

Interpretation and opportunities of coaching in the public service

The importance of coaching is increasingly recognized in the life of organizations, but it is still not typically accepted and applied in the practice of public sector. The first part of the study takes the basics of coaching and presents its features and benefits. In the second part, the author presents the possibilities of appearing in the organizational and management culture of public administration. Key words: coaching, organizational culture, leadership attitudes, public service

Introduction

Coaching has become a major asset in the life of profit-oriented organizations in recent decades. Unfortunately, the popularity and acceptance of the method in the practice of public service is currently minimal, as the necessary knowledge and financial capital were earlier not available and the level of development of the organizational culture, the leadership identity, was not mature enough to establish and use time and money-intensive system as a resource. Coaching is inherently a tool used to develop top leaders and managers, but it can also be effective in enhancing the efficiency of professionals, key people and teams, furthermore it can be used as an organizational and management tool as well. (SZABÓ-SZAKÁCS; 2015:183-199) The article looks at the basics of coaching, describes its process and toolbox, and focuses on coaching-driven organizational culture and leadership attitudes.

The interpretation of coaching (coaching basics)

Coaching is basically a personalized method, in which the coach does not actually advise, but supports the client in development relying on his or her own resources. It is a kind of developmental, educational and training activity, where the client is assisted by a specialist in reaching a specific goal. Coaching is not a „guidance”, or „development consultancy” as many mistakenly believe. While the counselor, or adviser primarily deals with problems in order to help clients overcome them, the coach deals with addressing changes in the positive direction and supporting this process. The consultant brings a certain knowledge that is relevant to the issue, but he or she cannot usually deal with the client's well-being and development. However, the coach focuses on the human questions and places the client's personal success in the forefront. According to this method, the coach teaches the client how to use opportunities more freely and achieve more daring goals. The task of the coach is to provide feedback and realistic perspective, and to enable the unfolding of the client's talent being hidden so far. The client's responsibility is to take steps in order to achieve the planned results.

Coaching is:	Coaching is not:
a work that connects the client's professional and personal world.	mentoring.
a situational and target-oriented behavior.	psychotherapy.
a process that guarantees the same rights.	a work process leading to a certain goal.
promotes continuous development.	an on-the job training and group development.

1. chart: coaching characteristics – summary chart (own editing)

The coach has appropriate education and enough experience in the lifelong development and its technology both in personal and professional terms as well. The consultant can create a dependent relationship, while the coach frees the client to soar.

There are several variants of the concept of coaching, perhaps the most suitable and practically related concept is the following: „The word *“coach”* means a trainer, a tutor, but the word *„trainer”* covers this activity the best. Being a coach means to help others achieve those opportunities that they have. The coach makes possible for the clients to unfold themselves from their own power and develop in the desired direction. Coaches can strengthen others to use their competencies in practice and increase their initiative to change.”(Tukora Gábor, president of the Hungarian Coach Association). (SZABÓ-SZAKÁCS; 2015:183)

Most important tools of coaching:

- good questioning,
- listening,
- management of attention, and
- search for solution, where the focus of the client concerned should be directed to the most appropriate solution.

We can talk about a developer relationship between two or more people with the following key points:

- goal setting,
- specification of expectations,
- evaluation of achievements, and
- motivation.

The coaching process has typically five phases:

- 1.) start and recruitment phase
- 2.) agreement
- 3.) working phase: situation analysis, diagnosis, phase of problem solving
- 4.) closure phase
- 5.) evaluation phase.

In the process of coaching there is always the opportunity to acquire new experiences and new knowledge. Coaching is most favored by managers because of the sake of success, as they are able to make more effective professional choices thanks to the support provided by the coach. A further advantage of coaching for the managers is that it provides immediately available information and external unbiased criticism. The basic of coaching takes up 3-12 months, although different time intervals can occur, since the service and the appearing questions are personalized and unique in every case.

