

Coaching supervision Professor Peter Hawkins

At the core of continuing professional development is continual personal development, where our own development is weaved through every aspect of our practice. When this happens every client becomes a teacher, every piece of feedback an opportunity for new learning, producing practices that support the balanced cycle of action, reflection, new understanding and new practice. Supervision provides a protected and disciplined space in which the coach can reflect on particular client situations and relationships, the reactivity and patterns they evoke in them and, by transforming these live in supervision, can profoundly benefit the coachee, the client organisation and their own professional practice.

What is supervision?

In Hawkins and Smith 2006 we defined Supervision as:

"The process by which a Coach with the help of a Supervisor, can attend to understanding better both the Client system and themselves as part of the Client / Coach system, and by so doing transform their work and develop their craft."

Coaching supervision has three elements:

- Coaching the coach on their coaching.
- Mentoring the coach on their development in the profession.

- Providing an external perspective to ensure quality of practice.

Role and purpose of supervision

I believe that the role and purpose of the supervision of coaches builds strongly upon the work carried out by those in the helping professions, but some important changes are needed in order to really support the executive coaching agenda.

The process of rigorous supervision helps the trainee link the theory and skills they learn on courses to the real-time experience of working with coachees. On workshops you may learn models and develop competencies, but these do not by themselves produce an excellent coach. Supervision provides the reflective container for the trainee to turn their competencies into capabilities.

Supervision is there to serve the developmental needs of the coach / supervisee, the individual clients of the supervisee, the client organisations that employ the coach, as well as the profession.

Supervision should be focused on outcomes including:

- The provision of the key part of continuous professional development and action learning of the coach.

- Help for the coach to develop their internal supervisor and become a better reflective practitioner.

- The provision of a supportive space for the coach to process what they have absorbed from their clients and their client's system.
- Help to keep the coach honest and courageous, attending to what they are: not seeing, hearing, allowing themselves to feel, or not saying.

- A chance to look at where and how the coach may need to refer the client on for more specialised help.

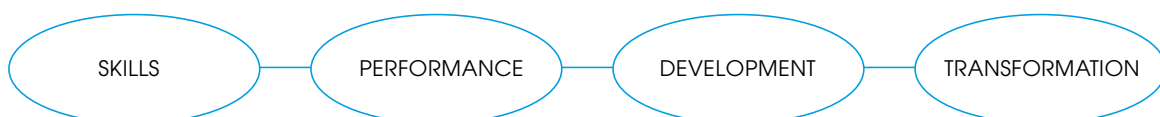
The stages in a supervision session

In the 1980s I developed a five stage coaching model CLEAR (**Contract, Listen, Explore, Action, Review**) to the stages of supervision or coaching the coach.

In this model the supervisor starts by **Contracting** with the supervisee on the boundaries and focus of the work. Then the supervisor **Listens** to the issues that the coach wishes to bring, listening to the content, feelings and the ways of framing the story that the coach is using. It is important that the supervisor lets the coach know that they have both heard the story and 'got' what it feels like to be in their situation. Only then is it useful to move on to the next stage to **Explore** with the

FIGURE 1.

THE COACHING CONTINUUM



coach what is happening in the dynamics of the coaching relationship and the live supervisory relationship, before facilitating the coach to explore new **Action**. Finally **Review** the process and what has been agreed about next steps.

This model can be developed and utilised differentially depending on the nature of the coaching. In Hawkins and Smith (2006) we outlined a continuum of coaching; please see **Figure 1**, on opposite page.

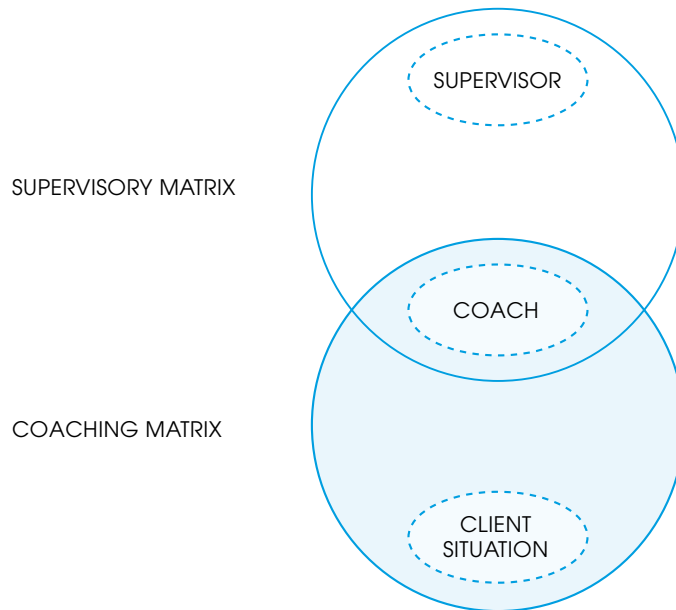
The form of supervision being used needs to match the coaching approach, thus performance coaches need performance supervision and transformational coaching needs transformational supervision and elsewhere we have shown how this changes the CLEAR intervention.

