivan, 2006). There was no doubt this was a business relationship with a performance focus, for a short term, but the executives made it clear they valued (and expected) the coach making this a relationally rich personal experience steeped in genuine interest and personal care.
Certainly his manner, coach’s manner, he always seemed interested. I suppose as a coach, you’ve got to always pay attention to what the person’s saying, but he actually seemed genuinely interested in ... what was happening...Matt

There was no doubt from the executives’ responses that the trusting relationship with their coach was the critical factor upon which other aspects of the coaching process hinged. One researcher sees the cumulative impact of these relational elements as empowerment, a place for the executive to tap into their inner source of energy. Trust, respect, unconditional positive regard and personal support contribute to empower executives to be their own final authority and rely on their inner strengths (Gonzalez, 2004).

While the empirical studies of executive coaching have not clearly articulated how trust is developed in the coaching relationship, some practitioner articles have postulated ideas. The Rogerian concepts referred to by Luebbe (2004), Mackenzie (2007) and Kleinberg (2001) are elaborated by Bluckert (2005b) as essential conditions for the building of trust. These four qualities include unconditional regard – deep, genuine caring; congruence – act in accordance with your values; accurate empathy – understanding the other person’s subjective reality; and non-possessive warmth – friendliness that does not gush. These are proposed by Bluckert (2005b) as core competencies for development of a working relationship with clients, which when addressed may lead to greater openness and vulnerability from the client (Peltier, 2001). These skills may be demanding for coaches, and a further challenge is that for some executives, the very issue they most need to address is their capacity to form effective relationships (Bluckert, 2005b).

In response to the question, what exactly do coaches do for these core qualities to be present in the relationship, a coaching practitioner proposes the practice of reflexivity (Armstrong, 2008). This is explained as the coach’s ability to reflect on their own inner stories, role and reactions as they simultaneously listen to the executives. The coaches reflect on themselves as they respond and intervene with questions and activities supported by a stance of curiosity, hesitancy, connectedness and a beginner’s mind (Armstrong, 2008; Orenstein, 2002). The importance of this psychological-mindedness of the coach in building trusting relationships is
acknowledged in the findings of Mackenzie (2007). It is proposed as an essential but neglected component of effective coach training (Bluckert, 2005a).

**Summary of 5 Trusting Relationship**

Factors contributing to coaching effectiveness: A relationship of trust and rapport was foundational to the entire coaching process. The coaches drew on a highly developed yet intuitive skill set to form these relationships quickly and effectively so that the executives felt like they “just clicked”. The trusting relationship essential for effective coaching was built upon unconditional positive regard, feelings of safety in a confidential environment and genuine caring personal interest by the coach.

**6 Support from the Organisation**

The theme of organisational support was explored specifically with the executives because of its prominence in the literature. The responses indicated a wide range of approaches. In all cases the organisation paid for the coaching. The coaching may have been initiated by the organisation’s general development policy, or in response to an evident need, or applied for by the executive and approved. It would be fair to say therefore that the executives all had organisational support; although for some that support was very minor.

*Supervisor said to me that he was getting some reports from around the place that suggested that maybe I needed some direction to create some clarity so he suggested a coach...Brian*

*I wanted to keep it as a, definitely a personal thing, despite the fact work paid for it... it was really, well you go and do it yourself and learn from the experience I guess, which was fine by me...Karen*

A few of the executives, particularly the ones who had experienced relational issues at work, were very protective of their coaching from any perceived “interference” by the organisation.

*I think that it might be a little bit invasive if you have to report back to somebody on what your coaching program...what it was about...Kirsty*
Most of the executives were fairly comfortable with the idea of a reporting process involving their supervisor, although it really did not happen. The idea of filling out forms or reports about goal achievement was not welcomed by the executives.

There wasn’t a lot of intervention at all as we’d set it up and ... supervisor was happy enough to pay the bills. Which was ok, but from time to time we would go back to him and say, this is where we’re at at the moment, this is what we’re doing. What’s your view of how we’re progressing? Brian

For a couple of the executives, the reporting process before and after the coaching was well implemented and they saw this as benefiting the process.

There needs to be more than just an investment, there needs to be a direct engagement in the process on a regular basis... I think at the beginning have the meeting with your supervisor, and the end you have the meeting with the supervisor...Andy

The issue of organisational support seemed in these cases more to be a matter for the organisation than for the executive and the coach. The coaches were highly skilled at engaging the executives, and were confident that the executives could progress in a self regulating environment without organisational support if needed.

I don’t think the organisational support in other ways is probably that critical... They’re self driven, self funding; nothing else really matters because they’re driving it themselves...coach

The executives valued the highly personal nature of the relationship with the coach and their own sense of ownership of the program, so they generally felt other support was unnecessary for the program to progress effectively.

I think it was the stepping back and allowing that personal journey to develop itself and...I think just having that ability to be unencumbered by reporting regimes or having to do this, this and this. It was very flexible, very open to how I wanted to do it and how often I wanted to do it. There was no pressure on you must do it within this timetable. It allowed me to feel that I was driving rather than as I said before, being the passenger. That gave me more ownership of the program...Merv
Organisational support seemed to be lacking in most cases because there was no effective mechanism for this to be implemented. In the few cases where the organisation’s policy or funding required some performance feedback on the coaching process, mechanisms had been set up to achieve this. The coaches agreed that this was the desired arrangement for optimum coaching effectiveness.

*I just thought you hit on something. I think the most successful coaching relationships and effectiveness happen when you do have the meeting with the manager and the coachee herself and you get a lot of information and lots of agreements as to where you’re heading. I think that works very, very well at the beginning, and at the end in fact, the one at the end is powerfully reinforcing of what’s gone on and they all come back into alignment...coach*

The findings of related research vary concerning the importance of organisational support. Four of the literature reviews rated this as vital for effective coaching (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Joo, 2005; MacKie, 2007; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007), although it has not been rated similarly in most studies of coaching effectiveness with research participants. Seamons (2006) rated the involvement of the supervisor as critical for effective coaching, and noted that this construct was largely absent from other studies. This finding was likely to be skewed by the study sample which only included coach-executive-supervisor triads. Other studies, however, noted the importance of organisational support as significant in ensuring that the executive’s learning and development was sustained after the coaching was completed (Kappenberg, 2008; Kombarakaran, et al., 2008; Paige, 2002).

The responses in this study do not indicate that organisational support was a significant contributor to perceptions of coaching effectiveness, either for the executives or the coaches. The impact of the other factors which have contributed to these effective coaching engagements appears to have rendered the presence or absence of organisational support a minor issue.

A related matter raised by the coaches in this study concerned the stability of the organisation, which was not an issue that emerged for executives in this study. The coaches remarked that where an organisation is turbulent and unstable, coaching executives is particularly difficult since there is nothing to “fix onto”. It could be concluded then that one of the requirements for coaching effectiveness is that the
organisation is sufficiently stable to allow the executive to attempt to implement the desired outcomes of the coaching.

Summary of 6 Support from the Organisation

Factors contributing to coaching effectiveness: Support from the organisation, other than funding the coaching, appears to have little impact on the perceived effectiveness of the coaching by the executives or the coaches.

Chapter Summary

A summary of the significant factors contributing to coaching effectiveness determined by this study is presented in Table 4.4. For comparison, the factors identified by the literature review (Table 2.7) are also included in Table 4.4. The minor variations between the responses of executives and coaches which have been discussed in this chapter are not presented in Table 4.4 as significant outcomes of this study. Rather than differences in perceptions of effectiveness, these variations were ones of the perspective with which the process was viewed.

All of the factors identified by the literature review were confirmed by the current study as important contributors to coaching effectiveness to some degree. The current study has contributed to the body of knowledge in this field by establishing the importance of some additional factors, which are not necessarily new, but here have been clarified or further supported. These additional factors are: Coach skilled in management and coaching, Coach’s investment of self fully in the process, Coach adapts process early to create executive buy-in and Coach responsive to workplace issues.

The current study has also provided some indication of the relative importance of these factors for the conduct of executive coaching in a similar context. These assessments of importance have been based on the frequency and intensity of the responses by executives and coaches and therefore are subjective providing an indication only. Among the factors of high importance (marked with H in Table 4.4) Coaching Relationship - trust, safety, positive regard and personal care is the most significant. The others are Executive’s readiness for change, Coach provides just-in-
time skills, Coach creates reflective space and Coach skilled in management and coaching.

The factors deemed to be of lower importance (marked with L) are Support from the organisation and Preliminary Assessment and feedback.
Table 4.4  
Factors Contributing to the Effectiveness of Executive Coaching: Comparison of Findings of Literature Review and Current Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors identified by literature review</th>
<th>Factors determined by current study</th>
<th>Significance in current study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coaching Relationship</strong></td>
<td><strong>Coaching Relationship</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches’ ability to develop relationship</td>
<td>Coaches’ ability to develop relationship</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trust, safety and positive regard</td>
<td>• Trust, safety, positive regard and personal care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Professional attributes – honest, objective, respectful, confident, caring</td>
<td>Coaches’ contribution</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Coach skilled in management and coaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Coach’s investment of self fully in the process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coaching Process</strong></td>
<td><strong>Coaching Process</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Listens effectively and skilful questions (Communicates well)</td>
<td>• Coach adapts process early to create executive buy-in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Challenges assumptions and comfort</td>
<td>• Listens effectively and skilful questions (Communicates well)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Coach creates reflective space</td>
<td>• Challenges assumptions and comfort</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focuses on actions to gain results</td>
<td>• Coach creates reflective space</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Helps view complexity in new ways</td>
<td>• Focuses on actions to gain results</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Coach provides just-in-time skills</td>
<td>• Helps view complexity in new ways</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Executive Engagement</strong></td>
<td><strong>Executive Engagement</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Executive’s readiness for change</td>
<td>• Executive’s readiness for change</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Coaching to executive’s agenda</td>
<td>• Coaching to executive’s agenda</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support from the Organisation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Support from the Organisation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary Assessment and feedback</td>
<td>Preliminary Assessment and feedback</td>
<td>L</td>
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</table>
Chapter 5

Conclusion

The current widespread popularity of executive coaching as an executive development technique is based largely on anecdotal feedback from executives and coaches regarding its effectiveness. There has been increasing attention given to executive coaching in the popular and professional business press (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001) where it is generally viewed positively. From the business practice point of view, there is a rapidly growing body of personal testimonials and case studies that give clear indications that coaching has a positive impact on both people and organisational results (Dagley, 2006).

Academic literature has also explored the practice, although the majority of published articles present executive coaching from the practitioner perspective (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Thach, 2002) citing vignettes, case studies and own experiences as sources of evidence (Dawdy, 2004; Smither, et al., 2003). These studies have contributed to the field by differentiating executive coaching from other styles of developmental intervention, defining what takes place in coaching, and identifying the expected outcomes of effective coaching (Feldman & Lankau, 2005).

There is a small but growing body of empirical research into executive coaching, much of it seeking to support the anecdotal evidence that executive coaching produces positive outcomes (Dagley, 2006; Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Finn, 2007; Kombarakaran, et al., 2008; MacKie, 2007; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007). Some of the empirical research provides limited support for the effectiveness of executive coaching through positive self reported behaviour change (Hall, et al., 1999; Kombarakaran, et al., 2008; Paige, 2002; Stevens, 2005; Wales, 2003). A few of the studies report more detailed longitudinal investigations with data collected from observers other than the executive, and hence establish some conclusive evidence that executive coaching improves aspects of leadership performance (Finn, 2007; Smither, et al., 2003; Thach, 2002). However, most of the studies to date have been inconclusive in establishing measurable outcomes of executive coaching personally or for the organisation (Baron & Morin, 2009b; Finn, 2007).
Researchers in the field of executive coaching are faced with a range of parameters yet to be determined, that is, empirical gaps in the knowledge. These gaps include the impact of coaching on executive performance, the methodology of coaching which works best and under what conditions, the active ingredients of the process that engender an effective outcome and the conditions under which executive coaching translates into greater organisational effectiveness (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Linley, 2006; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007). The researcher’s professional background and orientation is likely to determine which of these parameters they seek to address and therefore the direction they take in their research.

Researchers seeking to establish the theoretical base for executive coaching efficacy have tended to investigate the impact of coaching on executive performance, and coaching psychologists appear more likely to frame research around the methodology of coaching which works best (Whybrow & Palmer, 2006). However, those with a business imperative to make coaching work (practitioners) are drawn to investigate the active ingredients of executive coaching that engender an effective outcome (MacKie, 2007).

It was determined that this study would be developed with the perspective of the practitioner in mind so that the research could focus more specifically on the questions facing these professionals, in particular what are the factors of the executive coaching process that contribute to its effectiveness? The viewpoint of both the coach and the executive were considered valuable in exploring this question (Joo, 2005); therefore both were included in this study. This research sought to investigate the answers to two questions:

1. What are executives’ perceptions of the factors contributing to the effectiveness of executive coaching?

2. What are coaches’ perceptions of the factors contributing to the effectiveness of executive coaching?

A critical and comprehensive review of existing literature was undertaken to determine the contribution of previous researchers in identifying these factors. In particular the review focused on studies based on empirical evidence, both published articles and unpublished theses. The findings of the review were two sets of
overlapping factors which according to executives and their coaches contributed to effective executive coaching outcomes (refer to Table 2.7). The lack of clarity about these factors in the existing studies highlighted the need for further exploratory research.

The current study was designed to explore as near as possible executive coaching in a typical form in the Australian marketplace. This study gathered data from executives from various organisations all of whom chose to undertake executive coaching as a standalone intervention, not integrated with a corporate development program. In each case, the coaching was funded by the organisation and delivered almost entirely face-to-face. The organisations included both small and large, both private and government. The coaches were external professionals, active in the marketplace, maintaining a basic consistency of coaching model offered through one provider. All of the coaching interventions were commenced with a standardised assessment and feedback process conducted by the one psychologist.

The investigation was of qualitative design, exploring the perceptions of both coaches and executives, attempting to interpret coaching effectiveness in terms of the meanings brought by the participants. The research sample included four coaches and twelve executives whom they had coached effectively using a consistent coaching model. Data was collected from coaches by focus group discussion and from executives by semi-structured interviews. The data was coded manually and analysed thoroughly to identify a set of emergent themes which represent the perceptions of this sample concerning factors that contribute to effectiveness in executive coaching.

The combination of careful design and rigorous analysis used in this research program has provided an in-depth study of executive coaching effectiveness. The results of this research contribute to the body of theoretical knowledge about executive coaching by determining with greater confidence and clarity the factors which contribute to coaching effectiveness (presented below). The discussion of these factors has drawn together the findings of a wide range of previous research confirming existing knowledge and identifying additional key factors. Furthermore the detailed practical application of these results included in this chapter will enable executive coaches to enhance their practice by addressing factors perceived to be more effective for an organisational context; and will assist organisations to better
plan and engage in coaching interventions that are effective in meeting their needs and the needs of their executives. This research has also contributed to the field by identifying areas for future investigation which will continue to build the body of knowledge about executive coaching.

To complete this program of research, this chapter summarises the findings of the investigation in relation to the two research questions posed at the outset. The summary also discusses the theoretical contribution of the current study in relation to prior relevant research findings. The implications of the findings of this study for the practice of executive coaching are also detailed. The chapter concludes by acknowledging some limitations associated with the research and discussing some directions for future investigations into executive coaching.

**Key Findings**

The analysis of twelve interviews with executives and a focus group with coaches in relation to the research questions posed in this study identified six major themes, each comprising a collection of meanings. These themes have been labelled *Executive Engagement, Preliminary Assessment and Feedback, Coaching Process, Coach’s Contribution, Trusting Relationship and Support from Organisation*. One theme in particular, Coaching Process, comprises three significant sub-themes, namely, *Encouragement and Emotional Support, Challenge and Reflection* and *Enhancing Executive Performance*.

The identified themes include a mosaic of process, behaviour, context and personal attributes, all of which are holistically integrated into the phenomenon that is executive coaching. It is only for the purpose of analysis that these themes can be considered separately. Each of these themes will be briefly discussed with reference to existing literature.

**1 Executive Engagement**

The engagement of the executive with the process was considered a very important contributor to coaching effectiveness by both the coaches and the executives. The significance of this factor was already well established by previous researchers using a variety of terms, that is, adherence (Seamons, 2006), personal
effort and drive (Ballinger, 2000), exceptional drive for mastery (Jones & Spooner, 2006), willingness to be influenced by the coach (Stevens, 2005), committed client (Bush, 2004) and client engagement (Kappenberg, 2008).