Types of coaching based on the circle of participants (clients):

- personal coaching: is a development process, in which the most important goal of the participant leader or professional is to become the source and active shaper of the change process in solving problems of his or her professional challenges;
- team coaching: is a group process for the development of a team with a given organizational function, focusing on the professional problems of team members and team-to-team collaboration;
- group coaching: organization-independent, training-type grouping process where multiple organizational units and / or organizational professionals and leaders meet to jointly process and solve professional challenges and jams;

- organizational coaching: internal support organized for the employees working in the same organization/unit.

Two main types of coaching are distinguished, depending on whether business problems or personal problems have to be solved:

- 1.) Life coaching is a kind of individual life counseling where the coach can help the client by approaching his or her problems in a different perspective and by strengthening their personal values in achieving their goals. Life coach, unlike the psychologist, does not seek to find the causes of the past, he or she looks to the future all the while, in order to exclude negative overtones from the conversation. For this reason, the coach does not judge or even give advice, but only by asking the right questions makes the clients aware of the right decision and behavior that suits the client's personality the best.
- 2.) Business coaching usually addresses problems arising from business dilemmas, but it can also make a difference in acquiring various skills. Business coaching has two types:
 - Executive coaching, which means "personal training" with top managers and focuses on the development of communication, organizational skills and delegation capability.
 - Skill coaching on the other hand refines the basic skills of lower-ranking executives in order to build on them later.

Process and forms of coaching

Most important characteristics of the coaching process are the following aspects:

- *Target-specific, result-oriented process:* Accordingly, attention is directed from problems to possible solutions, and from shortages to strengths and opportunities (future). It focuses on the search for harmony and the joy-feeling of human relationships that can be achieved by supporting and developing another person.
- *Contract based:* The basis of a coaching process is a contract that specifies the goal set between the coach and the client and it also explores the tools used and the method of feedback. Contract binding is an inevitable fundamental part of this process in order to achieve what the client wants (not what the coach does!).
- *Action-oriented:* It focuses on the ternary of thoughts, words, and deeds primarily on actions. The process does not end with theoretical problem solving or decision making. The emphasis is on the implementation, and on the client's action- and initiative.
- *Personalized:* The coach does not provide panel answers and suggestions as a solution for the client, but helps highlight specific solutions of the situation
- *It is based on the principle of trust:* It is of significant importance that the client concerned becomes open, because it is the basis of the success. The process needs internal motivation from the client. During the meetings between the coach and the client leader's values and skills are clarified and examined and a highly motivating goal will be set for the client. Main characteristics of the relationship between coach and client: equal partnership, mutual trust, honesty, openness, and transparency of intentions.
- *Process and system approach:* Primarily, the client as a human being is the centerpiece of the process. The coach relies on the partner as a complex personality, managing the various aspects of life in an integrated way being aware of the fact that any of these difficulties affect each other and interact with each other. In practice, it means that we assume different roles in our professional, organizational, or our personal lives, since each situation needs different attitudes and skills. In the professional world, we mainly have to focus on efficiency, on the utilization of abilities and skills. In the organization there are also different habits and behaviors that characterize certain employees and positions. To our personal lives belong our friends, our families and our attitude to

them. Coaching deals with all three fields, as they cannot be separated being integrated into the client's life. (Hauser, 2006:84)

- *It builds on the „here and now“*: Coaching is a powerful, internally-based process, focusing on the present and the future, and is always connected to real, interactive situations. Due to coaching it is possible to process the acquired experience and to change the thinking and actions of the client.

All in all, the coaching process typically aims the supportive approach to the change and development process of the participant (leader, manager, and client) by focusing on a future goal the client is highly motivated to achieve. „The goal is clarified among the actors at the beginning of this special change and development process and it is clear, well-formed and conscientious for both parties. The agreement is sealed by the parties with a written or verbal „contract“ bearing in mind the uniqueness of the unrepeatable and unrepresentative person concerned and in view of this, building upon his or her potential.” (SZABÓ-SZAKÁCS; 2015:184)

Advantages of coaching:

- easy to apply – it is an “on-the-job” service, the loss of working time is minimal.
- "Just in time" learning, the client can learn what he or she needs right now.
- Flexibly adapts to the schedule of the client.
- Personal, so it is fully customized.
- Its impact is long-term - it helps the clients acquire important skills in life.
- It has added value to leadership: helps others achieve their goals and develop.
- The direct user of the service is the leader, but coaching has an impact on the whole organization.
- Coaching is a lot of return on investment in the personal and organizational future.

