**Contracting in Coaching**



**Overview**

Contracting for the Coach and client in coaching practice is important. It sets the ground rules for the coaching relationship so that both parties know their level of commitment and what they are "signing up for".

Many coaches do not establish the relationship on a business level, believing it to be unnecessary or that it may give an overly formal impression. Turning this view on its head, a contract demonstrates that you are a professional and that also applies to the coaching relationship. This can assist in keeping a professional objectivity in what can, at times, become quite an intimate situation.

In principle, there are three aspects to any coaching contract (Berne, 1966):

1. **Administrative** – the logistics and process under which the coaching will take place

2. **Professional** – the objectives of the coaching programme and the roles and responsibilities of the parties; and

3. **Psychological** – what the parties expect over and above the explicit expectations set out in the written contract.

**What should a Coaching plan include?**

The question for an internal Coaching programme is how explicitly the following points are laid out and agreed. It is suggested that even if they aren't committed to writing in the Coaching plan, then at least the Coach covers them in the first session with the client and agrees how they will approach each point and how they will review progress.

At the minimum a discussion needs to cover:

* The role of the Coach and the role of the client
* Cancellation policy and termination of the work
* Organisation of sessions – location, length and frequency and how and on what basis contact is made between sessions
* Commitment to sessions/hours – Is the coach being contracted on an open ended basis or will a fixed number of sessions be determined at the outset? If open ended, it would be essential to identify review dates
* Review dates and the agreed measurements to be used at review and the people to be involved in the review
* Boundaries - This links with relationships and confidentiality and should identify the purpose of the coach’s role and therefore the boundaries of the relationship

Confidentiality basics include

• Existing organisation confidentiality agreements will be adhered to by the coach

• If there is a sponsor involved, that they recognise the right to confidentiality but may ask for some success measures.

**Chemistry Meeting**

Within the scheme, the offer of a chemistry meeting is given to the client to see if both they and the Coach are comfortable to work with each other.

It is suggested that the chemistry meeting covers:

* The main presenting issues the client has
* Some background about the Coach and the way they go about their Coaching practice
* An overview of how the Coaching programme would work

**Use of Coaching Tools**

Whilst tools and models can be helpful in coaching practice, they need to be “lightly held” and the awareness and mindfulness of the Coach is paramount: many Coaches work with clients without using any formal tools.

If you are using Coaching tools or resources:

* It is worth thinking about whether clients complete them in between sessions or at the sessions; if it's the latter then it can compromise the flow of the session
* Consider whether you use a coaching tool like a 360 review or a psychometric assessment or a background history tool like "Autobiography" early in the process as a diagnostic type approach
* Whether you use something before sessions periodically like the Coaching progress review to get a sense of how the client is doing
* Whether you may encourage the client to keep a Coaching journal for self reflection