



How Coaches Spend Their Time:

A WHITE PAPER FOR COACHES

Introduction

There has been much research to determine the most important elements in coaching engagements. This research has resulted in competencies that guide coach training programs and inform coaches as they engage with clients. However, coaching competencies are only part of a coaching job—except for the rare instances when a coach has others to do the marketing, schedule sessions and perform all the necessary clerical tasks associated with the profession—and there is little research on the other elements of a coaching practice or an internal coaching program. Our study is a job analysis that takes an objective, rigorous look at these elements to better determine the importance of these duties in external coaching practices and internal coaching programs.

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The Study

The study was conducted in two phases. The first phase was a qualitative analysis using subject matter experts (SMEs) to determine the likely elements of a successful external coaching practice and internal coaching program. This was followed by a quantitative survey of 376 external coaches and 110 internal coaches to gauge each element's level of importance and to validate the findings in the qualitative study.

Phase 1: Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative study utilized the DACUM (Developing A CURriculum) process, which elicits job-based information from SMEs in a one-or-two day workshop. In this case, trained DACUM facilitators conducted a two-day session with a group of 10 external coaches from four countries and a separate two-day session with a group of nine internal coaches from three countries. All SMEs had five or more years of coaching experience. Some SMEs had no coaching credential, while others held varying levels of credentials.

In each session, six scales of criteria were developed for either an external coaching practice or an internal coaching program. Each group also created a set of knowledge and skills required for its respective subject matter.

Phase 2: Quantitative Survey

In order to gather a greater range of opinions on these elements, a quantitative phase using best-worst scaling was developed. Respondents were presented with a subset list of three to four items from each scale and asked to identify the most and least important items in that list. This process was repeated many times with the items presented in random order so that we could perform a statistical analysis of the item ranking. An anchoring question that asked if all of the items were important, some were important, or none were important was added to each presentation of the items for additional data.

The scale items consisted of unique sets of questions for external and internal coaches, while all respondents saw a common survey introduction and concluding demographics section.

A total of 376 external coaches and 110 internal coaches responded to the survey from December 2015 through January 2016. A sample question is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Example survey question

Which of these tasks is Most Important and which is the Least Important for developing a coaching business?

(1 of 28)

Most Important	Least Important	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Deliver online presentations (e.g. webinars, podcasts, videos)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Create social media campaign
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Develop a strategic plan
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Participate in media opportunities (e.g. radio, TV, newspaper)

Considering only the items above...

- None of these are important to me
- Some of these are important to me
- All of these are important to me

Click the 'Next' button to continue...



0%  100%

The results of the survey were analyzed utilizing multiple scoring methods. Tables 1-12 (see page 7) provide the ranking for each item based upon the survey scores. Rank 1 is the highest (most important) on each scale.

Survey participants were also asked to identify the five most important knowledge items and the five most important skill items for either an external coaching practice or internal coaching program. These were scored simply by totaling the number of times each item appeared in a “top five” ranking. Due to study limitations, the knowledge and skills rankings should not be taken as absolute, but rather as indications of importance. The resulting counts are provided in Tables 13-16.

Conclusions

When looking across all scales for a broad perspective, a different focus emerges for external coaching practices and internal coaching programs. For external coaches, the client is at the heart of all they do. Although client engagement is also a high priority for internal coaches, it appears that the most important part of the job is getting support from superiors and ensuring the program is aligned with organizational goals and strategy. Let's take a closer look at details of specific scales to see just how each group is spending their time.

External Coaching Practice

From looking at the external coaching practice data, it is clear that clients and coaching engagements are the focus. External coaches feel that the more administrative practices are less important for their business. We see evidence of this from the high rank of individual coaching sessions and tracking client progress on the Deliver Coaching Services scale (Table 2). Even when it comes to administrative functions, external coaches are still focused on clients by preparing client invoices and maintaining client records (Table 6).