The current study revealed that in the cases of effective coaching the executives’ engagement increased by their own estimation during the course of the coaching. The coaches recognised their role in developing executive engagement and implemented strategies to achieve this. There has been little exploration by researchers of what contributes to greater executive engagement. Here the current study was able to add to that body of knowledge concerning coaching effectiveness.

The executives and the coaches acknowledged a number of factors which contributed to the executives’ engagement with the coaching process. The major aspect of engagement identified by executives was *timeliness of the coaching* which has been recognised by one other researcher (Paige, 2002). The executives were aware that the influence of timeliness may not be apparent at the early stages of the process.

Other factors contributing to engagement were *recommendation by an associate*, and *willingness to change*, both of which were identified by Sztucinski (2001) as factors influencing the choice to undertake coaching, but not related to engagement.

This study contributes to the literature in this domain by identifying some factors which contribute to greater executive engagement and some approaches coaches can use to develop this.

### 2 Preliminary Assessment and Feedback

The preliminary assessment and feedback process is typical of many coaching programs (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; McGovern, et al., 2001; Thach, 2002; Wasylyshyn, et al., 2006) and considered a critical part of the executive coaching process by many scholars, particularly those with a psychology background (Judge & Cowell, 1997; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Kiel, et al., 1996; Saporito, 1996; Tobias, 1996). However, the existing studies do not discuss the contribution of this process to coaching effectiveness.
The results of the current study indicate that the assessment and feedback process was seen by the coaches and executives as a valuable step in an effective coaching relationship, although not critical to its success. The coaches utilised the outcomes of the assessment process as a platform to commence identifying issues and targets of high importance to the executive. They saw the assessment and feedback as a necessary mechanism or platform for creating the essential living process of creative discovery and development with the executive.

The large majority of positive responses from executives concerning the assessment and feedback process indicated that this was a valuable eye-opening time for them in preparation for the coaching phase. Some executives valued the clear framework provided by the feedback and defined goals for their coaching and thrived under this arrangement. Others, however, seemed entirely satisfied for their coaching direction to have little reference to the feedback data and no explicit goal for the process.

The greater importance placed on the subsequent shared creative discovery process rather than on the assessment and feedback process itself was evident. The concurring perspectives of both coaches and executives on this point provide a valuable contribution of the current study. It is the coach’s skill at utilising the assessment and feedback as the foundation for a living discovery process that is the contributor to effective coaching.

3 Coaching Process

The results of the study revealed three related sub-themes comprising the coaching process utilised by the coaches to achieve effective coaching. These themes 3a Encouragement and Emotional Support, 3b Challenge and Reflection and 3c Enhancing Executive Performance are discussed in subsequent section. A significant factor which also emerged regarding coaching process was the impact on that process of the way the coaching goal or objective was defined. This will be discussed first.

Much of the relevant literature is in agreement that effective coaching requires defined goals based on the assessment and feedback report (Hall, et al., 1999; Judge & Cowell, 1997; Kappenberg, 2008; Paige, 2002; Smither, et al., 2003) or distinct expectations regarding results (Thach, 2002). However, the findings of this study
agree with those of Sztucinski (2001) who observed that the literature placed more emphasis on the need for specific goals than the executives actually experienced. Rather than being rigidly defined, the goals often needed to be adjusted during the coaching without losing sight of the larger developmental picture (McCleland, 2005; Meneghetti, 2008).

In the current study which investigated standalone coaching engagements with a high sense of executive ownership, more than half of the executives interviewed were clear that a defined objective for the coaching relationship was not required and in some cases not desired. Of the twelve executives, only two clearly spoke of the value they placed on defined objectives. Similarly there was a sense from the coaches that the objective of the coaching process was more about growing through the journey than arriving at a pre-determined outcome. The objective would emerge during the journey. In a related study of coaches’ perspectives, this was seen as ‘walking together in collaboration until there is readiness to fly’ (Gonzalez, 2004, p. 108).

The current study revealed that in the majority of cases the expectations of both coach and executive were to create an ‘executive owned’ journey of discovery, development and achievement with targets and measures determined in conjunction with the executive and in response to their challenges, during the course of the journey. While contrary to much of the literature, this confirms the findings of a few unpublished theses (McCleland, 2005; Meneghetti, 2008; Sztucinski, 2001) and one recently published article (De Meuse, et al., 2009). It suggests that rather than rigidly defining objectives according to organisational practice, the objective of the coaching intervention and the method of measuring progress toward the objective should be determined according to the context, the executive preference and the executive’s expanding capacity to formulate their desired destination.

3a Encouragement and Emotional Support

The findings of the current study indicate the value not only of the executives gaining emotional support through the coaching but also becoming connected emotionally with process itself. Five pattern codes which emerged from the responses are: developing the executive’s emotional connection with the process, the positive
impact of early goal achievement, how the executive experienced encouragement and validation, and the impact of coach’s self disclosure.

Both the executives and the coaches identified the importance of the early emotional connection for coaching to be effective, that is, the sense that the executive feels “this is right” and has embraced the process. The intentional, almost intuitive adaptation of the process by the coach through astute listening and observation was acknowledged by the coaches as an essential ingredient without which the coaching process could flounder. The adaption of the coaching process at the early stages to develop greater executive emotional connection is not explored in other empirical studies, although it does receive a mention (McCleland, 2005; Meneghetti, 2008).

At the early stages of the coaching the executives indicated that their emotional connection with the process was based on early goal achievement or as some have termed “early wins” (Berman & Bradt, 2006). To the executives an “early win” was taking a step that worked very well, discovering a way to solve the pressing problem, or an obvious sense of personal benefit. This aspect also receives little coverage in relevant literature, one other researcher has identified a major theme as “find out how to add value quickly” (Jones & Spooner, 2006) which agrees with the findings of this current study. The executives identified these early wins as key to their growing confidence and trust in the coach, and therefore effective outcomes of the coaching.

The identification of these concurrent processes (emotional connection and early goal achievement) to develop the executive’s emotional connection with the coaching process is a unique and valuable contribution of the current study to the body of knowledge regarding coaching effectiveness.

The current study also identified the positive contribution of coaching to the executive’s emotional state through encouragement and validation. This was a identified by a minority of executives which agrees with existing research where only a few studies have identified this as a significant factor (Armstrong, et al., 2007; Ballinger, 2000; Sztucinski, 2001). One other unique finding of the current study was the emotional impact some executives placed on appropriate self disclosure by the coach.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

3b Challenge and Reflection

Challenge and reflection were seen by executives as some of the most vital parts of the coaching process. Coaches’ references to these were minimal, probably because these are assumed to be coaching foundations. Particular factors contributing to coaching effectiveness were identified as coaches’ expert communication skills, safe and relentless challenge, creating a reflective space, seeing complexity in new ways and the availability of an exclusive place to talk.

There was recognition from virtually all of the executives of the essential role challenge played in the effectiveness of the coaching process. This agrees with the existing literature which discusses the importance of the coach bringing challenge continually that will stretch the executives (Jones & Spooner, 2006) out of their comfort zone (Paige, 2002). It is noted that the executives value candour, not just support (Luebbe, 2005) and that they were aware this can be both hard work and painful (Sztucinski, 2001). Additional aspects of challenge specifically identified by the current study include the executives’ unsolicited commitment to honesty and executives taking personal responsibility for their situation.

The frequency and nature of executive responses indicated that they valued highly the space to reflect deeply on self, issue and role as well as to use the coach as a sounding board to test new ideas. This aspect of coaching providing time out from the business grind and opportunity for deeper learning has been well documented by other researchers (Gonzalez, 2004; Mackenzie, 2007; Seamons, 2006).

A further finding built on reflective space was the executives’ willingness to view the complexities and challenges of their role in new ways, to open their mind up to think and act from a fresh perspective. This expands the executive’s view to be more robust and encompassing with a greater capacity for making sense of complex ambiguous affairs (Blackman, 2006; Stevens, 2005).

The coaches’ communication skills in creating the reflective space and exploring the broader perspective were recognised as vital by the executives, and have been well documented in other studies (Berman & Bradt, 2006; Gegner, 1997; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007). These included listening, attentiveness, skilful questioning, paraphrasing and refraining from giving the solution.
The executives identified two other factors that contributed positively to this space – *availability* and *exclusivity*. Practically the executives were noticeably buoyed by the coaches making themselves available anytime, a result which has been recognised by two other studies also (Hall, et al., 1999; Sztucinski, 2001).

The reflective space was also enhanced by the sense that the executives had an *exclusive place to talk*. They appreciated someone being there, someone with whom they could be themselves and had permission to talk about anything, a finding identified by one other researcher (Sztucinski, 2001). The intensity of the executives’ positive emotion when discussing *exclusive place to talk* in the current study suggests this is worthy of further exploration.

The current study confirms the general agreement among researchers concerning the significance of challenge and creating reflective space as key factors in coaching effectiveness. It further contributes to the available knowledge by highlighting the value executives placed on as yet little explored aspects of coach availability and the sense of exclusivity.

**3c Enhancing Executive Performance**

The executives identified a number of factors related to the shaping of their professional performance by the coaching process. These were the significance of their sense of *ownership of the agenda*, the responsiveness of the coach to address *workplace issues* and the coach’s focus on *actions to achieve results*. The coach’s ability to provide *appropriate skills, models or suggestions* that were immediately applicable was highly valued by the executives.

Some executives indicated the importance they placed on the coach focusing on the *executive’s success* and the *executive’s ownership of the agenda* rather than a set organisational plan. This introduced a delicate balancing arrangement for the coach, particularly in standalone coaching arrangements. This balance is little discussed in other studies, many of which relate to organisational coaching programs where the priority focus is by definition on both prescribed organisational goals as well as the executive’s agenda (Stern, 2004; Stevens, 2005). The highlighting of this point by the current study suggests that further research into this importance of executive ownership of the agenda would be valuable.
The main factor contributing to effective coaching process identified by the executives was the coaches providing them with *appropriate skills*, models or advice that were immediately useful and relevant to their situation. The executives were impressed by simple, memorable, clear models, diagrams or suggestions that clarified their situation and their way to move forward. From their perspective the coaches were aware of their role in providing resources, and also of the need to balance providing suggestions with facilitating executive discovery. The coach’s resourcefulness in providing the right idea/model/pointer at the appropriate time can help the executive to open their eyes in another way, a factor noted by most researchers in this field (Ballinger, 2000; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007; Hall, et al., 1999; Luebbe, 2005; Meneghetti, 2008).

Executives in the current study also valued the practical nature of the coaching by identifying the importance of the coaches’ *responsiveness to workplace issues* thereby helping them to solve “now” problems and also a focus on *actions that would achieve results*. This latter aspect has been identified by other researchers (Jones & Spooner, 2006; Joo, 2005; Thach, 2002).

The current study confirms the executives’ view that effective coaching includes being resourced with appropriate skills models and suggestions. It further contributes to the body of knowledge regarding coaching effectiveness by highlighting the significance of executive ownership of the agenda and attention to current workplace issues. These closely related factors could be the subject of further research.

**4 Coach’s Contribution**

The theme *Coach’s Contribution* emerged from the executives’ responses that identified how the coach personally contributed to the effectiveness of their coaching experience. Under this theme has been included the coach’s professional attributes and actions, that is, the impact of the coach themselves. This theme did not arise in the coaches’ focus group; understandably the coaches did not promote their own personal characteristics as major contributors to coaching effectiveness.

Some studies have identified the importance of the coaches’ personal character qualities – honest, genuine and ethical (Blackman, 2006; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007;
An appreciable number of executives’ comments indicated that they valued what they saw as the coach’s background and experience in management. It seems executives value not just business experience, but a coach who is grounded in their business reality and the challenges they face, an in-depth feel for their lives (Meneghetti, 2008; Stevens, 2005). This requires understanding of business, political astuteness, organisational systems and the effect of cultural environments on the executive (Berman & Bradt, 2006; Hall, et al., 1999; Luebbe, 2005). Furthermore expert coaches are expected to bring disparate ideas, knowledge and insight to bear on problems, connecting previously unrelated notions in ways that yield novel solutions (Berman & Bradt, 2006) (Brotman, et al., 1998). This coaching expertise as documented by other researchers was reported in the current study.

The executives also commented on the coach’s experience and skill in their practice of coaching. However, the sense from the executives was not that they particularly valued the technique the coach was demonstrating, it was that they saw this as an example of the coach bringing their whole self to the coaching. The coach utilising their skills and experience in management and in coaching created important moments of personal insight and perspective for the executives, which they recalled with affection. These responses from executives provide clear examples of the coaches using self as a tool (Bush, 2004). A study of coaches’ perspectives by Gonzalez (2004) saw this as authenticity that is, coaches working from their core, using all of self, following a calling which was entirely consistent with their person.

The current study contributed some further insights regarding using self as a tool, a concept which receives little coverage in empirical studies other than Gonzalez (2004). The nature and intensity of their positive comments from executives in the current study was notable, with the majority of the executives engaging in superlatives to describe their experience of the coaching and the coach himself. In reviewing these numerous comments, there was a sense emerging that the coaching experience and the coach personally became interchangeable in the executives’ minds, that is, this peak experience came to be represented by the person.
themselves. This contributes to the sense that the executives’ experience of the coach themselves is an important factor in coaching effectiveness.

5 Trusting Relationship

The findings of the current study agree with other research which places the coaching relationship as the critical factor for coaching effectiveness (Bush, 2004; Kappenberg, 2008; Luebbe, 2005; Sztucinski, 2001). The current study adds to the knowledge of how the relationship was developed, trust as the primary pillar, and what contributed to the healthy trusting relationship.

The coaches acknowledged that well developed relationship building skills were assumed as a foundation for their role, yet they struggled to define clearly what they did to build high quality relationships. The executives’ comments that the coaching relationship seemed “like we just clicked”, and they felt “we were the sort of people who would get on”, confirmed that the coaches drew on their highly developed yet intuitive skill set to form these relationships quickly and effectively.

Trust and rapport were considered essential aspects of the coaching relationship by the executives; a majority of them commented they could not have proceeded without this. How trust is established in the coaching relationship is not clearly articulated in empirical studies available to date. Characteristics associated with trust in these studies are credibility, respect, unconditional care, support, genuineness, empathy and confidentiality (Bush, 2004; Kappenberg, 2008; Luebbe, 2005; Mackenzie, 2007; Sztucinski, 2001). These constructs are seen in Rogers’ person-centred therapy and Mezirow’s transformational learning (Kleinberg, 2001).

In the current study the executives were questioned specifically as to how the coach contributed to their perception of trust and rapport in the relationship. Pressing deeper than the initial responses in the executive interviews yielded three attributes they associated with trust – positive regard, safety (confidentiality), personal interest (care) - with the awareness that these attributes are intertwined in practice.

The majority of the executives in the current study commented on the sense of positive regard they experienced in the relationship. They were not at all tentative in their words, freely using upper limit statements such as “very safe”, “really relaxed”, and “never under threat”. Unconditional positive regard, a term first introduced by
Carl Rogers in 1961 in relation to counselling has been identified by three studies as a vital aspect of the coaching relationship (Kleinberg, 2001; Luebbe, 2005; Mackenzie, 2007). Coaches demonstrating this characteristic convey a high level of objectivity, non-judgement, safety and acceptance.

The concept of safety was many facetted in the executives’ responses, including aspects of confidentiality, validity, and freedom of expression. Similar studies have identified the value of safety (trust) in the coaching relationship. Executives value safety to bring up challenging issues and problems, to speak candidly, to receive coach’s feedback, and to risk trying new behaviours (Armstrong, et al., 2007; Kappenberg, 2008; Mackenzie, 2007).

A third attribute associated with building the trusting rapport was personal interest and care. This appears closely linked with the 4 Coach’s Contribution in the previous section, the executives welcoming the coaches injecting themselves personally into their role bringing care, empathy and genuine interest (Brotman, et al., 1998; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007; Sullivan, 2006).

The current study contributes to the existing knowledge of executive coaching by investigating in some depth how trust is established in a coaching relationship, identifying both contributing behaviours of the coach and inner experiences of the executive. Identifying in some detail the interplay of trust, respect, unconditional positive regard, safety and personal support provides much needed clarity concerning the development of effective coaching relationships which empower executives to tap into their inner source of energy (Gonzalez, 2004). This is significant in assisting coaches with the basis for skills in development of trusting relationships - the critical factor upon which other aspects of the coaching process hinge.

