

## Coaching

### - an exciting cooperation -

The interest for coaching and the concept of coaching is increasing noticeably. Coaching is expanding to new areas, it takes new forms and finds new exciting arenas, from sports to the many arenas in business. Anything introducing increased efficiency and better ways of coordination and interaction is welcome.

The corporate world has borrowed terms and visual images from the world of sports in order to describe its practices and efficient ways of coordination in this area. The use of terms and development of approaches and attitudes have been derived from psychology, counselling in particular, and adjusted to suit business arenas.

The concept of a mentor is widely accepted and used in business relations. Mentor is a term derived from Greek mythology, describing the relationship between a mature person raising a younger person, and caring for his/her development.

*Coaching*, however, is perceived by us as being something different, something more than that, and it has different and stronger effects of change in the people undertaking such a process.

### What is coaching?

People who receive individual coaching are often not *primarily* doing so to *learn* something per se. Leaders on all levels have a coach in order to become conscious of their own competence and potential, to get *wiser*, to *interrupt* their habitual way of thinking, to get *breathing space*, to learn something about themselves or to have an opportunity to talk to someone else about their daily tasks.

Many people describe their coach as a *sparrring-partner*. Someone to which you can present new ideas and thoughts, someone you can “fight” with in arguments and someone you can trust is not in it for personal gains, but who are focused on the other person succeeding in their tasks and challenges.

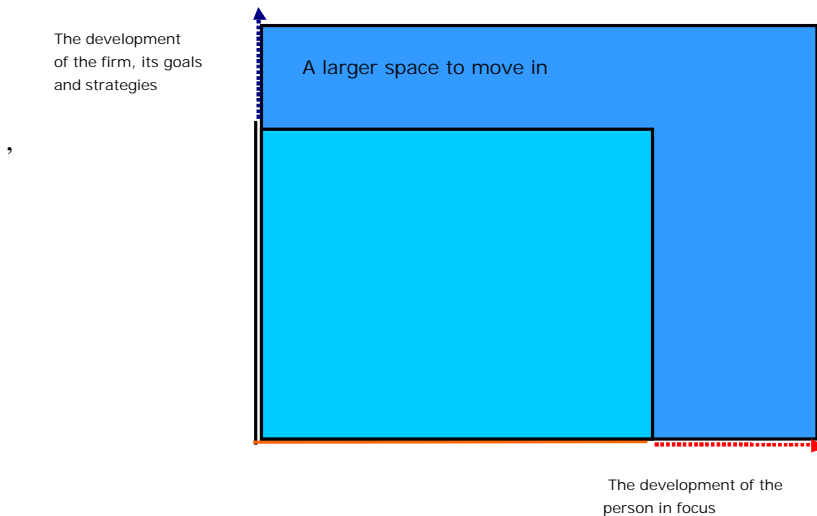
Coaching is not a single event, but rather a continuous communication process.

A coach is a conversation partner who poses the right questions the person in focus does not independently have access to, someone who presents ideas and propositions when it seems important. After a conversation with a competent coach, the person in focus should experience a different and better mental state than prior to the conversation.

Unexpected perspectives and ideas that contribute to create or elaborate the person's self-image (identity) as an executer of his/her work may often arise. The concept of identity is in this relation about identifying what you are good at and what you wish to be identified with.

Results may be that he/she has expanded their repertoire of actions, adjusted their self-image, gained access to new perspectives or seen connections and opportunities that

were not available to them earlier. The person in focus and the coach jointly decides the focus of the conversation



## Coaching and business

Coaching is in our context always closely related to the goals of the person in focus and the objectives and strategies of the firm (in which the person in focus is employed). Hence, coaching is not a process detached from the context in which the person in focus is.

Many people will experience that the relevant topics in coaching is directed to specific things in everyday life at work, such as developing plans and strategies, preparation for board meetings, business development, reflections regarding presentations and meetings, conflicts etc.

The duty of the coach is to make the person in focus move “in a larger space” in order to discover opportunities outside their personal frame of reference.

## What happens in coaching?

The coach should familiarise himself/herself with the person in focus’ way of thinking and speaking of the world. The person in focus is the “knowledgeable” or the expert, and the coach should use the language and narrations of the person in focus as a foundation the conversation.

The focus of the conversation is based on joint agreement between the coach and the

person in focus . This is in contrast to educational settings, where the teacher is the “knowledgeable” (expert) and the person in focus adapts to the teacher’s way of thinking and speaking.