External coaches like to sustain mental clarity by maintaining healthy boundaries and mindfulness practice (Table 4). The following knowledge and skills, all of which play an important role in coaching engagements, were ranked as most important by external coaches, further illustrating that external coaching practices are client-centric (Tables 13-14):

- Emotional intelligence,
- ICF Core Competencies,
- Coaching principles,
- ICF Code of Professional Ethics,
- Listening,
- Coaching, and
- Communication.

Additional patterns emerge when looking at specific scales. More experienced coaches seem to spend more time following up on sales leads than other external coaches. Data shows that coaches who have an ICF Professional Certified Coach (PCC) Credential or who have coached over 500 sessions in the last five years place greater importance on following up on sales leads than less experienced coaches. Less experienced coaches may want to pay more attention to following up on sales leads if they wish to gain more experience.

When considering administrative functions, PCC coaches placed lower importance on maintaining tax documents and reviewing periodic financial reports than other coaches. More experienced coaches may be less focused on finances than others, which would beg the question: Which came first? Are experienced coaches successful because they didn't focus on finances, or are they less focused on finances because they're already successful?

Experienced external coaches place greater importance on developing a personal support system. Perhaps, this is one of the keys to longevity. It also appears that external coaches as a whole are fairly independent because consulting with health care practitioners was of lowest importance.

In addition to differences between coaches of varying experience levels, contrasts also appear to exist between credentialed and non-credentialed coaches. An obvious difference is that credentialed coaches rated obtaining and maintaining a credential higher than those without (items 2 and 3 on the Develop Professional Competency scale, Table 3). Credential-holders also put greater importance on researching new methods or trends.

Non-credentialed coaches placed a greater importance on creating media products and conducting public relations campaigns than those with credentials. These items are fairly low in importance for both groups, but if this finding is considered with the fact that PCC coaches place much less importance on public relations campaigns, then it's possible that credentialed coaches feel their credential somewhat obviates the need for media focus.

When it comes to delivering coaching services, PCC coaches place a greater importance on involving stakeholders (items 10 and 11 on the Deliver Coaching Services scale, Table 2). Perhaps, this is a small element of their success, in that, ensuring

alignment or coordination with stakeholders enhances coaching satisfaction by all parties. The higher importance placed on concluding coaching engagements by non-credential-holders may imply that more experienced coaches don't mind leaving engagements open. It might be that non-credential-holders feel more need for closure and that more experienced coaches don't mind leaving engagements open for potential future work.

Internal Coaching Program

The overarching theme for internal coaches is securing support from leaders, securing resources and ensuring alignment with the organizational goals and strategy. We see evidence for this in the high rank of each of the following (Tables 7-9):

- Establishing the strategic business case;
- Securing a champion, sponsor and resources;
- Defining the coaching services and parameters;
- Monitoring the program for effectiveness; and
- Engaging with key influencers and leaders.

However, it is evident from the high rankings of knowledge and skills for internal coaches that client engagement is still important (Tables 15-16).

When managing a coaching program, the majority of internal coaches ranked managing the internal coaching budget and processing coach or client special requests or exceptions as the least important tasks (Table 8). Because building support for the program and aligning with the organization are the most important elements, it is likely budget and special request issues are seen as annoyances rather than moving their program forward.

A very low level of importance was given to researching global cultural norms when considering elements to ensure business and cultural relevance (Table 9). The low score may be due to the fact that many internal coaches are not part of a global organization or due to the feeling that organizational culture is more important than societal culture. It could also be because of the belief that no matter what culture the individual comes from or how great the cultural disparity between coach, client and organization is, cultural norms truly have little importance in coaching outcomes.