Coaching can be used not only in difficult situations, because it can be applied to numerous problems. Coaching provides tools in individual and organizational levels that help make important steps on the road to success. Coaching has a long-term effect, since it improves and supports skills providing strategies to prevent potential problems.

Coaching attitude in the organization and leadership culture

The organizational culture of the public service has been constantly moving, and been in the process recently. Nowadays, not only the characteristics of the authoritarian culture of authority determine the prevailing value system, but the impact of transformation of generations is also highly noticeable. Trust, cooperation, harmonious, rapid and accurate sharing of information, satisfaction of individual career needs set new tasks for public service leaders in the future. (SZABÓ-SZAKÁCS; 2015:186–187) Of course, no organization can do without clear rules and powers, the know-how and the good work organization. High performance and a balanced workplace atmosphere are indispensable and expected within a stable framework, but it can be only realized in circumstances, where employees view established rules as common guideline and comply with these voluntarily, without being forced. Such tasks are of significant importance that are appealing and challenging for employees, because they will entice themselves with great enthusiasm in work. In this case, it is worthwhile, or even necessary, to reconcile their ideas, support their creative contribution to leadership, and coordinate the tasks according to the situational leadership method, enhancing cooperation and teamwork within the organizational unit. This can only be realized in a supportive environment (organizational culture), where the leader also manages the situation with a coaching approach and not with the unilateral enforcement of his own

vision. In this environment, the leader takes the role of a „coach” instead of the „boss” power position.

the boss...	the leader...
controls the employees	teaches them
generates fear	generates enthusiasm
relies on his power	workers respect him
says „I”	says „WE”
knows, how to do it	shows how to do it
uses the people	develops people
the success is his	praises and supports
gives orders	asks
blames others for problems	looks solutions for the problems
says „do it”	says „do it together”

2. chart: characteristics of a leader with coaching approach (own editing)

One of the tasks of a leader with coaching approach is to encourage his or her colleague to start with confidence in the road to the solution to which he or she is assigned and accept the situation as a challenge. At the same time, of course, the most important of his or her own leadership role is to place his supportive, helpless, and empathic work on his forehead. In the public service it is common for employees to face problems when performing their tasks. This is not a situation that is a consequence of mistakes that must not happen in the case of organizational protocols (process descriptions), but situations in which workers ask questions for themselves, including questions such as: what, how, when, what happens if... because it's about people, thoughtful creatures. Answering these types of questions is sometimes obvious, sometimes not easy at all. For example, it is not, because it is not always easy to see the situation clearly: some things are for some alternatives, others are against them. Answering questions requires a "search" process and the response to this type of actions is usually a decision. If a colleague or a workgroup can make the problem recognition and decision-making with the help of its own leader's constructive support and shorten the time as well while being in the state of "disgust", they do not feel threatened. They are not looking for a scapegoat or a responsible person and can meet their own needs. They can feel themselves as useful assets in the decision-making process that leads to a long-term high motivation level and recognition of the individuals. The durability and quality of the result is based on the internal motivation of the employees. This cannot be achieved by penalties, restrictions, instructions, but even high salaries in the long run.

The leadership with coaching approach is the common synonym of the supporting, developing, accompanying, assistive and counseling leadership and the opposite of the instructional, solutions provider, prescriptive, qualifying, punitive / rewarding leadership. The kind of leadership attitude that:

- motivates the employee’s internal motivation, builds on their self-esteem, belonging to the group and the natural tendency of self-realization;
- leaves the widest possible segment of learning, thinking, decision making and responsibility;
- harmonizes the conflicting demands taking into account the interests of the common project by putting individual ego aspects in the background.

Synthesis

The study looks at the topic of coaching, which still counts as a „white spot” in the area of the public service. It presents in detail the basics, the conceptual definition, the form and

the process characteristics of coaching. Along with the definition bases, we deal with the possibilities and significance of the coaching-driven organizational culture and coach-type leadership in the practice of public service.

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