FEATURE

The Niche of Coaching Supervision

Creating a reflective safe space for coaches

By Terry H. Hildebrandt, PhD, MCC

Reproduced with the permission of choice Magazine, www.choice-online.com

The business of supporting other professional coaches in their own development has long been a niche for coaches. This includes coach training programs, coach mentoring and coaching supervision. While coach training and mentoring are well established, coaching supervision is an emerging practice and business niche.

Peter Hawkins and Eve Turner conducted an Internet-based research project on coaching supervision in 2014 with 569 participant coaches and found that much has changed since their earlier research done in 2006. Most notably, they saw a rise in coaches receiving regular supervision, to 92 percent from 44 percent in the U.K. and 81 percent globally (Hawkins & Turner, 2017). Also, a greater percentage of organizations that hire external coaches are also expecting coaches to receive supervision.

However, North America still lags behind Europe and is roughly where the U.K. was in 2006. Nonetheless, U.S.-based, third-party coaching providers are beginning to see corporate clients ask about coaching supervision (Underhill, 2017). Also, more coaching supervisor training programs are being offered in the United States and Canada.

What is Coaching Supervision?

The International Coach Federation (ICF) defines coaching supervision as: "a collaborative learning practice to continually build the capacity of the coach through reflective dialogue and to benefit his or her clients and the overall system" (ICF, 2017b).

At its heart, coaching supervision is about creating a safe, confidential space for coaches to reflect on their own practice. Common topics discussed include: reviewing and analyzing a client's system to gain insight and additional options for best serving the client; dealing with issues of ethics, professionalism and contracting; celebrating success; ongoing personal and professional development; and restoration.

How is Supervision Different from Coaching & Mentoring?

While there are certainly overlaps between coaching, mentoring and supervision, the ICF and other professional bodies make clear distinctions between these practices.

The ICF references Hawkins and Smith's (2013) "three Cs" model of Competencies, Capability and Capacity to ex-

plain the different purposes of coach training, mentoring and supervision, which are all part of continuing professional development (ICF, 2017c).

Coach training and mentor coaching (for an ICF credential) are designed to build coaching core *competency* skills and the *capability* to use these skills in an effective way at the right time with clients. Coaching supervision focuses more on the *capability* and *capacity* of the coach, where capacity is about emotional and professional maturity.

In my own experience, coaching typically focuses on helping a coachee identify and achieve their goals. Coach mentoring focuses primarily on skill development and often includes the mentor coach listening to recorded coaching sessions and providing feedback on coaching skills to the mentee. In contrast, coaching supervision focuses on the entire system including the client, supervisee/coach, and the client's overall system.

The supervisor supports the coach in improving their effectiveness with their clients by providing a safe space for reflection and brainstorming on how to further develop the supervisee and the effectiveness of their coaching interventions. A professionally trained coaching supervisor can provide much-needed support for coaches who often work independently with their clients.

Having another experienced coach in the role of a supervisor to bounce ideas off of and to provide a safe space for reflection is a much-needed oasis from the day-to-day business of coaching.

Why is Coaching Supervision Important?

I see supervision becoming an essential best practice for coaches for the following reasons:

Some corporate clients are starting to ask if coaching firms are using coaching supervisors, which will likely become a key competitive differentiator in the future.

- Coaching supervision improves the quality of coaches' work with their clients.
- Some coaching firms are including supervision as part of their corporate proposals, which could offer additional revenue streams.
- Coaches commonly pay for professional coaching supervision and hire their own supervisors. This could be a valuable service that experienced coaches with supervisor training could develop as a new market niche.
- The ICF includes coaching supervision (both giving and receiving) as one of the options for Continuing Coach Education (CCE) Hours (ICF, 2017a).

Hawkins and Turner found in their 2014 study that the primary motivations for coaches engaging with a supervisor were their personal commitment to good practice and its contribution to their continuing professional development.

A secondary factor was that some credentialing bodies require supervision to maintain a coaching credential. For example, the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) requires at least four hours of supervision a year and recommends one hour of supervision for every 35 hours of client coaching. Even though the ICF does not currently require supervision for coach credentialing, they do recommend it as a best practice for continuing professional development.