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Table 1. Ranking for external coaches: Develop Coaching Business scale

Rank	Number Item	Item
1	15	Develop coaching products and services
2	9	Create brand identity
3	22	Deliver speaking presentations (e.g., conferences, professional organizations, local chapter)
4	1	Develop a strategic plan
5	26	Follow up sales leads
6	23	Develop referral process
7	14	Develop coaching proposals
8	13	Conduct exploratory meetings
9	11	Participate in networking events
10	4	Develop business website
11	27	Solicit client testimonials
12	2	Develop a marketing plan
13	5	Develop professional bio
14	24	Provide client appreciation
15	16	Write professional publications (e.g., blogs, white papers, articles)
16	12	Participate in professional organizations (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, niche-specific organizations)
17	7	Develop contact database
18	17	Participate in media opportunities (e.g., radio, TV, newspaper)
19	28	Deliver online presentations (e.g., webinars, podcasts, videos)
20	3	Deliver sales presentations
21	20	Create social media campaign
22	10	Develop business newsletters (e.g., marketing, informational)
23	21	Conduct direct marketing campaign
24	18	Create media products (e.g., podcasts, radio show)
25	19	Conduct public relations campaigns (e.g., press releases, product launch)
26	25	Identify sponsorship opportunities
27	6	Create directory listings
28	8	Develop brochures and flyers

Table 2. Ranking for external coaches: Deliver Coaching Services scale

Rank	Number Item	Item
1	4	Conduct individual coaching sessions
2	12	Track client progress
3	2	Conduct client orientation
4	1	Finalize client contract
5	3	Schedule coaching sessions
6	15	Conclude coaching engagement
7	11	Conduct stakeholder alignment meetings
8	6	Conduct team (a group of people working toward a common goal) coaching sessions
9	9	Debrief client assessments
10	8	Review client assessments
11	10	Conduct stakeholder interviews
12	5	Conduct group (a number of individuals in a social entity) coaching sessions
13	14	Observe clients in their environment
14	13	Provide supplemental materials (e.g., reading materials, case studies, activities)
15	7	Administer client assessments

Table 3. Ranking for external coaches: Develop Professional Competency scale

Rank	Number Item	Item
1	4	Participate in mentor coaching (e.g., provide, receive)
2	2	Obtain ICF Credential
3	3	Maintain ICF Credential
4	14	Participate in personal and professional development groups (e.g., mastermind, peer support)
5	6	Participate in coach supervision
6	1	Obtain professional certifications
7	8	Participate in complementary educational opportunities (e.g., conferences, workshops)
8	5	Obtain personal coaching
9	10	Maintain complementary professional credentials (e.g., licenses, certifications)
10	9	Provide coaching skills training
11	15	Research new methods or trends
12	7	Participate in ICF activities (e.g., global, regional, local)
13	12	Provide pro bono coaching
14	11	Review professional publications
15	13	Participate in community volunteer activities

Table 4. Ranking for external coaches: Model Self Care and Well Being scale

Rank	Number Item	Item
1	5	Maintain healthy boundaries (e.g., say no, manage time)
2	7	Maintain mindfulness practices (e.g., yoga, walking, meditation)
3	1	Maintain exercise routine
4	3	Maintain healthy eating habits
5	6	Develop personal support system
6	2	Practice stress management strategies
7	4	Maintain personal hobbies
8	8	Consult with health care practitioners (e.g., doctors, chiropractors)

Table 5. Ranking for external coaches: Manage Business Operations scale

Rank	Number Item	Item
1	3	Set up operational systems (e.g., technology, financial management)
2	1	Set up legal business entity
3	5	Develop operating budget
4	7	Set up workspace
5	9	Define organization structure and roles
6	2	Determine startup costs
7	8	Determine ancillary support services (e.g., assistant, web developer, accountant)
8	4	Create administrative procedures
9	6	Obtain insurance coverage (e.g., personal and professional liability, property)
10	10	Supervise support staff