6 Support from the Organisation

The theme of organisational support was explored specifically with executives and coaches and the responses indicated a wide range of approaches. In all cases the organisation paid for the coaching. The coaching may have been initiated by the organisation’s leadership development policy, or in response to an evident need, or applied for by the executive and approved. It would be fair to say therefore that the
executives all had organisational support; although for some that support was very minor.

The coaches were highly skilled at engaging the executives, and were confident that the executives could progress in a self regulating environment without organisational support if needed. The executives valued the highly personal nature of the relationship with the coach and their own sense of ownership of the program, so they generally felt other support was unnecessary for the program to progress effectively.

Organisational support seemed in most cases more to be a matter for the organisation than for the executive and the coach – the organisation had no mechanism to effectively support the executive being coached.

The findings of related research vary concerning the significance of organisational support for coaching effectiveness. Four of the literature reviews rated this as vital for effective coaching (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Joo, 2005; MacKie, 2007; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007), although it does not appear as a significant factor in the studies of coaching effectiveness with research participants. Some studies, however, noted the importance of organisational support as significant in ensuring that the executive’s learning and development was sustained after the coaching was completed (Kappenberg, 2008; Kombarakaran, et al., 2008; Paige, 2002).

The contribution of this study is to clarify the role of organisational support as a minor contributor to perceptions of coaching effectiveness, both for the executives and for the coaches. The impact of the other factors which have contributed to these effective coaching engagements appears to have rendered the presence or absence of organisational support a minor issue.

**Summary of Findings**

All of the factors identified by the literature review were confirmed by the current study as important contributors to coaching effectiveness. The current study has contributed to the body of knowledge in this field by establishing the importance of some additional factors, which are not necessarily new, but here have been clarified or further supported. These additional factors as depicted in Table 4.4 are: *Coach skilled in management and coaching, Coach’s investment of self fully in the*
process, Coach adapts process early to create executive buy-in, and Coach responsive to workplace issues.

Furthermore, the current study has contributed a richer understanding of some of the factors of coaching effectiveness already established by previous research. The factors leading to greater Executive Engagement have been identified as timeliness of the coaching, recommendation by an associate and willingness to change. The contribution of Preliminary Assessment and Feedback to coaching effectiveness has been shown to depend on the coach’s skill in interpreting the feedback and utilising this to create a living process of creative discovery. Creating Reflection for executives may be enhanced by coach availability and a sense of an exclusive place to talk. The development of Trusting Relationship, the critical factor for coaching effectiveness, may be enhanced by the coach genuinely demonstrating positive regard and personal care, and creating an environment of safety.

The current study has also provided some indication of the relative importance of the factors which contribute to coaching effectiveness in a similar context. Among the factors of high importance Coaching Relationship - trust, safety, positive regard and personal care is the most significant. The others are Executive Engagement, Coach provides just-in-time skills, Coach creates reflective space and Coach skilled in management and coaching. The factors deemed to be of lower importance are Support from organisation and Assessment and feedback.

**Practical Application**

This study has been developed with the perspective of the practitioner in mind, that is, those with the business imperative to design and implement effective coaching programs, be they managers, HR professionals or executive coaches themselves. The practical application of the findings will be of particular interest to these practitioners providing additional insights for the design of coaching programs and development of executive coaches. The practical application is presented under the thematic headings to maintain consistency with the rest of the study, however, it is recognised that all of these factors are inter-dependent and concurrent.
1 Executive Engagement

Executive commitment to behavioural change is an important factor contributing to an effective coaching process (Kombarakaran, et al., 2008; McGovern, et al., 2001; Turner, 2006). This suggests that in many instances coaching interventions be preceded by some form of systematic approach to evaluating candidate readiness (Joo, 2005; Kilburg, 2001) and highlighting steps toward greater engagement. This evaluation may be a brief discussion or a more elaborate process; it may be conducted by the coaching program manager, the executive’s supervisor, the coach or the preliminary assessment psychologist depending on the context.

The evaluation should seek to establish the executive’s own choice for undertaking the coaching and their reasons for doing so (motivation), in order to highlight their need to achieve and openness to learning (McKenna & Davis, 2009). Where appropriate, positive recommendations from others about coaching should be indentified or sought by the executive. Furthermore the evaluation should help the executive to explore the range of factors that make coaching right for them now. Recognition of this timeliness should enhance the executive’s commitment to embrace radical change that may be necessary for the coaching to be effective. The evaluation may also seek to establish the organisation’s preparedness to recognise the executive’s efforts to grow (Joo, 2005).

Such an evaluation process could assist organisations and executives in preparing well for executive coaching and recognising the commitment necessary to make it effective. From the coaches’ perspective, coaches should recognise that developing greater executive engagement is part of their core business and develop skills to effectively achieve this at the early stages of the coaching engagement.

2 Preliminary Assessment and Feedback

In the context of this study, preliminary assessment and feedback is recognised as a valuable contributor to an effective coaching process, however, it is regarded with a healthy tension. Its value depends on how it is integrated by the coach into a living process for creative discovery. It also depends on the specific preferences of the executive. The message for coaches and coaching program managers is that
emphasis should be placed on the coach’s skill in integrating the assessment data with the executive’s understanding and blending this with the executive’s preference for either a more structured or more dynamic approach to goal achievement.

The findings of this study are based on a stand-alone executive coaching implementation. Where executive coaching is integrated with a structured executive development program with defined organisational outcomes, the significance attached to the assessment and feedback process would be expected to be greater.

3 Coaching Process

It appears there are benefits for all stakeholders in making transparent the process for determining goals and measuring progress. In this context, organisations may have specific requirements which need to be met, and executives may have particular style preferences which can be respected. Coaches should develop the ability to work with clearly defined processes where required, and also the courage and responsiveness to facilitate a more expansive dynamic learning journey where this is the preference of the executive. Executives, and their supervisors where appropriate, should be included in the process of goal definition throughout the coaching duration. In particular, specific measures of progress should be formulated so that achievement can be celebrated personally and stated organisationally.

3a Encouragement and Emotional Support

Effective coaching is far more than a cognitive process relying solely on rational thought processes and behaviour – it does evoke considerable emotion and that is an integral part of the experience (Sztucinski, 2001). Coaches can skilfully apply their expertise to surface and engage these emotions in the executive with the goal of developing greater attachment to the process and enhanced personal well being for the executive.

In the early stages, coaches should be aware of adapting their approach to discover significant meaning for the executive and a pathway to some rapid goal achievement in the workplace. The resultant emotions of “this is right for me” and/or “this really works” are significant contributors to the executive’s growing confidence and trust.
Coaches should also develop sensitivity to the executive’s emotional states, recognising the significant role coaches may have in enhancing these states. Depending on their context executives may place a high value on encouragement, enhanced self belief, or validation of their thinking and actions. Some executives are deeply affected in a positive manner by the coach’s skilful self disclosure of their own humanness when appropriate.

3b Challenge and Reflection

This study confirms that as well as the essential foundation of support and encouragement, effective coaching must include a strong element of challenge for the executives. Coaches should provide continual and specific challenge of the executive’s attitudes and actions that will stimulate executive ownership of their issues rather than treating these as the responsibility of others. A further element of challenge is also healthy for executives, that is, an implicit challenge conveyed by the coach to be entirely open and honest holding nothing back. The findings of this study and related studies suggest that coaches should develop the skills to challenge effectively and relentlessly, and that executives should be prepared for confrontation with self that can be painful.

Space for the executive to reflect deeply is essential to facilitate learning in the solution focused approach to coaching. Executives rarely enter this space on their own, it is a result of a coach utilising expert communication skills and an executive willing to be fully present. Coaches persistently facilitating deep reflection allow the executive to explore the iterations of double-loop and triple-loop learning.

An outcome of effective reflection is the ability to see complexity in new ways and to see self more objectively. Coaches should practice not only seeking solutions for executive’s issues, but building executive’s capacity to make sense of complex and ambiguous affairs and their relationship to the world. Executives thus equipped are better able to make robust decisions and commit to pathways of transformation of self (Armstrong, et al., 2007; Gonzalez, 2004; Mackenzie, 2007).

Furthermore coaches are challenged to develop an awareness of the executive’s view of the coaching relationship as an exclusive place to talk. Coaches creating safety and offering availability can provide a valued place of permission and self-
belief for executives to dialogue about many matters as a means of locating
themselves more securely in the midst of overwhelming performance demands.

**3c Enhancing Executive Performance**

Improved executive performance is the desired outcome of executive coaching,
so any measure of performance must account for the multi-dimensional nature of
executive achievement. This may include some or all of the aspects of personal
growth such as self awareness or self regard, ability to view complex and ambiguous
affairs differently, changed behaviour in the workplace, and improved performance
of team members.

A foundation of effective executive coaching is the centrality of the executive
agenda – the executive owns where the process is going. Coaches must be perceived
to be “own agenda free” since some executives may guard this ownership of the
agenda carefully, particularly in standalone executive coaching where the executive
may view the organisation as an opponent. Coaches have the delicate role of
authentically placing executive success as priority, while extending the executive to
achieve both personal and organisational outcomes that bring the best result for all
stakeholders.

Executives expect the coach to embrace both developmental and current
workplace challenges that arise. Coaches should develop skills in successfully
dealing with current issues while simultaneously extracting learning toward the
agreed development agenda.

Executives enthusiastically welcome just-in-time skills and knowledge that
simplifies current organisational issues. This may be in the form of models, diagrams
or ideas that may be quickly remembered and applied. Coaches’ effectiveness will
benefit from ready access to a wide range of such resources, and the wisdom of how
to utilise them sparingly and appropriately to achieve optimum learning by the
executive.

Research findings do not suggest that coaches monitoring executive follow-
through of actions contributes significantly to behaviour change in executives.
Perhaps this indicates that executives should be empowered for this process also.
4 Coach’s Contribution

Effective coaching of executives requires coaches who are well grounded in the business realities of the executive’s role and the challenges they face. Business experience itself is not the determining factor. Coaches are expected to combine business insight, political astuteness, and understanding of organisational culture and systems with expert coaching skills. This suggests that coaches develop capabilities for systems thinking and critical analysis to be able to quickly contextualise situations and connect unrelated notions to yield novel perspectives.

Coaches are challenged to evaluate to what extent they bring their whole self to coaching engagements. Executives appreciate the experience of a coach who is fully present, highly skilled and aware, and authentically fulfilling a personal calling that is working from the core of their being. This authentic use of self as a tool in coaching conveys value to executives, invites engagement and inspires action in an infectious way.

5 Trusting Relationship

The quality of the coaching relationship is the critical factor in coaching effectiveness for many executives. The ability to form trusting relationships quickly with a wide range of executive styles is essential for effective coaches. Coaches intentionally stepping into the executive’s frame of reference, gauging preferences, and behaving in a manner to connect well can early establish a likeability link with the executive (Natale & Diamante, 2005).

In the initial stages of the relationship particularly, the executive will be seeking visual, verbal and sensory indicators of the development of a place of deep trust where they will be comfortable being open and vulnerable. Executives’ experience of trust includes the characteristics of unconditional positive regard, safety, confidentiality, and genuine personal care. The descriptors executives may associate with these experiences could be safe, relaxed, no threat, no judgement, and comfortable, without compromising the sense of relentless challenge identified earlier. The challenge for coaches to prioritise development of these relational skills is significant. Coaches should reflect on and enhance their personal capabilities to intuitively create these experiences of deep trust and rapport for executives.
While not clearly established by research, it is proposed by some scholars that the core competencies for creating trust in coaching relationships are identical to those established by Rogers for therapeutic relationships (Kleinberg, 2001; Luebbe, 2005; Mackenzie, 2007). These competencies are built on the coach’s psychological-mindedness, their ability to reflect on their own inner stories, role and reactions as they simultaneously listen to the executives. This is proposed as a key component of effective coach training (Armstrong, 2008; Bluckert, 2005a).

6 Support from the Organisation

Organisational support for executive coaching is seen as positive in all situations, where that support includes the organisation funding the coaching, remaining open to the changes the executive may adopt and accepting coaching as a viable executive development process. In standalone coaching for individual executives, this may be the extent of involvement by the organisation that is required or desired by the executive. The engagement of the executive with the coach can provide sufficient support in these cases to drive effective outcomes, though it will be prudent for the coach to account for helping and hindering forces in the executive’s organisation (McKenna & Davis, 2009).

Often, however executives are open to involvement by their supervisor in collaboratively shaping goals and reviewing progress. This may occur in some combination of pre-, mid- and post-coaching interaction as mutually determined. Organisations seeking to enhance the effectiveness of executive coaching programs should seek to establish a defined mechanism for appropriate supervisor involvement and support of executive coaching outcomes since lack of process is often the reason this does not occur.

Limitations

Theoretically and practically this research program has provided valuable contributions to the field of executive coaching. There are, however, some limitations which must be considered. Where possible these have been addressed to minimise their effects on the outcomes.
The first limitation to be considered is sample size. This qualitative enquiry was designed to focus in depth on a relatively small sample selected purposefully (Patton, 2002). The sample of four coaches and twelve executives was adequate for this task given the constraints of time and resources. However, due to the sample size and the specific context defined by that sample, the findings of this study are not readily generalisable to all executive coaching programs.

The limitation posed by sampling technique has also been identified. The problem of gaining access to a suitable population of coaches and executives was solved by the alliance with the industry partner AIM. However, this also limited the sample of coaches to those available through AIM (four) and the population of executives recently coached by these coaches to seventeen. While the principle of maximum variation sampling was applied (Patton, 2002), it was clear that there were no executives available from some roles (for example sales) or rapidly changing industries (for example technology).

The study will be limited by the conceptual framework brought by the researcher (often without full awareness) to the literature review and subsequently to the data collection methods and analysis (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The study incorporates a retrospective design based on self report data, both of which may limit the validity of the findings. The executives reporting on the experience of executive coaching may be limited by their memory (De Meuse, et al., 2009). Executives may have responded to the interviews in ways that they deemed socially or professionally desirable, or perhaps consistent with the positive aspects they thought the research was trying to uncover (Kilburg, 1996). To address these factors, the researcher probed deeper than initial responses provided to the prepared questions.

Factors other than the coaching intervention may have affected the executives’ perception of the coaching effectiveness, for example, organisational expectations or peer experiences. This possibility was addressed with the executive in the interview.

The researcher’s personal closeness to the situation could result in unconsciously framing questions and reporting findings in a way that confirm
personally held ideas. In order to reduce bias during the interviews, the researcher
retained an awareness of his frame of reference through regular liaison with his
supervisor, and maintained an audit of adherence to objective criteria (see Appendix
L). The tendency for bias during coding was addressed by engaging a subject matter
expert to conduct code checking and comparison of results.

Although there were some limitations in this program of research there is no
evidence that they have seriously compromised the findings. The results of this
investigation do provide a robust contribution to the study of executive coaching
effectiveness.

Future Research

This study has deepened the understanding of executive coaching, building
upon earlier studies of coaching effectiveness (Bush, 2004; Mackenzie, 2007; Olsen,
2005; Paige, 2002; Stevens, 2005; Sztucinski, 2001). With the perspectives of
coaches and executives combined, there is now greater confidence in clearly defining
the key attributes of effective executive coaching. This suggests a number of options
for further investigations to explore this developing field.

Research could be undertaken into how to quantify coaching effectiveness. In
the current study the instances of effective coaching were determined by the positive
reports of both coach and executive without reference to organisational criteria such
as return on investment (ROI). Further research could investigate criteria for
evaluation of coaching effectiveness – what significance should be given to
participant positive reports, to achievement of agreed objectives, and to ROI? (De
Meuse, et al., 2009).

Some of the findings of the current study invite further investigation; three
topics in particular have been identified here. First, preliminary assessment and
feedback is implemented as a standard procedure in many coaching designs, often at
considerable cost to the client. The current study suggests that the predominant value
of the assessment and feedback process is as a platform for the coach to launch a
process of creative discovery. Studies could be undertaken of similar coaching
interventions some with and some without preliminary assessment and feedback to
investigate whether preliminary assessment and feedback is essential to launch the process of creative discovery.

Second, the current study highlighted the healthy tension existing between the expectation of some executives and organisation for defined coaching objectives and progress measures, and the preference of other executives for a less defined journey of discovery with the outcome shaped by the executives developing awareness of the desired destination. Further investigation could explore the relative merits of executive coaching with defined objectives and that with a developmental stance. In addition, the means of effectively shaping developmental outcomes could be investigated, including the role of the executive’s sense of ownership of the agenda and the ever present opportunity to focus the coaching on current workplace issues.