How Does Supervision Work?

In the last 10 years, many models have been developed to support supervision. These models draw from supervision best practices in other helping professions and include the Gestalt approach, systems theory, humanistic psychology, psychodynamic theory, analytical psychology and transactional analysis, to name a few (Bachkirova, Jackson, & Clutterbuck, 2011).

Probably the most popular model is the Seven-Eyed Model created by Hawkins and Shohet (1989). This model examines the client-coach-supervisor system from seven different perspectives. These include:

1. The client's context,
2. The coach's interventions,
3. The relationship between the coach and the client,
4. The coach's self-awareness,
5. The relationship between the coach and supervisor, including parallel processes,
6. The supervisor's reactions and reflections, and
7. The wider context and system.

Using the Seven-Eyed Model, the supervisor and supervisee engage in rich dialogue and reflection, resulting in insights that can expose blind spots, deepen self-awareness and open possibilities for new client interventions. Supervision can be done in a one-on-one setting or in groups.

How to Launch a Coaching Supervision Business

I highly recommend that experienced coaches wishing to explore coaching supervision as a business first hire a professional supervisor for themselves to experience the benefits and the process of supervision.

Since coaching supervision has its own competencies and ethical standards, I also strongly suggest that coaches receive specialized training before supervising other coaches. The European Mentoring & Coaching Council (EMCC) has an accreditation process for coaching supervision training programs and lists credentialed training providers on its website (EMCC, 2017).

Experienced supervisors can also apply for individual accreditation as a coaching supervisor from the EMCC,

Reproduced with the permission of choice Magazine, www.choice-online.com

the Association for Coaching (AC), and the Association for Professional Executive Coaching and Supervision (APECS).

Summary

Coaching supervision is already an established practice in the UK and Europe. As the field of coaching continues to grow globally, clients and organizations that hire coaches will likely demand more rigorous quality standards from coaches and coaching firms.

Just as we are seeing more emphasis on coach certification, coaching supervision will likely be the next evolution of enhancing coaching quality. Supervision also provides coaches with the support to reflect upon their own practice and engage in continuing professional development in a confidential setting that is customized to their unique context and individual needs.

REFERENCES:

Bachkirova, T., Jackson, P., & Clutterbuck, D. (2011). *Coaching and Mentoring Supervision: Theory and Practice*. New York: NY: Open University Press.

EMCC. (2017). About the European Supervision Quality Award, from http://www.emccouncil.org/eu/en/accreditation/esqa

Hawkins, P., & Shohet, R. (1989). *Supervision in the Helping Professions*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Hawkins, P., & Smith, N. (2013). *Coaching, Mentoring and Organizational Consultancy: Supervision, Skills and Development* (2nd ed.). Berkshire, England: Open University Press.

Hawkins, P., & Turner, E. (2017). "The Rise of Coaching Supervision 2006–2014". *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice,* 1-13. doi: 10.1080/17521882.2016.1266002

ICF. (2017a). Accepted sources for CCE, from http://coachfederation.org/credential/landing.cfm?ItemNumber=3326&RDtoken=2617&userID=

ICF. (2017b). Coaching supervision, from http://coachfederation.org/credential/landing.cfm?ItemNumber=4259&_ga=1.245966916.1541132702.1476546220

ICF. (2017c). Continuing professional development (CPD), from http://coachfederation.org/credential/landing.cfm?ItemNumber=4258&navItemNumber=3364

Underhill, B. (2017). Coaching supervision: It's here (or is it?), from http://www.coachsource.com/drupal7/2017/02/06/coaching-supervision-it%E2%80%99s-here-or-it

The Power of Specializing

Carving out your coaching niche

What is niche coaching and why is it important? What are the benefits of a niche coaching business? Does niche coaching differ from life coaching, and in what ways? How do you find the right client niche that fits you? Is special training required? How do you package, price and market your niche client programs? Join us as we look at the power of specialization in building your business and making a greater impact.

Reproduced with the permission of choice Magazine, www.choice-online.com