Table 6. Ranking for external coaches: Manage Administrative Functions scale

Rank	Number Item	Item
1	1	Prepare client invoices
2	6	Maintain client records
3	9	Process business correspondence (e.g., email, phone, postal mail)
4	2	Collect accounts receivable
5	5	Maintain personal calendar
6	16	Maintain tax documents
7	3	Process accounts payable
8	7	Maintain business files
9	8	Maintain coaching resources (e.g., library, electronic files)
10	18	Maintain online presence
11	4	Reconcile business accounts
12	14	Review periodic financial reports
13	11	Maintain workplace organization and cleanliness
14	15	Manage subcontractors and service providers
15	17	Prepare expense reports
16	10	Maintain office equipment
17	13	Arrange business travel
18	12	Maintain office supplies inventory

Table 7. Ranking for internal coaches: Develop Internal Coaching Program scale

Rank	Number Item	Item
1	1	Establish strategic business case for internal coaching
2	2	Secure internal coaching champion or sponsor
3	5	Secure internal coaching resources (e.g., funding, people)
4	3	Define internal coaching services and parameters
5	8	Train initial internal coaches
6	4	Define internal coaching project plan
7	9	Design internal coaching program measurement process
8	11	Develop internal coaching standard operating procedures
9	12	Pilot internal coaching program
10	6	Market internal coaching services to clients and stakeholders
11	10	Develop internal coaching support materials (e.g., intake packet, coaching log)
12	7	Hire initial internal coaches
13	11	Maintain workplace organization and cleanliness
14	15	Manage subcontractors and service providers
15	17	Prepare expense reports
16	10	Maintain office equipment
17	13	Arrange business travel
18	12	Maintain office supplies inventory

Table 8. Ranking for internal coaches: Manage Internal Coaching Program scale

Rank	Number Item	Item
1	9	Monitor internal coaching program effectiveness
2	12	Design long-term internal coaching program strategy
3	2	Assess ability of internal coaches
4	8	Monitor coach and program accountability
5	3	Match internal coaches to qualified clients
6	1	Engage qualified internal coaching clients
7	7	Manage coach performance
8	4	Assess internal coaching resource needs (e.g., funding, people)
9	11	Implement internal coaching program improvements
10	10	Report program progress to stakeholders
11	5	Manage internal coaching budget
12	6	Process coach or client special requests or exceptions

Table 9. Ranking for internal coaches: Ensure Business and Cultural Relevance scale

Rank	Number Item	Item
1	1	Engage with key influencers and leaders
2	8	Propose coaching initiatives to support strategic business initiatives
3	7	Partner with key local influencers
4	4	Research internal cultural norms
5	2	Research industry and organizational practices and trends
6	5	Participate in industry and organizational learning events
7	6	Participate in industry and organizational networking events
8	3	Research global cultural norms

Table 10. Ranking for internal coaches: Facilitate Internal Coaching Engagement Scale

Rank	Number Item	Item
1	6	Coach internal client
2	1	Contract with internal coaching client and sponsor
3	3	Prepare for client session
4	4	Link client goals to organizational measures
5	5	Conduct coaching orientation
6	10	Report ethics violations
7	11	Conduct client assessments
8	7	Coach internal team (a group of people working toward a common goal)
9	13	Debrief client assessments
10	12	Review client assessments
11	14	Conduct midpoint check-in
12	2	Schedule coaching sessions
13	8	Coach internal group (a number of individuals in a social entity)
14	9	Provide on-demand coaching
15	17	Close coaching engagement
16	16	Collect client results
17	15	Conduct observation of client

Table 11. Ranking for internal coaches: Facilitate Coaching-Related Skill Development scale

Rank	Number Item	Item
1	1	Conduct needs assessment (e.g., organizational, team)
2	7	Conduct coaching demonstrations
3	6	Share skill development resources
4	5	Facilitate coaching circles
5	4	Deliver workshops and courses
6	3	Develop workshops and courses
7	2	Recommend skill development solutions

Table 12. Ranking for internal coaches: Pursue Personal and Professional Development scale