Third, the current study also revealed the importance of the coach intentionally developing the executive’s emotional connection with the process in the early stages and securing early goal achievement. This intuitive adaption by the coach has been discussed in some practice articles (Natale & Diamante, 2005; Orenstein, 2002) but not investigated in empirical studies. Perhaps this process is related to the coach’s use of self as a tool which was another finding of interest in the current study. Both of these processes have a strong emotional impact on the executive and warrant further investigation to more fully determine how coaches can develop and apply these skills.

The coaching relationship as the most significant factor contributing to coaching effectiveness invites further investigation from a variety of perspectives. Existing empirical studies have not articulated how trust is developed in the coaching relationship. An extensive body of research has established the efficacy of the Rogerian concepts of building trust in therapeutic relationships (Bluckert, 2005a; Peltier, 2001) however, this needs to be tested empirically in coaching applications. Further study is required into the value of training coaches in reflexivity or psychological-mindedness to develop greater competence in building trusting coaching relationships (Armstrong, et al., 2007; Bluckert, 2005b; Mackenzie, 2007; Orenstein, 2002).

An aspect of particular interest regarding the coaching relationship is the interpersonal fit between the executive and the coach. At present little is known
about the characteristics that should be taken into account in pairing a coach and an executive and what impact this has on the outcome of the coaching engagement (Baron & Morin, 2009a; Joo, 2005). The current study was not able to explore the impact of difference in coach characteristics, for example, gender and background, and how these may affect the coaching outcomes (Smither, et al., 2003). Further study is needed to determine whether the pairing of the coach and executive is an issue that significantly influences outcomes, or whether this is rendered insignificant by a highly skilled coach working with an actively engaged executive.

Since the current study has more confidently identified and defined the factors contributing to coaching effectiveness, an evaluation tool may be developed based on these factors. A quantitative study based on this instrument could gather the responses of a much larger sample of coaches and executives from a variety of contexts to provide further detail on the significance and interdependence of these factors. Further investigation could seek to define more consistently relevant dimensions, appropriate scaling, and ideas for addressing rater bias issues (De Meuse, et al., 2009).

A further direction to pursue in future research is the identification of coaching processes that result in negative outcomes. Much could be learned from an exploration of executive coaching with clients who were disappointed about their coaching experience due to the coach themselves, the shortcomings in the process, or the perceives negative outcomes for their role (Bush, 2004; Feldman & Lankau, 2005).

**Conclusion**

Executive coaching has achieved widespread acceptance as a valued executive development technique. Recent academic research has confirmed the anecdotal evidence of the efficacy of executive coaching, yet there has remained lack of certainty in confidently defining the factors that contribute to executive coaching effectiveness. Rigorous research into this rapidly expanding field as demanded by stakeholders has, to some extent, been answered by this investigation.
References


Ballinger, M. S. (2000). *Participant self-perceptions about the causes of behavior change from a program of executive coaching*. Unpublished 9995508, Capella University, Minnesota, United States.


Appendices

Appendix A
Summary of Published Empirical Articles

Table A1
Summary of Published Studies Based on Empirical Evidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author and Date</th>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Location and Context</th>
<th>Essence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olivero, Bane,</td>
<td>Public Personnel Management</td>
<td>USA, coaching (by manager) of 31 managers in a health agency</td>
<td>Compared training plus coaching group with training only group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kopelman, 1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judge, Cowell,</td>
<td>Business Horizons</td>
<td>USA, survey of 60 Executive Coaches</td>
<td>Identified some common and effective aspects of EC</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hall, Otazo,</td>
<td>Organizational Dynamics</td>
<td>USA, interviews with 75 executives and 15 executive coaches</td>
<td>Investigated practice, effectiveness, and future development of EC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hollenbeck, 1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thach, 2002</td>
<td>Leadership and Organisation</td>
<td>USA, 360 degree feedback and coaching of 281 executives in a telecommunications firm</td>
<td>EC increases leadership effectiveness – measured by pre and post 360 degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Journal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smither et al, 2003</td>
<td>Personnel Psychology</td>
<td>USA, 360 degree feedback and coaching of 404 managers in a global corporation</td>
<td>EC marginally improved 360 degree ratings, although inconclusive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luthans, Peterson,</td>
<td>Human Resource Management</td>
<td>USA, 360 degree feedback and coaching of 20 managers in manufacturing company</td>
<td>360 degree feedback with EC raised subsequent ratings by reports and possibly performance outcomes</td>
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<td>2003</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stevens, 2005</td>
<td>Consulting Psychology Journal:</td>
<td>USA, Informal telephone interviews of 7 CEO’s from four business sectors</td>
<td>CEO’s responses revealed importance of coaching relationship and executive readiness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practice and Research</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wasylyshn, Gronsky,</td>
<td>Consulting Psychology Journal:</td>
<td>USA, Survey of 33 execs and some supervisors (17) following development program in one organisation</td>
<td>Indicates value of the specific developmental approach which includes coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haas, 2006</td>
<td>Practice and Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kombarakaran, Yang,</td>
<td>Consulting Psychology Journal:</td>
<td>USA, survey of 114 coached executives and 42 coaches in one multinational</td>
<td>Study identified five areas of positive change attributable to coaching although design limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baker, Fernandes, 2008</td>
<td>Practice and Research</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Baron and Morin,</td>
<td>Human Resource Development</td>
<td>USA, survey of 73 managers and 24 coaches (executives in coach role) in one manufacturing organisation</td>
<td>Established the importance of relationship in coaching effectiveness</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author and Date</td>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>Location and Context</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baron and Morin, 2009</td>
<td>Leadership and Organisation Development Journal</td>
<td>USA, survey of 73 managers and 24 coaches (executives in coach role) in one manufacturing organisation</td>
<td>EC contributes to self efficacy of executives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moen, Allgood, 2009</td>
<td>Organisation Development Journal</td>
<td>Norway, survey of 127 executives in one organisation</td>
<td>EC has a significant positive effect on self efficacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales, 2003</td>
<td>Journal of Change Management</td>
<td>UK, survey of 16 managers in major bank coached for one year</td>
<td>EC contributes to personal development for managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evers, Brouwers, 2006</td>
<td>Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research</td>
<td>Netherlands, pre and post survey of 30 coached managers and 30 control managers in one org</td>
<td>Coached group increased scores on two variables, not on others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Spooner, 2006</td>
<td>Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research</td>
<td>UK, Interviews of 14 high achievers in business and sport, and 7 coaches</td>
<td>Key characteristics of high achievers and ideas for coach practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paige, 2002</td>
<td>International Education Journal</td>
<td>Aust, Interviews with five coached executives</td>
<td>Responses identified key factors for effective coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue-Chan, Latham, 2004</td>
<td>Applied Psychology: An International Review</td>
<td>Survey of 30 coached MBA students (Canada); and 23 EMBA students (Aust)</td>
<td>Results inconclusive, research design not closely related to EC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackman, 2006</td>
<td>The Business Review, Cambridge</td>
<td>Aust, survey of 114 coached managers</td>
<td>Responses indicate managers views on preferred aspects of EC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Rafferty, 2006</td>
<td>Leadership and Organisation Development Journal</td>
<td>Aust, longitudinal study of 23 managers, some coached some control</td>
<td>Some indication that EC may enhance manager flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finn, Mason, 2007</td>
<td>Academy of Management Conference</td>
<td>Aust, longitudinal study of 23 managers, some coached some control</td>
<td>EC enhanced managers leadership behaviours as rated by team members</td>
</tr>
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</table>
# Table A2

*Summary of Published Empirical Studies Based on Literature Review*

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<tr>
<th>Author and Date</th>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Location and Context</th>
<th>Essence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kampa-Kokesch, Anderson, 2001</td>
<td>Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research</td>
<td>USA, comprehensive review of literature on EC</td>
<td>Some support for EC contributing to improved performance and developmental change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joo, 2005</td>
<td>Human Resource Development Review</td>
<td>USA, review of 78 articles from academic and practice literature</td>
<td>Develops conceptual framework of EC and related propositions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feldman, Lankau, 2005</td>
<td>Journal of Management</td>
<td>USA, review of literature on executive coaching</td>
<td>Clarifies concepts and poses searching questions for future research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fillery-Travis, Lane, 2006</td>
<td>International Coaching Psychology Review</td>
<td>UK, review of some studies of coaching efficacy</td>
<td>Studies suggest EC provides positive results for executive, unclear on organisation benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackie, 2007</td>
<td>Australian Psychologist</td>
<td>Aust, review of coaching studies and approaches to evaluation</td>
<td>Proposes model for evaluation of coaching effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant, 2008</td>
<td>Unpublished, University of Sydney</td>
<td>Annotated Bibliography of coaching in Behavioural Science Literature</td>
<td>Provides comprehensive bibliography of coaching articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author and Date</td>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>Location and Context</td>
<td>Essence</td>
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<tr>
<td>McGovern et al, 2001</td>
<td>Manchester Review</td>
<td>USA, Interviewed 100 executives coached by Manchester in various organisations</td>
<td>Concludes EC provides significant ROI to business and identifies success factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasylynshyn, 2003</td>
<td>Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research</td>
<td>Survey of 87 executives, clients of one coach over 16 years</td>
<td>Comments on coach credentials and coaching processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant and Zacker, 2004</td>
<td>International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring</td>
<td>Online survey of 2529 ICF coaches</td>
<td>Coaches are diverse in background and practice standards; clarity of role is needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turner, 2006</td>
<td>Ivey Business Journal</td>
<td>Canada, interviews of coached executives</td>
<td>Identifies 5 benefits of coaching and some factors for effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passmore, Gibbes, 2007</td>
<td>International Coaching Psychology Review</td>
<td>Review of existing coaching studies</td>
<td>Critiques existing studies and suggests future research directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greif, 2007</td>
<td>International Coaching Psychology Review</td>
<td>Review of existing coaching studies including those in German</td>
<td>Critiques existing studies and suggests future research directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gyllensten &amp; Palmer, 2007</td>
<td>International Coaching Psychology Review</td>
<td>UK, Sweden, interviews of nine participants, four of whom were managers</td>
<td>Identified the importance of the coaching relationship for coaching success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackenzie, 2007</td>
<td>International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring</td>
<td>UK, phenomenological study of eight clinical leaders who had been coached</td>
<td>Six major themes of the leaders’ experience of coaching emerged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagley, 2006</td>
<td>International Coaching Psychology Review</td>
<td>Aust, interviews of 17 Human Resource practitioners</td>
<td>HR practitioners see EC as effective and with greater benefit to executive than to organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armstrong, Melser, Tooth, 2007</td>
<td>Institute of Executive Coaching, Australia</td>
<td>Aust, survey of 111 and interviews of 30 leaders all coached by IEC</td>
<td>Foremost impact of EC is on self efficacy leading to improved performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooks, 2007</td>
<td>International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring</td>
<td>NZ, survey of 59 executive coaches</td>
<td>Provides data on coaches background, training and processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binsted &amp; Grant, 2008</td>
<td>International Coaching Psychology Review</td>
<td>Aust, interview of 28 executive coaches</td>
<td>Provides data on coaches background, training and processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant, Curtayne, Burton, 2009</td>
<td>Journal of Positive Psychology</td>
<td>Aust, Pre and post test of 41 executives in a public health agency</td>
<td>EC improved self-confidence, insight, management skills</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Appendix B
Factors Contributing to Effective Coaching

Summary from published studies based on empirical evidence

Key

Characteristic: The characteristic of the coaching process that the author suggests contributes to effective outcomes.

Entries: Entries in columns provide page number of reference to the characteristic.
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<td>Focus on skills, issues OR values, motivations</td>
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<td>205</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forge partnership, trusting relationship</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>65</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment, 360 degree</td>
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<td>206</td>
<td>73</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning, written plan</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coach listens well</td>
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<td>276</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grow skills, practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitor progress, honest feedback</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>44, 52</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>49</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coach candid, confronts</td>
<td>45, 52</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Client responsibility for learning, ready to change, timeliness</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>40, 247</td>
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<td>71</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>65</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clear goal of process with expected results</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>26, 40</td>
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<td>Results are measured</td>
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<td>Ongoing process not program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organisational support and perhaps model by top executives</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>206</td>
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<td>Coaching linked to business strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coach input professional and knowledgeable</td>
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<td>44, 52</td>
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<td>Perceived match with coach</td>
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<td>Coach authentic, genuine and ethical</td>
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<td>Follow-up with stakeholders on 360 results – frequency of</td>
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<td>Holistic systems perspective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closely related to practical job project</td>
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<td>Aims to extend executive’s ability to think and act optimally</td>
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<td>Coach’s wise and ethical use of influence-power</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coach grounded in business reality and aware of organisation culture</td>
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<td>Collaborative emphasis in the coaching</td>
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<td>283</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Add value quickly</td>
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<td>Maintain momentum</td>
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Table B2
Factors Contributing to Effective Coaching: Summary from Published Studies Based on Empirical Evidence, Part 2

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Appendix C
Memorandum of Agreement with Partner Organisation

Memorandum of Agreement

Between

Graham Hill, Leadership Pathways

And

The Australian Institute of Management
Memorandum of Understanding

Australian Institute of Management
Graham Hill, Leadership Pathways

Introduction

This agreement provides a basis for cooperation between the parties whereby the Australian Institute of Management - Qld & NT (AIM Qld & NT) has agreed to support Graham Hill, Leadership Pathways in his Masters of Business research into Executive Coaching.

AIM is formulating a coaching accreditation process to ensure coaches are well trained in AIM's coaching model and philosophies and have a minimum level of coaching knowledge and skill. Research completed in conjunction with Graham Hill will inform this process and ensure accreditation covers the necessary fundamentals to produce effective coaches.

Scope

AIM and Graham Hill will work together to achieve some key research on the topic of Executive Coaching. Outcomes expected would include identification of:

- Key attributes of an effective coach
- Other factors contributing to effective coaching

In order to gain this insight, discussion and study will need to occur with coaches and coaches.

Agreement

AIM agrees to provide Graham Hill access to coaches and clients for the purposes of the research and outcomes as outlined in the scope.

Graham Hill agrees to provide AIM with a progress report every 2 months, outlining the current status of the research and any key findings. Graham will also provide AIM with a final report on the research.

All data supplied to AIM by Graham Hill can be used at AIM's discretion and without charge, for AIM's marketing, product development or strategic and business purposes.

Responsibilities

Responsibilities of AIM

- AIM will provide Graham Hill access to at least 3 coaches whose expertise and experience cover the 4 major areas of coaching at AIM:
  - Career Development
- Women’s Coaching
- Public Sector Coaching
- Private Sector Coaching

AIM will advise the coach of the research prior to contact from Graham.

- AIM will allow Graham Hill to contact clients who have received or are currently receiving coaching through AIM.

- AIM will acknowledge research completed by Graham Hill if data from these studies is used in any development of coaching materials.

Responsibilities of Graham Hill

- In contacting coaches and clients Graham will maintain professional conduct in alignment with AIM’s business behaviours (attached).

- Graham will maintain confidentiality of any personal information divulged by the coach or the client. Names of person’s involved will not be used in any public material unless written permission is obtained. Graham will act in accordance with AIM’s confidentiality policy (attached).

- Graham will provide AIM with regular updates of the research and a report on the final findings to be utilised for the purposes of establishing a formal coaching accreditation process.

- No part of AIM’s publications may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information or retrieval system, without the prior permission of AIM – Qld & NT. Requests for permission to use material contained in any publications should be directed to the General Manager. Subject to certain conditions AIM may be able to provide the Graham Hill with materials through a copyright release fee, royalties or a formal licensing arrangement.

Term

Graham Hill and AIM Qld & NT shall honour this agreement for a period of 12 months from 22nd August 2006. The terms and conditions may be reviewed after 6 months and extended if required.
Appendix D
AIM’s Coaching Process

1. Promotional Material

Coaching: An Essential Personal and Business Building Skill

“The goal of coaching is the goal of good management – to make the most of your or your organisation’s valuable resources.”

Coaching is synonymous with improved performance, growth and realising full potential. A coach acts as a confidante, mentor, encourager and challenger, providing meaningful and timely support in an entirely objective manner.

Coaching is a process that enables learning and development to occur and performance to improve (often acting as the catalyst for change).