The Seven-eyed Coaching Model: A process model of supervision Figure 2.

In 1985 I developed a more in depth model of supervision which later was developed along with my colleagues Robin Shohet, Joan Wilmot and Judy Ryde at the Centre for Supervision and Team Development and became known as the seven-eyed supervision model (Hawkins and Shohet 1989, 2000 and 2006). I then further developed and adapted the model for the world of coaching, mentoring and organisational consultancy with my colleagues at Bath Consultancy Group (Hawkins and Smith 2006), **Figure 2**. The purpose of the model is to provide a complete range of different areas that can be focused on in supervision and the range of styles necessary. It is based on a systems understanding of the ways things connect, inter-relate and drive behaviour. It illustrates the way in which the systemic context of the coachee can be mirrored in the coaching relationship and how the dynamics of the coaching relationship can be mirrored in the supervisory relationship. I set out below the seven

FIGURE 2.

THE SEVEN-EYED MODEL OF COACHING SUPERVISION



areas of potential focus that can be useful to both supervisor and supervisee in reviewing the supervision they give and receive and help them discover ways they can expand their supervision practice.

1. The coachee's system

Here the focus is on the coachee and the content of the issues they have brought to the coaching and the wider issues of their organisation. It includes, not only the problem both parties want help with, but also how they are presenting and framing the issues.

2. The coach's interventions

Here the focus is on the interventions the coach made and alternative choices that might have been used. It might also focus on a situation in which the coach is about to intervene and explore the possible options

including the likely impact of each.

3. The relationship between the coach and the coachee

Here the focus is on the relationship that the coach and coachee are creating together.

4. The coach

Here the focus is on the coach themselves, both what is being re-stimulated in them by the coachee's material and the dynamics of the client system, and themselves as an instrument for registering that which is happening beneath the surface of the coaching relationship.

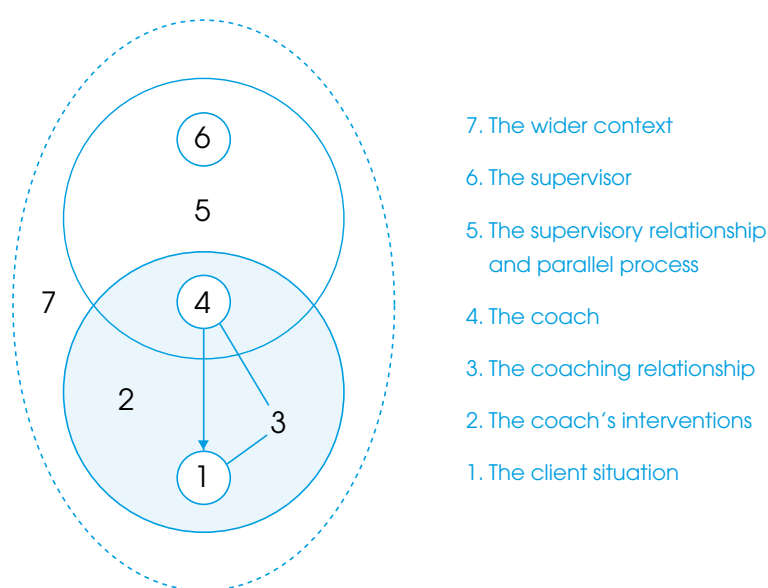
5. The supervisory relationship

Here the focus is on the live relationship between the supervisor and the coach. The focus needs to include what the

Coaching supervision (cont.)

FIGURE 3.

THE SEVEN MODES OF COACHING SUPERVISION



- 7. The wider context
- 6. The supervisor
- 5. The supervisory relationship and parallel process
- 4. The coach
- 3. The coaching relationship
- 2. The coach's interventions
- 1. The client situation

coach has absorbed unconsciously from the coachee system and how it may be being played out in the relationship with the supervisor. Unconsciously the coach can treat the supervisor in the way their coachee treated them.

6. The supervisor self-reflection

The focus for mode six is the supervisor's "here and now" experience with the coach and what can be learnt about the coach / coachee / client relationship from the supervisor's response to the coach and the material they present.