Rank	Number Item	Item
1	1	Complete coach-specific training program
2	6	Maintain coaching credential
3	8	Implement individual development plan
4	3	Participate in mentor coaching
5	5	Obtain coaching credential
6	4	Participate in coaching supervision
7	7	Create individual development plan
8	2	Participate in professional organizations
9	11	Participate in special projects (e.g., task force, leadership role)
10	9	Participate in professional conferences
11	10	Monitor industry trends

Table 13. External Coach Knowledge counts

Item Number	Knowledge	Counts
1	Emotional intelligence	266
8	ICF Core Competencies	247
22	Coaching principles	196
7	ICF Code of Professional Ethics	185
2	Change management	111
5	Positive psychology	109
3	Human and organization dynamics	107
4	Neuroscience	94
14	Personality types	92
20	Transformational leadership	90
13	Learning styles	63
12	Neurolinguistic programming	58
9	Cultural diversity	42
19	Systems theory	41
21	Cognitive behavioral theory	40
17	Human needs psychology	32
18	Nonviolent communication	27
6	Somatics	22
15	Cognitive processing style	21
16	Transactional analysis	21
11	Neuroassociative conditioning	6
10	Quantum physics	3

Table 14. External Coach Skills counts

Item Number	Skills	Counts
1	Listening	343
12	Coaching	230
11	Communication	146
29	Challenging	91
27	Giving and receiving feedback	87
25	Reframing	85
32	Acknowledging and validating	82
19	Observation	81
30	Evoking transformation	75
28	Deepening the learning	74
16	Goal setting	70
34	Reading body language	70
4	Leadership	51
2	Strategic thinking	49
23	Forwarding the action	46
8	Facilitation	40
7	Marketing	35
17	Mentoring	27
33	Selling	22
18	Prioritizing	20
5	Public speaking	19
3	Team building	17
21	Conflict management or resolution	15
9	Organization	15
22	Storytelling	14
6	Planning	12
24	Calling forth	10
10	Negotiation	10
31	Holding client's skills	9
26	Interpreting	9
13	Analytical	6
14	Presentation	5
20	Teaching	5
15	Writing	5

Table 15. Internal Coach Knowledge counts

Item Number	Knowledge	Counts
1	Emotional intelligence	76
13	Neuroscience linked to coaching, change, leadership	56
8	Leadership competencies	46
4	Coaching body of knowledge	45
15	Coaching models	43
9	Organizational culture	38
3	Goal setting model	36
14	Change management	35
2	Adult development theory and practice	30
11	Systems thinking	23
22	Strategic direction	18
23	Sensitive to language	17
17	Business acumen	16
12	Cultural competence	16
18	Hierarchy of values	12
7	Perceptual levels	11
21	Resources	7
5	Linguistics (speech acts)	6
19	Organizational policies and procedures	5
6	Narrative	4
10	Organizational systems	4
20	Management theory	2
16	Organizational history	2

Table 16. Internal Coach Skills counts

Item Number	Skills	Counts
1	Active listening	93
3	Powerful questioning	82
33	Building trust and intimacy	54
4	Contracting	31
10	Relationship building	26
25	Use of silence	26
5	Facilitating goal setting	25
14	Rapport building	24
9	Intuition	20
21	Reframing	20
26	Reflection	17
30	Direct communication	16
34	Protecting organizational confidentiality	16
2	Communication (verbal, written)	15
35	Using client's vocabulary	10
12	Facilitation	9
6	Holding the vision	9
23	Using metaphor and analogy	8
24	Leadership	7
20	Reading body language	6
32	Use of humor	6
13	Calibrating	5
15	Storytelling	5
29	Managing up	4
16	Networking	3
27	Strategic thinking	3
19	Using virtual technology	3
31	Candor	2
7	Time management	2
8	Negotiating	1
28	Project management	1
22	Aligning perceptual shifts	0
17	Analytical	0
18	Paraphrasing	0
11	Public speaking	0

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