Coaching can help shape the future direction of a career or business, contribute to the development of a vision and strategic objectives and assist in making key decisions that will have a long-term impact on business performance, productivity and competitiveness.

In 2000 AIM created the Centre for Career Management (CCM) to ensure coaching predominates throughout Australia. CCM employs Organisational and Career Psychologists to ensure the integrity of its offerings and uses a coaching model based on the work of Dr Anthony Grant, one of Australia’s most successful coaching psychologists.

Coaching Programs Attract Many Audiences

The successful coaching program concept introduces local support coaches into the mix, matching each participant with their own individual coach to ensure the right chemistry and skills set mix.

**Small Business**

Small business is the backbone of the Australian economy, and in that group, micro-business is the fastest growing segment. Small business is defined as up to 50 employees (100 in manufacturing) and micro-business is defined as 5 or less employees. Both have operational marketing and strategic needs different to corporate Australia or the big end of town.

Individuals managing in a small business environment have special needs, such as succession planning, financial management, and business goal setting, as well as the leadership needs of vision, engagement and innovation. The AIM program affords small business owners and managers the space to reflect with the help of well-chosen coaches and like-minded peers.

**Women**

AIM has successfully delivered many coaching programs for women from government, business and the not-for-profit sectors. They typically attract women who want to learn from other women, usually owner managers or middle to senior managers who want to take their career to the next step.

Coaching for women provides powerful, professional development by way of using a focused, personal approach to assist individuals to develop at their own pace, achieving goals meaningful to them which provide broad scope outcomes for the participants and the wider community.

**Young Managers**

Coaching programs are ideal for rising stars, allowing young managers the opportunity to learn and grow in a confidential and supportive environment. AIM defines a young manager as someone typically under 36, but is not specific about the age limit.

The specific issues of managing up, dealing with Baby Boomers and Generation Y as well as work/life balance are important issues to this group. Each participant benefits from direct skills transfer with a focus on performance management and improvement, goal setting, work relationship building, advancement and promotion.

**Government Managers**

AIM welcomes managers from all levels of government to the coaching programs. There are unique aspects of the way government conducts its business, and through the coach matching process, coaches can be chosen who have that experience.

Coaches will cover issues like navigating hierarchies, learned optimism, managing expectations, and innovation within specific frameworks.
2. **Assessment**

AIM places a lot of emphasis on strategic assessment (Activate) as the essential first stage of the coaching process. The aim is to maximise the benefit for the executive by giving them the widest possible view of their scenario including a career plan and a set of developmental themes. This is a constructivist approach where the executive is the key player in the story they construct.

The assessment process utilises a range of tools including McQuaig Surveys (Word Survey and Self Development Survey), New Directions Career Mapping Program, and 360 degree feedback. The assessment process is consistently conducted by one coaching psychologist who seeks to utilise the tools seamlessly to maximise the developmental conversation with each executive.

By the conclusion of the assessment stage the executive has a detailed action plan identifying key themes and action steps. A copy of this plan is also provided to the coach.

3. **Coaching Model**

The definition of coaching used by AIM is consistent with that quoted in this research study. The AIM Coaching Model is based on the Solution Focused model developed by Dr Anthony Grant. This model provides a structure for the process but is not highly prescriptive in terms of how the coach and the executive plan and conduct individual sessions.
4. Allocation of Executives to Coaches

AIM manages the contracting stage of the process with the client organisation or the executive themselves. This includes agreements, desired outcomes, time, cost, and confidentiality commitments. The executive is referred to the coaching psychologist for the assessment stage. Once the assessment has been completed, the shortlist of proposed coaches is formulated by the coaching psychologist based on the executive’s needs. The executive generally participates in the selection of the coach based on the profiles presented in the shortlist.
Appendix E
National Ethics Application Form – Pages 1 to 4

National Ethics Application Form
Version 1.1

PROPOSAL TITLE: A Study of managers’ experiences of executive coaching and its effectiveness in bringing about behavioural change

FOR SUBMISSION TO: Queensland University of Technology University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00171)

PROPOSAL STATUS: Complete

COMPLETION DATE: 18/09/2006

APPLICANT: Mr Graham Hill

INSTITUTION: QUT

ADDRESS: 5 Hurlstone St
Wishart QLD 4122

CONTACT NUMBERS: Business Hours 07 38492126
After Hours -
Mobile 0412 190192
Fax 07 38492126

PROPOSAL DESCRIPTION:
Executive coaching is a rapidly growing profession receiving increasing acceptance in the world of business. It has been widely discussed in the popular press, however there are relatively few academic research articles addressing this practice. The purpose of this study is to research managers’ experiences of executive coaching within a range of organisations which have implemented similar coaching interventions. The study will investigate how managers experience executive coaching, and which experiences, in their opinion, contribute to effective behavioural outcomes.

Since the theoretical concepts of executive coaching are not currently well defined, it is proposed that coaching be studied using a constructivist qualitative design. With this approach, executive coaching will be studied in its natural setting, attempting to make sense of, and to interpret these phenomena in terms of the meanings the managers bring to them.

Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews of managers from a
range of business organisations all participating in a consistent coaching process delivered by a small group of coaches. Partially structuring the interviews will ensure that the key concepts from the relevant current literature are addressed while being flexible enough to ensure the managers can raise issues that may not have been canvassed and to frame those issues in their terms.

This qualitative enquiry will focus in depth on a relatively small sample selected purposefully. It is proposed to interview twelve managers drawn from six to eight different organisations, each being coached by one of three coaches from the Australian Institute of Management (AIM) in Brisbane. The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases from which a great deal can be learned about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry.

Variation among the twelve managers selected in the sample may be facilitated by creating a matrix where each manager will be chosen to differ from others, though all will share the aspects common to the one coaching process.

Additional data will be collected to test the theoretical concepts drawn from the literature thereby providing data triangulation. This data will be collected by conducting a focus group of participating external coaches.

**POINTS TO REMEMBER:**
This document has been created using the online National Ethics Application Form (NEAF) - available at [www.neaf.gov.au](http://www.neaf.gov.au). The set of questions that appear in this document have been generated as a result of answers you have provided to specific questions in NEAF. For this reason, the contents of this document are unique to this research ethics proposal and should not be used as the basis for future proposals. New proposals for submission to Human Research Ethics Committees must be generated using NEAF online.

Should you wish to use the contents of this document for other purposes:
- You can copy and paste text out of a PDF document in Adobe Acrobat by using the 'Tools/basic/text select' button.
1. TITLE AND SUMMARY OF PROJECT

1.1. Title

1.1.1 What is the formal title of this research proposal?
A Study of managers’ experiences of executive coaching and its effectiveness in bringing about behavioural change

1.1.2 What is the short title / acronym of this research proposal (if applicable)?
N/A

1.2. Description of the project in plain language

1.2.1 Give a concise and simple description (not more than 400 words), in plain language, of the aims of this project, the proposed research design and the methods to be used to achieve those aims.

Executive coaching is a rapidly growing profession receiving increasing acceptance in the world of business. It has been widely discussed in the popular press, however there are relatively few academic research articles addressing this practice. The purpose of this study is to research managers’ experiences of executive coaching within a range of organisations which have implemented similar coaching interventions. The study will investigate how managers experience executive coaching, and which experiences, in their opinion, contribute to effective behavioural outcomes.

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Variation among the twelve managers selected in the sample may be facilitated by creating a matrix where each manager will be chosen to differ from others, though all will share the aspects common to the one coaching process.

Additional data will be collected to test the theoretical concepts drawn from the literature thereby providing data triangulation. This data will be collected by conducting a focus group of participating external coaches.

1.3. Type of Research

1.3.1 Tick as many of the following ‘types of research’ as apply to this project. Your answers will assist HREOs in considering your proposal. A tick in some of these boxes will generate additional questions relevant to your proposal (mainly because the National Statement requires additional ethical matters to be considered), which will appear in Section 4 of NEAF.

This project involves:

[X] Qualitative research
[ ] Research on workplace practices or possibly impacting on workplace relationships
[ ] Research conducted overseas involving participants NS 1.21
[ ] Research involving deception of participants, concealment or covert observation NS 17
[ ] Epidemiological research NS 14
[ ] Administration of a drug for research but is not clinical research
[ ] Clinical research (excluding those under the CTN/CTX schemes) NS 12
[ ] Clinical trial under CTN/CTX scheme NS 12
1.4. Research participants

1.4.1 The National Statement requires additional information to be provided to an HREC where research participants are certain or likely to include any of the categories of people listed in this question. HRECs need to know whether you intend to include or to exclude any of these categories. Answer this question by:
(a) selecting any of those categories that are targeted or likely to be included as participants in this research project,
(b) selecting any other of those categories that will be excluded from participation, and
(c) selecting any other of these categories who may be adversely affected by this research.

Where you select a category for inclusion, you will be required to answer additional questions later in the form.

1.4.1 Where any of the following participant populations may be involved, the National Statement requires additional information to be provided to the HREC. Tick as many of the following 'types of research participants' as apply to this project. If none apply please indicate this below. A tick in some of these boxes will require you to answer additional questions later in the form.

The participants who may be involved in this research are:

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<th>Category</th>
<th>a) Intended or targeted</th>
<th>b) Probable coincidental recruitment</th>
<th>c) Design specifically excludes</th>
<th>d) Research has potential to adversely affect this population</th>
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<td>People whose primary language is other than English (LOTE) NS 2.2%</td>
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<td>Children and/or young people (ie. &lt;18 years) NS 4</td>
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<td>People with an intellectual or mental impairment NS 5</td>
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<td>People highly dependent on medical care NS 6</td>
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<td>People in existing dependent or unequal relationships with any member of the research team, the researcher[s], and/or the person undertaking the recruitment/consent process (eg. student/teacher; employee/employer; warden/prisoner; officer, enlisted soldier; patient/doctor) NS 7</td>
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<td>People who belong to a collectivity NS 8</td>
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<td>Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples NS 9</td>
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1.5. Research techniques

1.5.1 The research techniques to be used in this project include (You must tick at least one. Tick as many as apply):

[ ] Observation of non-identified people in public places
[ ] Covert observation of identifiable people in non-public places
[ ] Interviews - telephone
[ ] Interviews - face to face
[ ] Documentary/records analysis
[ ] Focus groups
[ ] Data linkage
[ ] Physical activities / exercises / tests
[ ] Taping - audio / video
[ ] Biomedical / clinical interventions, tests, samples
[ ] Use of complementary or alternative medicine, or a natural therapy
Appendix F
Ethics Approval

From: Research Ethics [ethicscontact@qut.edu.au]
Sent: Tuesday, 10 October 2006 8:31 AM
To: Mr Graham Ian Hill
Cc: Ms Janette Lamb
Subject: Ethics Application Approval -- 0600000675

Dear Mr Graham Hill

Re: A study of managers' experiences of executive coaching and its effectiveness in bringing about behavioural change

This email is to advise that your application 0600000675 has been considered and approved. Consequently, you are authorised to immediately commence your project.

The decision is subject to ratification at the next available Committee meeting. You will only be contacted again in relation to this matter if the Committee raises any additional questions or concerns in regard to this clearance.

Please do not hesitate to contact me further if you have any queries regarding this matter.

Regards

David Wiseman
Research Ethics Officer
Appendix G
Communication with Coaches

1. Explanatory Email following coaches’ agreement to participate in research project

2. Email confirming arrangements prior to focus group of coaches

3. Agenda for preliminary individual meetings with coaches

4. Table for recording details of candidate executives

5. Questions Prompts for Focus Group of Coaches

6. Preliminary survey of coaches regarding factors contributing to coaching effectiveness
   
   Both items 5 and 6 have been developed from the findings of the review of executive coaching literature (Chapter 2 of this study).

7. Email with details of the selected executives for coaches to contact

8. Email seeking verification of the transcript of focus group of coaches
1. **Explanatory Email following coaches’ agreement to participate in research project**

From: Graham Hill6 [grahamhill6@optusnet.com.au]
Sent: Friday, 8 September 2006 6:01 PM
To: four coaches
Subject: Coaching Research with AIM

Hi ……..

Thank you for the assistance you have given me over the last few weeks in shaping this research. There always seems to be one more step and the current one is getting the ethics approval finalised. Until I do this (which is well underway) I cannot proceed further. I will give a quick summary of where this is going so you are up to date.

**Research Question:**

*How do managers experience executive coaching and its contribution to behavioural change?*

**Process:**

1. Conduct a focus group of coaches who all use the AIM model for coaching to discuss the significant aspects of the model, how the coaching has been effective or otherwise, and factors contributing to this. This will require about 60 to 80 minutes, will be recorded and results will be given to you for checking before use. No part of the data will identify you individually. I will aim to set a date for this in the next few weeks as the ethics approval is obtained and I check with you on availability.

2. Interview twelve managers who have been coached using the AIM model including assessment and then at least three sessions of coaching. For currency of data it would be best if they have experienced the coaching in the last six months or as close to that as possible. These managers may have initiated the coaching themselves, or been allocated by their organisation.

The interviews will be for about 50 to 60 minutes, by arrangement at a place and time suitable to them. They will be recorded and transcribed and given to each one to check before use in the research. All data will be kept confidential and no individual will be identified. The interview will deal with the process of the coaching not the content which can remain confidential.

I will be asking each of you to suggest four or five candidates suitable for this research (more if you can), and then a sample of 12 will be chosen to best serve the research objectives. I will then ask you to make the first contact to introduce them to the process and seek their involvement.
Please let me know of any uncertainties you have with the process or any further info you need at this time. I greatly appreciate your willingness to participate and realise the demand this places on your time, so I will attempt to keep this to a minimum. I welcome any suggestions you have that will make this project more effective both in meeting my academic requirements and providing useful outcomes for AIM.

Graham
2. Email confirming arrangements prior to focus group of coaches

From: Graham Hill6 [grahamhill6@optusnet.com.au]
Sent: Friday, 29 September 2006 2:53 PM
To: four coaches
Cc: AIM coaching supervisor

Subject: Focus Group of AIM Coaches

Hi …

Focus Group of Coaches

We have an agreed time to meet which can suit all coaches. Thank you for your cooperation so far in arriving at this.

Thursday 26 October 3pm to 4.30pm at AIM - Heidi has booked the boardroom for us.

I will arrange for afternoon tea to be available.

I expect that this focus group will be a stimulating experience that will help you reflect deeply on your coaching practice and its effectiveness for the managers you are coaching. I hope the outcome will be further learning for you personally, and as a team which will be a benefit for AIM

I will send you an outline of some of the questions we will be considering one week before

Interview of Managers

I will be in touch to arrange to meet with you personally, before 26 October if possible. The aim will be to discuss the possible managers you have coached who will be available for interview, their characteristics, their organisation characteristics, etc. From the set of manager data I will then be able to form a matrix from which to select the sample for the research.

Thanks for your time and your assistance with this project.

Graham
3. Agenda for preliminary individual meetings with coaches

Preliminary Meeting with Coaches

9 - 12 October 2006

1. Discuss Informed Consent for Coaches
   - Criteria for selection of managers
   - AIM access to focus group
   - AIM access to transcript

2. View Informed Consent for Managers

3. Complete managers’ details on table

4. Factors affecting Coaching Effectiveness responses

5. Distribute questions for Focus Group
4. **Table for recording details of candidate executives**

Coach________________________ Date________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Manager Id</th>
<th>Manager Id</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation Characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role/Position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason for coaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiated by…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals of Coaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment – No of Feedback Sessions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of Coaching Sessions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Coaching Completed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement Level (1 to 5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational Support (1 to 5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. **Questions Prompts for Focus Group of Coaches**

1. How would you describe AIM’s coaching approach?

2. What have you found to be the most important aspects of this process?
   - How consistently has this process been applied across the population of clients from which the sample will be drawn?

3. What were the goals of the coaching process?
   - learning for the client
   - new behaviour for the client
   - changes in the organisation
   - other

4. What was the initial level of understanding of the managers regarding goals?

5. How well do you think the coaching was received by the managers?

6. What factors do you see significantly contributing to/detracting from the effectiveness of the coaching process in achieving the desired outcomes?

7. How was goal achievement measured?
6. Preliminary survey of coaches regarding factors contributing to coaching effectiveness

Factors Contributing to Coaching Effectiveness

Coach Name ___________________________ Date __________________

The purpose of this exercise is to gain some preliminary data on the views of AIM coaches concerning the factors contributing to coaching effectiveness.