Coaching is, in many ways, based on the words of Søren Kierkegaard’s (sml. værker bd. 18, side 192 – 93): “the secret in all aid is to meet the other where the other is, and accept not to understand, if not he/she just want to be admired ”.

We interpret Kierkegaard’s emphasis on “accept not to understand”, to mean that the coach should retain his/her humbleness and doubt and let personal categories of understanding remain in the background.

The coach should help the person in focus to understand himself/herself. The coach is not meant to be the wise one with all the solutions, but the one with ideas available for experiments, such as alternative ideas for the person in focus to evaluate and possibly decide to attempt. It is the person in focus who decides what may be useful and what is not appropriate or useful.

*The duty of the coach* is to pose questions that invite the person in focus to distance himself/herself to himself/herself, and also enable the person to reflect upon what he/she has achieved, what needs to be addressed now, or what seems important to do in the future.

Reflection of thought, just as beams of light being reflected, serve as a mirror for itself. The good coach provides the person in focus with an opportunity to see themselves in their own mirror – assisted by the coach wiping the mirror clean – to ensure a clearer vision.

A desirable result of cooperation between the person in focus and the coach:

- The person in focus will see new possibilities in a deadlocked situation
- The person in focus will see new connections and gain perspectives that enable alternative understanding and actions.
- The person in focus is provided with a sparringpartner who is bound to professional secrecy, and does not have a personal interest in the evaluations and decisions that are being made.
- The person in focus will expand and elaborate their selfimage, and they will be able to bring out creativity and qualities that have not been taken advantage of
- The person in focus will have opportunities to reflect over past, present and future, through questions posed by the coach.
- The person in focus will have possibilities of becoming more aware of values and attitudes, which are vital for decision making and priorities.
- The person in focus is invited to explore alternative meanings and interpretations to those he/she have previously had, and that have been important in decision-making and evaluations.

*The coach’s expectations of the person in focus*

- To wish for a conversation partner
- To be open to the notion that new perspectives may develop or be elaborated
- That changes may happen both within the person himself/herself or in the context in

which they work

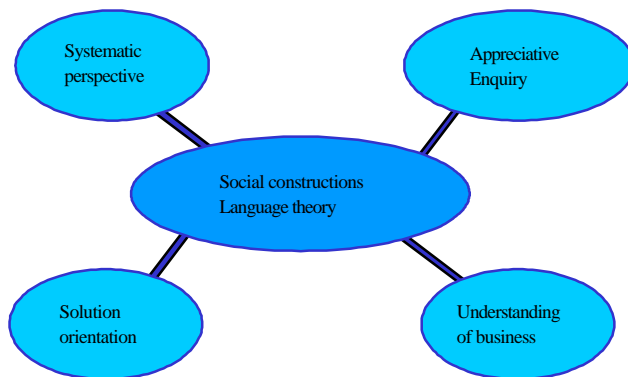
- To prioritise time to follow up on ideas and further reflect upon problems or issues that have been brought up in the coaching process

*The coach's expectations of the firm*

It is expected that the person in focus can give priority to coaching appointments, and that time and possibilities are given to follow up on ideas and experiments that are developed through coaching.

It is a prerequisite that the executive's superior participates in a preliminary conversation between the executive's superior, the person in focus and the coach in order for him/her to understand the form, scope and method of the coaching process. Through this the executive's superior will have an opportunity to give the person in focus the recognition he/she needs to progress. The executive's superior will also have an opportunity to influence the topics and the direction of the coaching.

*Key terms of our theoretical platform*



*What characterises the conversation and the process?*

Curiosity

Coaching is a continuous search for how the person in focus views and interprets the world, where the coach has the courage and confidence to put own interpretations aside.

Speed

Coaching must vary in speed, but always be slow enough to allow for reflection. The duty of the coach is to adjust the speed to the person in focus, and take responsibility for the progression in the coaching process.

#### Power

Because coaching is about creating movement, there will always be a power perspective involved. Our coaches are trained to create conversations where people continuously change positions, and where the power lies in the relations and not within the people involved.

#### Recognition, challenge and belief in ability to change

Our starting point is that people can and wish to change. An appreciative environment, understanding of why change is appropriate, and distinct challenges that create movement are necessary factors to allow for change.

This will result in conversations that open more than they close, create movement not stagnation, and experiment rather than confirm what we already know.