7. The wider context

The focus of mode seven is on the organisational, social, cultural, ethical and

contractual context in which the coaching is taking place. This includes being aware of the wider group of stakeholders in the process that is being focused upon: the client organisation and its stakeholders, the coach's organisation and its stakeholders, and the organisation or professional network of the supervisor.

Using all seven modes Figure 3.

In talking with supervisors and coaches who have approached others in search of help in exploring coaching situations, we have discovered that often supervisors are stuck in the groove of predominantly using one of the seven modes of working. Some focus entirely on the situation with

the coachee and adopt a pose of pseudo objectivity (mode one). Others see their job as coming up with better interventions than the coach managed to produce (mode two). This can often leave the coach feeling inadequate or determined to show that these suggested interventions are as useless as those previously tried. Other coaches have reportedly left supervision feeling that the problem with a coachee was entirely their own pathology (mode four).

"Single-eyed vision", which focuses only on one aspect of the process, will always lead to partial and limited perspectives. This model suggests a way of engaging in an exploration that looks at the same situation from many different perspectives and can thus create a critical subjectivity, where subjective awareness from one perspective is tested against other subjective data.

Each mode of supervision can be carried out in a skilful manner but it will prove inadequate without the skill to move from mode to mode. We have devised a training method for helping the supervisor to skilfully use each mode to explore the timing and appropriateness for moving from one mode to another.

The most common order for moving through the modes is to start with mode one talking about specific coaching situations. Then to move into modes three and four to explore what is happening both in the coaching relationship and for the coach / supervisee. This may well explore the here and now relationship in the room between the coach and the supervisor (modes 5 and 6), and/or bringing into awareness the wider context (mode 7). Finally having gained new insight and created a shift in the supervisory matrix, the attention may turn back to mode two, to explore what different interventions the coach might use in their next session to create the needed shift in the coaching matrix. The coach might even try out some

of these interventions in what we term a 'fast-forward rehearsal'. Our experience shows that if change starts to happen live in the supervision, it is far more likely to happen back in the coaching.

The model has also been used as a way of empowering the coach (ie. the customer receiving the supervision) to be able to give feedback on the help they are being given and request a change in focus. It can be used as a framework for a joint review of the supervision process by the coach and supervisor.

Training as a supervisor

In 2002 the debate about the need for supervision began to change in coaching. Some of the professional coaching bodies in the UK and the USA started to argue that all coaches should receive supervision from trained and qualified supervisors. In response Bath Consultancy Group led the way in the development of a certified training programme in the supervision of coaches and mentors.

Our starting belief was that these professions had much in common with other helping professions when it came to supervision, but were also significantly different as their work was focused primarily on the individual client. Work-based coaches and mentors always have, in contrast, a minimum of three clients:

- the coachee
- the organisation they work in and for
- the relationship between them and the organisation.

This led us to design and deliver an open training programme with four modules. The first was a foundation module and the final an advanced supervision module. These are for people who are experienced executive coaches, mentors and consultants.

In addition the participants chose two further modules to be undertaken alongside other helping professionals.

Our second belief is that learning to be a supervisor is best undertaken through cycles of action learning, not by sitting in a classroom. Thus the training involves supervision practice in threes, comprising a supervisor, supervisee and shadow supervisor, who gives feedback to the supervisor, sometimes at the end of the practice session, and sometimes in the middle, in structured 'time-outs'. The trainee supervisors, as well as undertaking the modules, receive 10 hours of supervision on their supervision, from an experienced supervisor, and two tutorials to help them maximise their individual learning programme.

We are constantly learning from each cohort of new trainees about the fascinating craft of supervising coaches. Increasingly we are reminded that at the heart of being a good coach or coaching supervisor is not academic knowledge, nor an armoury of tools and techniques, but a dedication to developing one's human capacity to be fully present for another, acting with what we term 'ruthless compassion'. For it is the ruthless compassion we can bring that ultimately allows the fear and anxiety that pervades so many work situations to be overcome, and for our clients to find new strength to act courageously.

Conclusion

It is important that supervision is not seen as an activity carried out by a supervisor, supposedly with supervision! Rather it should be seen as a joint activity between coach and supervisor that ensures that the quality of practice constantly develops the capacity and capability of the coach and makes sure they are adequately resourced for the work they are undertaking.

Supervision needs to be a place of co-creative and generative thinking where new learning is being forged for the clients, coach, supervisor and for the profession.

A longer version of this paper can be found in 'The Complete Handbook of Coaching' edited by Eileen Cox, Tatiana Bachirova and David Clutterbuck (Sage 2009).

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