The factors have been gathered from relevant literature.

You are asked to assign a rating to each factor from 1 to 5 (1 lowest and 5 highest), both for your opinion of its importance and your view of the significance given to the factor in your actual coaching practice.

If there are other factors you consider should be present here please add them to the list. If you consider some are double-ups please strike out the least applicable.

The ratings you assign to these will be averaged over the four coaches and discussed at the focus group. Your responses will be confidential.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Your opinion of the importance of this factor in coaching effectiveness</th>
<th>The significance of this factor in your actual practice of AIM coaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship of coach and client</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building a trusting relationship</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapport, personal chemistry</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set mutual expectations</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach inspires commitment</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort in disagreeing</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi rater assessment of client</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific feedback</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine changes client is motivated to make</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative goal setting</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Process of Coaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coach u'stands client’s particular situation</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address both individual &amp; systemic issues</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask permission to coach in new and sensitive areas</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills practice/role play</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client identifies changes &amp; lessons learned</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach fosters reflections on actions</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach poses challenging questions</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach requests specific behavioural changes</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client creates detailed action plans</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadowing/live action coaching</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach confronts with candid feedback</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surfaces an array of emotions in client</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor progress toward agreed goals</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement by coach</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular celebration of achievements</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach plans for resistance to change</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery of appropriate resources</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up of client by coach</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach provider of expert info/suggestions</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results are measured</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal accomplishment</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of process by client</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Engagement of Client with the process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ownership, client chosen to be involved</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client willing and committed</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeliness, client has ‘opening’ for the coaching</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching is flexible and relevant to client current reality</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client assumes responsibility for change</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Organisational Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coaching linked to strategic goals</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching supported/modeled by supervisor</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client seeks developmental support from others</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client’s supervisor monitors progress</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Email with details of the selected executives for coaches to contact

From: Graham Hill6 [grahamhill6@optusnet.com.au]  
Sent: Tuesday, 24 October 2006 7:51 AM  
To: coach  
Subject: Coaching Research Info  
Attachments: Manager Info.doc; Info-consent Coach 22 Oct.doc

Hi coach

The Coach Focus Group is being held on Thursday 26 October 3pm at AIM Boardroom. Afternoon will be provided.

I have revised the informed consent sheet following discussions with each coach individually. Would you please read the attached and if ok print and sign the agreement page, and bring with you on Thursday?

From the clients proposed by all four coaches, I have a list of seventeen possible managers to participate in the study. I have selected from this twelve managers to give as large a range of characteristics as possible with a small population. This has resulted in three managers from each coach as the initial choice. I have indicated yours in the attached file. If some of these are not available, then the others are in reserve.

Would you please contact these managers when you have the opportunity and ask them whether they are willing to participate in the research, and how they would best like me to contact them – phone at office or mobile or email? Please note the details in the space provided, and any other appropriate details (such as ‘call on Fridays’ or similar)

Thanks for your assistance with this project

See you Thursday

Graham
8. Email seeking verification of the transcript of focus group of coaches

From: Graham Hill [grahamhill6@optusnet.com.au]
Sent: Saturday, 28 April 2007 3:57 PM
To: coaches
Subject: Coaching Research project - Focus Group transcript

Attachments: Focus Group Transcript Vsn 1.doc

Hi

Well here it is at last, the long overdue transcript of the focus group discussion last October.

I have checked it all through in detail with the recording, so it should be quite accurate.

Would you please read through and check that:

a. the transcript is consistent with the message you believe you were conveying at the discussion?
   b. you agree with this data being used in the research (Confidentiality note: none of this will be traceable to you personally in any form).

Where you would like a correction to be made to your contribution in the transcript, please do so, highlight the change, and email the copy back to me. If no changes are necessary please let me know by reply email.

I have now completed all the interviews with your clients, I’m finalising their transcripts, and sending them out for checking.

I will have a fair idea of emerging themes by June/July and, if you would like, I could arrange another discussion to gain your comments on the initial findings.

I have taken six months leave of absence from the research project this semester since my supervisor left QUT. Good news is that this week I have finally located replacement supervisors, and expect to pick this up at full pace in July.

Thanks for your participation and your patience.

Hope all is prospering and at peace in your world

Regards

Graham
A Study of managers' experiences of executive coaching and its effectiveness in bringing about behavioural change

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION for QUT RESEARCH PROJECT (Coach)

Research Team Contact
Graham Hill - Researcher
Ph 0412 190192, 07 38492126
grahamhill6@optusnet.com.au

Description
You have been referred to me by Heidi Christie of the Australian Institute of Management (AIM) as a coach conducting coaching engagements under contract to AIM.

The purpose of this project is to study managers’ experiences of executive coaching within a range of organisations which have implemented similar coaching interventions. This study includes twelve managers who have received coaching during 2006 by coaches from AIM.

This project is being undertaken as part of Master of Business research at Queensland University of Technology by Graham Hill (researcher).

The researcher requests your assistance because it is hoped that this study will add value to the field of executive coaching by identifying factors contributing to its effectiveness.

Participation
Your participation in this project is voluntary. If you do agree to participate, you can withdraw from participation at any time during the project without comment or penalty. Your decision to participate will in no way impact upon your current or future relationship with QUT or with AIM.

Your participation will involve:

1. Contributing to a once off focus group of four AIM coaches to explore the significant aspects of the AIM coaching model (60 to 80 minutes)
2. Identifying managers you have coached (clients) who may be willing to participate in this study by being interviewed about their coaching experience

I plan to interview twelve managers (clients) from various contexts that have all been coached by one of the group of AIM coaches. In order to be considered for this study, your clients must have completed a coaching engagement that meets the following criteria:

- The coaching engagement was completed within the last nine months
- The client fulfils a managerial role in their organisation
- The coaching was funded by the client’s organisation
- The coaching engagement lasted at least six months with regular contact between the client and the coach
If the clients you nominate agree to be part of the study, I will interview him/her about their experience of executive coaching; it will not be necessary for them to divulge the personal details of the coaching.

**Expected benefits**

It is expected that this project will help you discover further insights about your coaching role and its effectiveness. However, it is anticipated that greater benefits will accrue to those receiving coaching from AIM coaches in the future.

**Risks**

There are no risks beyond normal day-to-day living associated with your participation in this project.

**Confidentiality**

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially and remain anonymous. The focus group discussion will be recorded to enable an accurate transcript of coaches’ responses to be produced. The recording will not be used for any other purpose. The completed transcript will be made available to each coach to verify the content, and following this the recording will be destroyed. Due to the requirement for accuracy in capturing participant responses, it will not be possible to participate in the study without the focus group being recorded.

To maintain confidentiality, access to the recording of the focus group discussion will be available only to the researcher and a transcription assistant. The verified transcript will be stored in a secure location, accessible in an identifiable form only by the researcher.

The research is being conducted in association with AIM and therefore a representative of AIM may attend the focus group discussion as an observer. A general summary of the outcomes of the discussion (with all participant specific identifiers removed) will be made available to AIM after approval by all participants.

**Results**

At the completion of the project, a copy of the results of the study will be made available to you by the researcher.

**Consent to Participate**

Would you please sign the accompanying written consent form dated 22 October 2006 to confirm your agreement to participate?

**Questions / further information about the project**

Please contact the researcher (details above) to have any questions answered or if you require further information about the project.

**Concerns / complaints regarding the conduct of the project**

QUT is committed to researcher integrity and the ethical conduct of research projects. However, if you do have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the QUT Research Ethics Officer on 3864 2340 or ethicscontact@qut.edu.au. The Researcher Ethics Officer is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an impartial manner.
CONSENT FORM for QUT RESEARCH PROJECT

A Study of managers’ experiences of executive coaching and its effectiveness in bringing about behavioural change

Researcher – Graham Hill

Statement of Consent for Coaches 22 October 2006

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

• have read and understood the information document regarding this project;
• have had any questions answered to your satisfaction;
• understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the researcher;
• understand that you are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;
• understand that you can contact the Research Ethics Officer on 3864 2340 or ethicscontact@qut.edu.au if you have concerns about the ethical conduct of the project;
• agree to participate in the project.
• understand that the project will include audio recording of your responses;

Name

Signature

Date _____ / _____ / _____
Appendix I
Sampling Matrix Showing Dimensions of Variation of Executive Sample

Notes:

1. Organisation characteristics – large is deemed to be greater than 200 employees, medium 20 to 200, small less than 20 employees

2. Engagement Level and Organisational Support are ratings made by the coach from their own observations. Here 1 is very low and 5 is very high.
Table II

*Sampling Matrix Showing Dimensions of Variation of Executive Sample – Part 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Matt</th>
<th>Brian</th>
<th>Karen</th>
<th>Freda</th>
<th>Malcolm</th>
<th>Ted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>50-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation characteristics</td>
<td>Private, large</td>
<td>Semi-Government Utility</td>
<td>Private, medium</td>
<td>Private, small</td>
<td>Private, large</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role/Position</td>
<td>CFO</td>
<td>GM Retail</td>
<td>Financial Controller</td>
<td>GM</td>
<td>Exec Manager</td>
<td>Assistant Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in role</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>4 years acting Recently appointed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching initiated by…</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Jointly</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Months since coaching completed</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Current</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engagement level (1 to 5)</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>At start 3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation support (1 to 5)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table I2

*Sampling Matrix Showing Dimensions of Variation of Executive Sample – Part 2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Larry</th>
<th>Fay</th>
<th>Carol</th>
<th>Kirsty</th>
<th>Merv</th>
<th>Andy</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>40-50</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>50-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role/Position</td>
<td>Stream Leader</td>
<td>Director of strategy</td>
<td>Assist Director General</td>
<td>Middle Manager</td>
<td>CFO</td>
<td>Director of Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in role</td>
<td>New to role</td>
<td>Continually shifting roles</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>New to role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching initiated by…</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Months since coaching completed</td>
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<td>Current</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Current</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement level (1 to 5)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational support (1 to 5)</td>
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<td>4.5</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Appendix J
Summary of Coaches’ Responses to Preliminary Survey Regarding Factors Contributing to Coaching Effectiveness

Coaching Effectiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multi rater assessment of client</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific feedback</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine changes client is motivated to make</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative goal setting</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rating

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Coaching Effectiveness

- Coach u'stands client’s particular situation
- Address both individual & systemic issues
- Ask permission to coach in new and sensitive areas
- Skills practice/role play
- Client identifies changes & lessons learned
- Coach fosters reflections on actions
- Coach poses challenging questions
- Coach requests specific behavioural changes
- Client creates detailed action plans
- Shadowing/live action coaching
- Coach confronts with candid feedback
- Surfaces an array of emotions in client
- Monitor progress toward agreed goals
- Encouragement by coach
- Regular celebration of achievements
- Coach plans for resistance to change
- Discovery of appropriate resources
- Follow-up of client by coach
- Coach provider of expert info/suggestions
- Results are measured
- Goal accomplishment
- Evaluation of process by client

Rating:
- Practice
- Importance
Appendix K
Data Gathering Format for Semi-structured Interviews with Executives

The question prompts for the semi-structured interviews with executives were subject to slight revision as the interviews progressed. The three versions are included below.
A Study of managers’ experiences of executive coaching and its effectiveness in bringing about behavioural change

Participant Group 1 – Managers

Interview Prompts

A. Introduction

The purpose of research is…
Expected time is 60 min
Thank you for your participation
Interview will be recorded – I will turn the recorder on now
Do you agree to this interview being recorded, transcribed and shown to you for verification of the content?

B. Questions/prompts

There are 8 questions drawn from the relevant literature, with prompts provided in dot points for digging deeper if needed.

1. How would you describe your experience of coaching?

2. How important were the goals of the coaching process?
   - How were these clearly defined before and during the coaching?
   - How was achievement of these goals measured?

3. What was your relationship with your coach like?
   - What were the key aspects of this relationship for you?
   - What did you experience that built or weakened this relationship?
   - How did this relationship contribute to a positive coaching experience for you?

4. What experiences in coaching most assisted you to learn and change?
   - What were the ‘aha’ moments for you that opened up new horizons?
   - How did you identify the key learning points that led to new behaviours?

5. What level of support from your organisation did you experience?
   - How involved was your supervisor in discussing the progress of the coaching and its final outcomes?
   - How did this contribute or detract from your coaching experience?
• How was the coaching process integrated into your organisational journey?

6. How did you experience the assessment and feedback process?

• Which of these experiences contributed to/detracted from the coaching sessions?
• How did the coaching effectively build on the assessment/feedback process?

7. To what extent did you experience a sense of responsibility for your personal development?

• What choices did you have regarding your participation in and control of the process?
• How closely were the goals of the coaching aligned to your own?
• How would you describe your engagement with the learning?

8. What other issues regarding your coaching experience would you like to add?

• What would you do differently in future coaching relationships?

C. Demographic Data

Name:

Age:

Sex:

Organisation:

Role/position:

Length of time in role:

Organisation characteristics:

Reason for coaching:

Initiated by:

Paid for by:

Assessment/Feedback – number of sessions:

Number of coaching sessions over what period:
B. Questions/prompts

1. How would you describe your coaching experience?
   - What factors made coaching ‘right’ for you at that time?

2. Considering the goals/outcomes of the coaching process?
   - How were these clearly defined before and during the coaching?
   - Were the goals learning/behaviour/organisational outcomes?
   - How was achievement of these goals measured?

3. What was your relationship with your coach like?
   - What were the key aspects of this relationship for you?
   - What did you experience that caused these attributes to be established?
   - How did this relationship contribute to a positive coaching experience for you?

   Note: Mutual trust, respect, freedom of expression
   How did you know the coach was there beside you, in your world?

4. What experiences in coaching most assisted you to learn and change?
   - What were the ‘aha’ moments for you that opened up new horizons?
   - How did you identify the key learning points that led to new behaviours?

5. What level of support from your organisation did you experience?
   - How involved was your supervisor in discussing the progress of the coaching and its final outcomes?
   - How did this contribute or detract from your coaching experience?
   - How was the coaching process integrated into your organisational journey?

6. How did you experience the assessment and feedback process?
   - Which of these experiences contributed to/detracted from the coaching sessions?
   - How did the coaching effectively build on the assessment/feedback process?

7. To what extent did you experience a sense of responsibility for your personal development?
   - What choices did you have regarding your participation in and control of the process?
   - How closely were the goals of the coaching aligned to your own?
• How would you describe your engagement with the learning?

8. What other issues regarding your coaching experience would you like to add?
• What would you do differently in future coaching relationships?

**Version 3 – 24 Nov 2006**

For version 3 there are no changes in the questions, although the order has been rearranged.

**B. Questions/prompts**

1. How would you describe your coaching experience?
• What factors made coaching ‘right’ for you at that time?

2. How did you experience the assessment and feedback process?
• Which of these experiences contributed to/detracted from the coaching sessions?
• How did the coaching effectively build on the assessment/feedback process?

3. Considering the goals/outcomes of the coaching process?
• How were these clearly defined before and during the coaching?
• Were the goals learning/behaviour/organisational outcomes?
• How was achievement of these goals measured?

4. To what extent did you experience a sense of responsibility for your personal development?
• What choices did you have regarding your participation in and control of the process?
• How closely were the goals of the coaching aligned to your own?
• How would you describe your engagement with the learning?

5. What was your relationship with your coach like?
• What were the key aspects of this relationship for you?
• What did you experience that caused these attributes to be established?
• How did this relationship contribute to a positive coaching experience for you?

Note: Mutual trust, respect, freedom of expression
How did you know the coach was there beside you, in your world?

6. What experiences in coaching most assisted you to learn and change?
• What were the ‘aha’ moments for you that opened up new horizons?
• How did you identify the key learning points that led to new behaviours?

7. What level of support from your organisation did you experience?

• How involved was your supervisor in discussing the progress of the coaching and its final outcomes?
• How did this contribute or detract from your coaching experience?
• How was the coaching process integrated into your organisational journey?

8. What other issues regarding your coaching experience would you like to add?

• What would you do differently in future coaching relationships?
Appendix L
Communication with Executives

1. Email informing executive of pending telephone call regarding the research project

2. Email confirming appointment for interview with executive

3. Criteria for enhancing consistency of executive interviews

4. Email seeking verification of the transcript of the executive’s interview and typical reply from executive
1. Email informing executive of pending telephone call regarding the research project

From: Graham Hill [grahamhill6@optusnet.com.au]
Sent: Wednesday, 25 October 2006 12:58 PM
To: executive
Subject: Coaching Research Project

Hi executive

Your name has been given to me by coach as a manager who has recently experienced coaching through Australian Institute of Management. I am conducting research into “Managers’ Experiences of Executive Coaching” and seek your participation in the study.

I will contact you by phone within the next two weeks to discuss your participation and, if appropriate, arrange a time for an interview that is suitable with your schedule.

I am very grateful for your participation in this study.

Regards

Graham Hill
2. Email confirming appointment for interview with executive

From: Graham Hill6 [grahamhill6@optusnet.com.au]
Sent: Friday, 27 October 2006 2:58 PM
To: Executive
Subject: Coaching Research project

Attachments: Info-consent Manager 9 Oct.doc

Hi Matt

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research on executive coaching being conducted through QUT.

The attached document provides details of the project. Please contact me if you require more information.

If you agree to the arrangements, would you please sign the consent form and I will collect it at the interview.

The interview is confirmed for 3.30pm Thursday 9 November at your office at …………. Please allocate 60 to 80 minutes for the interview during which time I will be asking you about your experience of the executive coaching process.

Regards

Graham Hill
3. **Criteria for enhancing consistency of executive interviews**

- *How did I quickly develop an atmosphere of trust and rapport?*

  Engage in a ‘real’ conversation with empathic understanding, treat participants as equals, immerse self in the situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994)

- *How did I prepare myself to focus on objective data?*

  Ensure the responses actually provided answers to the questions, manage the interview to get quality responses (Patton, 2002)

- *Have I refrained from ‘leading’ the participant?*

  The goal is to unfold the executive view on coaching effectiveness (the emic perspective) rather than my own view (the etic perspective) (Marshall & Rossman, 2006)

- *Was I careful in responding not to encourage a particular style of answer?*

  Neutrality – they can tell me anything without engendering either my favour or disfavour (Patton, 2002)

- *What did I do to dig deeper on key points?*

  Use gentle probing for elaboration (Marshall & Rossman, 2006)

- *Did I am to discover trends rather than anecdotes?*

- *How did I seek to clarify the meanings the participants put on their experiences?*
4. Email seeking verification of the transcript of the executive’s interview
   Typical reply from executive

From: Graham Hill [grahamhill6@optusnet.com.au]
Sent: Saturday, 5 May 2007 9:28 AM
To: executive
Subject: Coaching Research project - Your Interview
Attachments: 1 Interview M.doc

Hi executive

Attached is the transcript of your interview last …….

I have checked it all through in detail with the recording, so it should be quite accurate.

Would you please read through and check that:

   a.. the transcript is consistent with the message you believe you were conveying at the interview?
   b.. you agree with this data being used in the research (Confidentiality note: none of this will be traceable to you personally in any form).

Where you would like a correction to be made to your contribution in the transcript, please do so, highlight the change, and email the copy back to me. If no changes are necessary please let me know by reply email.

Thank you for your time and participation in this research

Graham Hill

_________________________________________________________________

From: executive
Sent: Tuesday, 15 May 2007 8:53 AM
To: Graham Hill
Subject: RE: Coaching Research project - Your Interview

Hi Graham,

I have checked through the transcript of our interview and, from memory, it appears to accurately reflect our discussion.

Happy for the data to be used in your research and hope it all goes well.

Please let me know if there is any other way in which I can be of assistance.

Regards,
Executive
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION for QUT RESEARCH PROJECT

A Study of managers' experiences of executive coaching and its effectiveness in bringing about behavioural change

Research Team Contact

Graham Hill - Researcher
Ph 0412 190192, 07 38492126
grahamhill6@optusnet.com.au

Description

You have been referred to me by your coach as a manager who has had a recent experience with executive coaching.

The purpose of this project is to study managers’ experiences of executive coaching within a range of organisations which have implemented similar coaching interventions. This study includes twelve managers who have received coaching during 2006 by coaches from the Australian Institute of Management (AIM).

This project is being undertaken as part of Master of Business research at Queensland University of Technology by Graham Hill (researcher).

The researcher requests your assistance because it is hoped that this study will add value to the field of executive coaching by identifying factors contributing to its effectiveness.

Participation

Your participation in this project is voluntary. If you do agree to participate, you can withdraw from participation at any time during the project without comment or penalty. Your decision to participate will in no way impact upon your current or future relationship with QUT or with AIM.

Your participation will involve an interview of 60 to 80 minutes conducted at a location appropriate to you (eg your office or meeting room).

Expected benefits

It is expected that this project will help you develop a deeper insight into your coaching experience. However it is anticipated that greater benefits will accrue to those receiving coaching from AIM coaches in the future.

Risks

There are no risks beyond normal day-to-day living associated with your participation in this project.
Confidentiality

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially and remain anonymous. The names of individual persons are not required in any of the responses.

The interview will be recorded to enable an accurate transcript of your responses to be produced. The recording will not be used for any other purpose. The completed transcript will be made available to you to verify the content, and following this the recording will be destroyed. Due to the requirement for accuracy in capturing participant responses, it will not be possible to participate in the study without the interview being recorded.

To maintain confidentiality, access to recordings of interviews will be available only to the researcher and a transcription assistant. Once verified by you, the transcripts will be stored in a secure location, accessible in an identifiable form only to the researcher.

Results

At the completion of the project, a copy of the results of the study will be made available to you by the researcher.

Consent to Participate

Would you please sign the accompanying written consent form to confirm your agreement to participate?

Questions / further information about the project

Please contact the researcher (details above) to have any questions answered or if you require further information about the project.

Concerns / complaints regarding the conduct of the project

QUT is committed to researcher integrity and the ethical conduct of research projects. However, if you do have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the QUT Research Ethics Officer on 3864 2340 or ethicscontact@qut.edu.au. The Researcher Ethics Officer is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an impartial manner.
CONSENT FORM for QUT RESEARCH PROJECT

A Study of managers' experiences of executive coaching and its effectiveness in bringing about behavioural change

Statement of consent
By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- have read and understood the information document regarding this project;
- have had any questions answered to your satisfaction;
- understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the researcher;
- understand that you are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;
- understand that you can contact the Research Ethics Officer on 3864 2340 or ethicscontact@qut.edu.au if you have concerns about the ethical conduct of the project;
- agree to participate in the project;
- understand that the project will include audio recording of your responses;

Name

___________________________________________________________

Signature

___________________________________________________________

Date

_____ / _____ / _____
Appendix N
Codes used in Data Analysis

1. Initial set of codes (Version 1)
2. Record of meeting with another rater to check coding
3. Revised set of codes – after checking (Version 2)
4. Communication with Gary regarding code checking
5. Further revised set of codes – after partial coding of data (Version 3)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Property</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Initial Set of Codes Version 1 - 15.09.09</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.gen</td>
<td>Coaches’ ability to develop relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.dev</td>
<td>Rapport, approachable, personable, helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.rap</td>
<td>Rapport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.tst</td>
<td>trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.con</td>
<td>confidential...safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.upr</td>
<td>unconditional positive regard, comfortable, non judgmental,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.fam</td>
<td>familiar with executive’s organization and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.prf</td>
<td>Professional attributes of coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.hon</td>
<td>Honest, integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.obj</td>
<td>Objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.car</td>
<td>Caring, interested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.exp</td>
<td>Experienced and skilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.suc</td>
<td>Committed to exec success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coaching Process</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.gen</td>
<td>Listens effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.lst</td>
<td>skillful questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.com</td>
<td>Communicates well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.chl</td>
<td>Challenging feedback, changes assumptions and comfort zone, blind spots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.res</td>
<td>Focuses on actions to gain results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.rfl</td>
<td>Creates reflective space, Helps view complexity in new ways, self awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.skl</td>
<td>Coach provides just-in-time skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.prb</td>
<td>Problem solving, working on real workplace issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.mon</td>
<td>Coach monitors progress, follows up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.obj</td>
<td>Clear objective for coaching, end goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.enc</td>
<td>Encourages, majors on positive, and celebrates achievements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.prg</td>
<td>Progress, change in exec, improvement, new behaviours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.flx</td>
<td>Flexible in content and/or arrangements, scheduling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.val</td>
<td>Validates person and feelings, gives permission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.ins</td>
<td>Coach inspires to achieve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.per</td>
<td>Assist exec to take personal responsibility for own contribution and making changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Executive’s readiness for change</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.chg</td>
<td>Approach to coaching, mindset at start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.apr</td>
<td>Exec’s engagement and follow through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.eng</td>
<td>Timeliness, was right time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.agn</td>
<td>Coaching to executive’s agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support from organisation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O.gen</td>
<td>Supervisor actively involved, engages with coaching process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O.sup</td>
<td>Reported on coaching outcomes/progress to supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O.rep</td>
<td>Peers involved in process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment – experience of</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.gen</td>
<td>Feedback – conveying the findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.fbk</td>
<td>Action points, things to address from feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.gls</td>
<td>Goals for coaching set from feedback, working with these goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perspective on coaching positive</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.pos</td>
<td>Perspective on coaching positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.imp</td>
<td>Perspective – coaching could be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benefits of coaching – personal</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.per</td>
<td>Benefits of coaching – personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benefits of coaching – team behaviours and managing team differently/better</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.tm</td>
<td>Benefits of coaching – team behaviours and managing team differently/better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benefits of coaching - organisational</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.org</td>
<td>Benefits of coaching - organisational</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Record of meeting with another rater to check coding

A meeting with Gary 30 Sept 2009 to compared agreement and variations in coding. There were many variations in coding. For the first five pages of Kirsty interview Graham had 27 codings, Gary had 34. Of these 10 were in agreement and 23 were at variance.

**Items discussed:**

Gary and Graham’s approaches have differed due to Graham’s greater familiarity with the coding and clearer focus on the research questions (which were not made clear enough to Gary).

Gary noted from the discussions that he may have:

- Not differentiated the assessment phase and the coaching phase clearly so that some items coded as relationship really belong in assessment
- Applied codes for timeliness (E.tim) to individual problem solving in the coaching process rather than the timeliness of the coaching intervention viewed as a whole
- Included in the progress coding (C.prg) anything that indicated growth rather than the actual comments about progress

Gary noted that the big issues that came out of the two interviews he coded were:

- Relationship with the coach: personable, helpfulness, confidentiality, UPR - not as much about the professional attributes
- Executive feels they own the agenda
- Timeliness – issues affecting me now
- Being challenged by the coach

**Outcomes of discussions**

Suggestions to refine the coding items:

Combine listening, questioning and communication into one item i.e. communication (C.com). The discussion is not focused enough on these distinctions to warrant three categories.

Clearly differentiate between what are statements of benefits of coaching (B.per) and what are comments on the process, and others where the manager actually quantifies their progress (C.prg)

C.prg progress will apply only to their comments on how they quantify their progress
A.act will apply particularly to forming the action plan points in the assessment phase

C.rfl will become two coding terms, ie
C.rfl – reflecting on behaviour and the way I do things (in general)
C.vew – viewing complexity in a new way, new insight, new perspective

E.tim will apply to the timeliness of the coaching intervention
C.prb will apply to working on current workplace issues

C.obj applies to setting clear objectives for the coaching
E.agn applies to how the executive feels that they own where the agenda is going

R.tst and R.rap will be combined, that is, trust and rapport will be viewed together
### Relationship
- **R.dev**: Coaches’ ability to develop relationship
- **R.rap**: Rapport, approachable, trust
- **R.con**: Confidential…safety
- **R.upr**: Unconditional positive regard, comfortable, non judgmental,
- **R.fam**: Familiar with executive’s organization and culture
- **R.tlk**: Manager values this exclusive place to talk
- **R.prf**: Professional attributes of coach
- **R.hon**: Honest, integrity
- **R.obj**: Objective
- **R.car**: Caring, interested personally
- **R.exp**: Experienced and skilled in coaching
- **R.suc**: Committed to exec success ie exec feels this is about their own success

### Coaching Process
- **C.com**: Communicates well, Listens effectively, questions skillfully
- **C.chl**: Challenging feedback, challenges assumptions and comfort zone, blind spots
- **C.res**: Focuses on actions to gain results
- **C.rfl**: Creates reflective space,
- **C.vew**: Helps view complexity in new ways, new insight, self awareness
- **C.skI**: Coach provides just-in-time skill and/or relevant advice
- **C.prb**: Problem solving, working on real workplace issues. Responsive to now needs
- **C.mon**: Coach monitors progress, initiates follows up of actions
- **C.obj**: Clear objective is set for the coaching, end goal
- **C.enc**: Encourages, majors on positive, and celebrates achievements
- **C.prg**: Progress quantified, manager measures improvement, new behaviours, changes
- **C.flx**: Flexible in arrangements, scheduling
- **C.ava**: Coach makes self available anytime
- **C.slf**: Coach’s self disclosure enlivens the process
- **C.hon**: Manager realises they need to be honest and open to get value from the coaching
- **C.val**: Validates person and feelings, gives permission
- **C.ins**: Coach inspires to achieve
- **C.per**: Assist exec to take personal responsibility for own contribution and making changes

### Manager’s engagement
- **E.chg**: Readiness for change
- **E.apr**: Manager’s approach to coaching, mindset at start
- **E.fol**: Manager’s follow through and ownership of the process
- **E.tim**: Timeliness of coaching, was right time for the coaching to begin now
- **E.agn**: Manager feels coaching was to their agenda

### Support from organisation
- **O.gen**: Supervisor actively involved, engages with coaching process and how it is working
- **O.sup**: Reported on coaching outcomes/progress to supervisor
- **O.rep**: Peers involved in process

### Assessment
- **A.gen**: Experience of the assessment process
- **A.fbk**: Feedback – Gary conveying the findings to the manager
- **A.act**: Action points, specific points to address from feedback
- **A.gls**: Goals for coaching set from feedback, working with these goals
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P.pos</th>
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<td>B.tm</td>
<td>Benefits of coaching – team behaviours and managing team differently/better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.org</td>
<td>Benefits of coaching - organisational</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Communication with Gary regarding code checking

From: Graham Hill [graham@leadershippathways.com.au]
Sent: Sunday, 4 October 2009 1:30 PM
To: Gary
Subject: research project
Attachments: Rater reliability notes.docx; codes 04.10 after compare.docx; 10 Inter Kirsty - table.docx

Hi Gary
Thanks for your help with this project, the discussion last week was very beneficial in clarifying terms

I have documented some of our discussions (notes attached), revised the codes (attached), and redone the Kirsty interview (attached)

If you have the opportunity would you please review the coding of KH and note any comments which may be
* Preference for another code
* A coding I have missed
* A coding which may be removed since it is non significant

I realise I did not make patently clear to you my research questions ie when I am setting out to discover. The following extract may help. Obviously only Q1 will be applicable to this interview.

Thanks

Graham

This study will be developed with the perspective of the practitioner in mind i.e. those with the business imperative to design and implement effective coaching programs, be they managers, HR professionals or executive coaches themselves. By adopting this stance, the research can focus more specifically on the questions confronting these professionals, in particular what are the factors of the executive coaching process that contribute to its effectiveness?

This snapshot of the existing literature has clarified the viewpoint from which this study will be approached (that of the coaching practitioner) and the question to be addressed - what are the factors of the executive coaching process that contribute to its effectiveness? Since the perspectives of both coaches and executives will be included, the study will address the two research questions:

1. What are executives’ perceptions of the factors contributing to effectiveness of executive coaching?

2. What are coaches’ perceptions of the factors contributing to effectiveness of executive coaching?
Hi Graham,

Sorry about the delay mate. I have had a rather big week and i wanted to give this the time it needed.

I have now gone through all the docs you sent. I think you have done a great job with the re coding. I went through the report thoroughly and would have to say that I could not see anything I would code differently. Perhaps I may have if I started with a clean sheet but in using yours as a guide, I agree with it all.

I hope this has been helpful.

Regards

Gary
### Relationship
- **R.dev** Coaches’ ability to develop relationship – *we click*
- **R.rap** Rapport, approachable, trust
- **R.con** Confidential...safety
- **R.upr** Unconditional positive regard, comfortable, non judgmental,
- **R.fam** Familiar with executive’s organization and culture
- **R.tlk** Manager values this exclusive place to talk
- **R.prf** Professional attributes of coach
- **R.hon** Honest, *authentic*
- **R.obj** Objective
- **R.car** Caring, interested personally
- **R.exp** Experienced and skilled in coaching
- **R.suc** Committed to exec success ie exec feels this is about their own success

### Coaching Process
- **C.com** Communicates well, Listens effectively, questions skillfully
- **C.chl** Challenging feedback, challenges assumptions and comfort zone, blind spots
- **C.res** Focuses on actions to gain results
- **C.rfl** Creates reflective space,
- **C.vew** Helps view complexity in new ways, new insight, self awareness
- **C.skl** Coach provides just-in-time skill, *model* and/or relevant advice
- **C.prb** Problem solving, working on real workplace issues. Responsive to *exec issues*
- **C.mon** Coach monitors progress, initiates follow up of actions
- **C.obj** Clear objective is set for the coaching, end goal
- **C.enc** Encourages, majors on positive, and celebrates achievements
- **C.prg** Progress quantified, manager measures improvement, new behaviours, changes
- **C.flx** Flexible in arrangements, scheduling
- **C.ava** Coach makes self available anytime
- **C.slf** Coach’s self disclosure enlivens the process, *creates me too sense*
- **C.hon** Manager *chooses* to be honest and open to get value from the coaching
- **C.val** Validates person and feelings, gives permission
- **C.ins** Coach inspires to achieve
- **C.per** Assist exec to take personal responsibility for own *reality* & making changes,
- **C.erl** Identifies blocks
- **C.snd** *Exec experiences early wins that build confidence in coach and process*
- **C.adp** *Exec enjoys coaching as sounding board to test ideas*
- **E.chg** Coach adapts process to their perception of exec engagement and developmental needs
- **E.apr**
- **E.fol**
- **E.tim** Manager’s approach to coaching, mindset at start
- **E.agn** Manager’s follow through and ownership of the process
- **O.gen** Timeliness of coaching, was right time for the coaching to begin now
- **O.sup** Manager feels coaching was to their agenda
- **O.rep**
- **O.per** Support from organisation
- **A.gen** Supervisor actively involved, engages with coaching process and how it is working
- **A.fbk** Reported on coaching outcomes/progress to supervisor
- **A.act** Peers involved in process
- **A.gls** Assessment – experience of the assessment process
- **A.gls** Feedback – Gary conveying the findings to the manager
- **A.gls** Action points, specific points to address from feedback
- **A.gls** Goals for coaching set from feedback, working with these goals
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P.pos</th>
<th>Perspective on coaching positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P.imp</td>
<td>Perspective – coaching could be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.per</td>
<td>Benefits of coaching – personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.tm</td>
<td>Benefits of coaching – team behaviours and managing team differently/better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.org</td>
<td>Benefits of coaching - organisational</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Appendix O**

*What are the Main Themes Concerning the Effectiveness of Coaching that are Evident in Relevant Literature?*

Table O1

**Published Articles 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coaches process and style, skills and technique</th>
<th>Coaching interested in exec success</th>
<th>Communication skills, organised and confidential</th>
<th>Don’t try to be friend</th>
<th>Knowledgeable of co culture</th>
<th>(about relationship)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timing of the coaching</td>
<td>Credible in the business context</td>
<td>Credible and experienced</td>
<td>Add value quickly</td>
<td>High professional standards, incl confidentiality, boundaries</td>
<td>Trust incl confidentiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational culture</td>
<td>Empathic, honest, etc</td>
<td>Be flexible</td>
<td>Be challenging</td>
<td>Organisational support</td>
<td>Transparency of process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledgeable</td>
<td>Be self confident</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Valuable relationship, get on well with coach, empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identifies blind spots</td>
<td>Focus is on leaders goals centrally</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Also learning skills ie learning and growth happens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helps to view issues differently</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reaching specific goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capable of listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assists to take appropriate action</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paige, 2002 p65-69

Stevens, 2005 p 278

Blackman, 2006 p101

Jones and Spooner, 2006 p46,47

Kombarakan, Yang, Baker, Fernandes, 2008 p87

Gyllensten and Palmer, 2007 p171
### Table O2

*Published Articles 2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anxieties at start ie approach and initial session</strong></td>
<td><strong>Issues of self and r’ship to the world incl</strong> Reflective space</td>
<td>Ownership by exec ie choice and level of control</td>
<td>Exec motivation</td>
<td>Coach: Prof credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self development and reflection</strong></td>
<td><strong>Safe place to explore problems</strong> Will challenge my assumptions Can depend on for support</td>
<td>Coaching relationship</td>
<td>Coaching relationship</td>
<td>Clarification of goals and expectations of the client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UPR incl Psych mindedness</strong></td>
<td><strong>Issues of conventional learning, skills devl’t or direct help with work</strong> Place to test ideas</td>
<td>Psych mindedness</td>
<td>Psych mindedness</td>
<td>Exec: Change readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business mindedness</strong></td>
<td><strong>Brainstorm ideas for the future</strong></td>
<td>Business culture</td>
<td>Business culture</td>
<td>Persistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship development</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conversations incl exec agenda</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communic’n skills</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>See issues in new ways</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity of coach to needs and feelings ie EI of coach</td>
<td>Committed client – readiness, attitude, timing</td>
<td>Coach’s contribution – attitude, background, knowledge, tools, responsiveness</td>
<td>Trusting relationship – maintains confidentiality, demonstrates integrity, builds rapport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant to work</td>
<td>Org culture that supports transformations</td>
<td>Structured process focused on development- depth, intensity, tools, methods, frequency, goalsetting</td>
<td>Organisational savvy ie importance of cultural environments and effect on exec</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Execs open to learning</td>
<td>Relationship with coach (pertains to bond, not just to coach characteristics) – rapport, trust, care</td>
<td>Including others in the coaching process – enrolling others in the process</td>
<td>Analyse and synthesize data esp from 360 degree, turning information into insight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Results that benefit the client – personal insights, new learning, self confidence, identity, as well as business goals</td>
<td></td>
<td>Resourcefulness – providing models, methods, tools to foster independence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Candid direct feedback ie shoot straight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table O4

*Theses*

Sztucinski, 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path to Achievement</th>
<th>Unique to Self</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Confrontation With Self</th>
<th>Array of Emotion</th>
<th>Bond With Coach</th>
<th>Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Choice</td>
<td>Relaxation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Goal accomplishement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Process control</td>
<td>Inadequacy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Enhanced self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Exclusivity</td>
<td>Guilt</td>
<td></td>
<td>Change in focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Promotion</td>
<td>- Not a “taned” program</td>
<td>- Candid feedback</td>
<td>- Vulnerability</td>
<td>- Consistently diagnose</td>
<td>Greater self-awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Figuring out what’s getting in the way</td>
<td>- Relevant/ motivational focus</td>
<td>- Challenging questions</td>
<td>- Energized</td>
<td>- Does it please</td>
<td>On-going growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Fear of failure</td>
<td>- Doesn’t try to change me</td>
<td>- Reflection</td>
<td>- Uncomfortable</td>
<td>- Caring and support</td>
<td>Better Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Boss/Influential other had coaching</td>
<td>- Enrolls over time</td>
<td>- Work assignments</td>
<td>- Turbulence</td>
<td>- Expertise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Amenable/ flexible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Commitment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

*How Executives Experience Coaching: The Essential Elements & Supporting Themes*
Table O5  
*Theses*

Ballinger, 2000

---

**Coaching Factor Items**

These factors encompass the various aspects of the coaching process. The first comparison, Table 38, summarizes the mean scores of the coaching factors for the whole sample group. The table shows the coaching factors in descending order of rating, for the sample group as a whole.

**Table 38**  
Summary of Total Sample Ratings of Coaching Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement from the Coach</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.198</td>
<td>.817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Knowledge</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>5.908</td>
<td>1.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Effort and Drive</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>5.755</td>
<td>.879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Modeled by the Coach</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>5.702</td>
<td>1.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Skills Learned</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>5.204</td>
<td>1.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chance to Try New Behaviors</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>5.971</td>
<td>1.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from Coworkers</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>4.826</td>
<td>1.243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from Boss</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>4.717</td>
<td>1.917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from the Organization</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>4.670</td>
<td>1.719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readings and Assignments</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>4.349</td>
<td>1.331</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These ratings indicate that the participants felt that encouragement from the coach was the most significant factor toward making behavior change from the coaching. Next, the group was most impacted by the knowledge they gained in the coaching, followed by
## Appendix P

### Major Themes, Pattern Codes, and Code Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Code Frequency</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executives</td>
<td>Coaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Executive Engagement</strong> - keenness to participate, right time for coaching, willing to change</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Preliminary Assessment and Feedback</strong> - valuable in giving picture of self, opinions of others and starting point for process</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Coaching process</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective for the coaching defined</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive’s progress by own measure</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3a. Encouragement and Emotional Support</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing engagement due to coach adaption of process and/or early wins</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged, inspired, self belief</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esteem and emotional support</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3b. Challenge and Reflection

| Enlarged, personally expanded | 14 | 0 | C.hon | Executive chooses to be honest and open to get value from the coaching
| | | | | Assist executive to take personal responsibility for own reality and making changes, identifies blocks
| | 9 | 3 | C.per | Challenging feedback, challenges assumptions and comfort zone, blind spots
| | 15 | 0 | C.chl | Reflective space, see complexity in new ways

| Reflective space, see complexity in new ways | 29 | 1 | C.rfl | Creates reflective space,
| | 20 | 3 | C.vew | Helps view complexity in new ways, new insight, self awareness
| | 7 | 1 | C.snd | Executive enjoys coaching as sounding board to test ideas
| | 15 | 1 | C.com | Communicates, well, listens attentively, questions skilfully

| Exclusive place to talk | 12 | 0 | C.ava | Executive enjoys coaching as sounding board to test ideas
| | 13 | 0 | R.tlk | Coach makes self available anytime

### 3c. Enhancing Executive Performance

| Responsive to executive needs, makes executive agenda central | 9 | 1 | R.suc | Committed to executive success ie executive feels this is about their own success
| | | | | Executive feels coaching was to their agenda
| | 22 | 1 | E.agn | Problem solving, working on real workplace issues. Responsive to executive issues
| | 22 | 3 | C.prb | Focuses on actions to gain results

| Relevant to now issues, assist to perform differently at work | 16 | 0 | C.res | Coach provides just-in-time skill, model and/or relevant advice
| | | | | Coach monitors progress, initiates follows up of actions
| | 32 | 3 | C.skl | Benefits of coaching - personal
| | 8 | 0 | C.mon | Experienced and skilled in coaching
| | 24 | 0 | B.per | Familiar with executives org and culture

### 4. Coach’s Contribution

| 4. Coach’s Contribution | 27 | 0 | R.exp | Honest, authentic
| | 8 | 0 | R.fam | Perspective on coaching positive
| | 6 | 0 | R.hon | Familiar with executives org and culture
| | 48 | 0 | P.pos | Experienced and skilled in coaching

|  |  |  |  | Focused on actions to gain results
|  |  |  |  | Benefits of coaching - personal
|  |  |  |  | Experienced and skilled in coaching
|  |  |  |  | Familiar with executives org and culture
|  |  |  |  | Honest, authentic
|  |  |  |  | Perspective on coaching positive

|  |  |  |  | Experienced and skilled in coaching
|  |  |  |  | Familiar with executives org and culture
|  |  |  |  | Honest, authentic
|  |  |  |  | Perspective on coaching positive

|  |  |  |  | Experienced and skilled in coaching
|  |  |  |  | Familiar with executives org and culture
|  |  |  |  | Honest, authentic
|  |  |  |  | Perspective on coaching positive

|  |  |  |  | Experienced and skilled in coaching
|  |  |  |  | Familiar with executives org and culture
|  |  |  |  | Honest, authentic
|  |  |  |  | Perspective on coaching positive

|  |  |  |  | Experienced and skilled in coaching
|  |  |  |  | Familiar with executives org and culture
|  |  |  |  | Honest, authentic
|  |  |  |  | Perspective on coaching positive

|  |  |  |  | Experienced and skilled in coaching
|  |  |  |  | Familiar with executives org and culture
|  |  |  |  | Honest, authentic
|  |  |  |  | Perspective on coaching positive

|  |  |  |  | Experienced and skilled in coaching
|  |  |  |  | Familiar with executives org and culture
|  |  |  |  | Honest, authentic
|  |  |  |  | Perspective on coaching positive

|  |  |  |  | Experienced and skilled in coaching
|  |  |  |  | Familiar with executives org and culture
|  |  |  |  | Honest, authentic
|  |  |  |  | Perspective on coaching positive

|  |  |  |  | Experienced and skilled in coaching
|  |  |  |  | Familiar with executives org and culture
|  |  |  |  | Honest, authentic
|  |  |  |  | Perspective on coaching positive

|  |  |  |  | Experienced and skilled in coaching
|  |  |  |  | Familiar with executives org and culture
|  |  |  |  | Honest, authentic
|  |  |  |  | Perspective on coaching positive

|  |  |  |  | Experienced and skilled in coaching
|  |  |  |  | Familiar with executives org and culture
|  |  |  |  | Honest, authentic
|  |  |  |  | Perspective on coaching positive

|  |  |  |  | Experienced and skilled in coaching
|  |  |  |  | Familiar with executives org and culture
|  |  |  |  | Honest, authentic
|  |  |  |  | Perspective on coaching positive

|  |  |  |  | Experienced and skilled in coaching
|  |  |  |  | Familiar with executives org and culture
|  |  |  |  | Honest, authentic
|  |  |  |  | Perspective on coaching positive

|  |  |  |  | Experienced and skilled in coaching
|  |  |  |  | Familiar with executives org and culture
|  |  |  |  | Honest, authentic
|  |  |  |  | Perspective on coaching positive

|  |  |  |  | Experienced and skille
| 5. Trusting Relationship | 10 5 | R.dev | Coaches ability to develop relationship – we click |
| | 41 5 | R.rap | Rapport, approachable, trust |
| | 15 3 | R.con | confidential...safety |
| | 28 2 | R.upr | unconditional positive regard, comfortable, non judgmental, |
| | 17 1 | R.car | Caring, interested personally |
| 6. Support from Organisation without intrusion | 25 5 | O.gen | Support from organisation |
| | 14 3 | O.rep | Reported on coaching outcomes/progress to supervisor |
| | 4 0 | O.sup | Supervisor actively involved, engages with coaching process and how it is working |
| Unassigned | 5 0 | C.flx | Flexible in arrangements, scheduling |
| | 5 0 | B.tm | Benefits of coaching – team behaviours, managing team differently |
Appendix Q
Examples of Text by Pattern Code

Table Q1
Examples of Text by Pattern Code

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme (with contributing Pattern Codes)</th>
<th>Code Frequency</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3c. Enhancing Executive Performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsive to executive needs, makes executive agenda central</td>
<td>9 1</td>
<td>R.suc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22 1</td>
<td>E.agn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22 3</td>
<td>C.prb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quotes from executives – plain text, Quotes from coaches - italics

**R.suc**
that’s the advantage of having an independent person whose interest is me and how I am managing through things. Coach manages to get across that he is there working for me…Coach is interested in my welfare and my development and things like that 8 Fay p1, 6
I like that whole, this is going to be a real personal growth as opposed to lets get some runs on the board to say you’ve done this and achieved that. 4 Freda p6
I think another thing, too, was probably some the advice he gave. It was quite clearly not centered around the best outcome for the company, or the best outcome for himself, but the best outcome for me. 1 Matt p5

**E.agn**
it was my own agenda and my own topic because it was really me that needed the growth and different strategies on how to deal with things 10 Kirsty p5
I’ve always had the sense that of what it was and what it became and what it is all were up to me 8 Fay p3
I felt completely, 100% ownership…I felt completely in control the whole way through 4 Freda p4
or I’d sort of put my foot down and go, no, I think this is where we need to be at in this particular instance because of this, this and this and we’d both justify our position from the other, and we’d go with it. 2 Brian p8
C.prb
I think that’s a very important process. It’s not just a matter of relaying, performance against your action plan and then advancing onto that as the way forward. I think a very important component that coach was very good at was “what’s happening in your world” because what’s happening in your world can influence what challenges you’ve got in front of you at that point in time 12 Andy p5
I suppose there was just in my normal work day there was different issues that came up which I’d think, ok, I’ll bring that up at the next session 3 Karen p3
So rather than dealing with business issues, a lot of the time we were dealing with more political type issues in the company. 1 Matt p4

What can I help you with today because in virtually every case there is something that has come up and they need guidance on how to address it and its bugging them a coach p1