The nature and focus of coaching in the UK today: a UK survey report

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The nature and focus of coaching in the UK today: a UK survey report

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This paper reports and discusses the findings of the UK coaching survey run in 2010/2011 and compares these findings with similar surveys within the UK and in the USA. The paper explores the nature of coaching in the UK today. It confirms that the prevailing focus of UK coaching activity is business and management related. It also establishes that a majority of UK coaches who responded to this survey are accredited with a coaching-related professional body, and the majority of coaches identify themselves as independent consultants, with a business and management orientation. This trend appears to reflect business demand for recognised qualification among a growing number of external coaches in the UK.

Keywords: coaching practice; business coaching; coaching psychology; management development; CIPD

Introduction

Coaching has established itself as a recognised and respected organisational intervention, and there is a growing evidence of its efficacy in the literature (see e.g. Grant, Passmore, Cavanagh, & Parker, 2010). This paper reports the results of a survey, hereafter referred to as the UK survey, undertaken to explore the nature of coaching practice in the UK and specifically how this compared with US practice based on the research work of Bono, Purvanova, Towler, and Peterson (2009). Their research established that there was ‘little uniformity in the practices (e.g. assessment tools, scientific and philosophical approaches, activities, goals, and outcome evaluation methods) of executive coaches’ (Bono et al., 2009). The UK survey specifically examined the current position of coaching practice, clients, methods, assessment tools and activities in the UK.

To help position the results in a UK context comparisons have been made with the coaching climate, a CIPD survey published in September 2011 whose remit was ‘to help HR professionals and coaches working with HR, to deliver coaching and mentoring and to develop the evidence base on practice’. It could be argued, therefore, that the CIPD survey looked at the organisational perspective of coaching delivery, whereas this survey focuses on coaching practice within the UK, from the perspective of coaches. The coaching climate survey was undertaken in 2011 and had 332 responses, which amounts to a 2% response rate. A number of its key findings

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tally with those of the UK survey and will be discussed as and when appropriate throughout this paper.

In addition to this, annual surveys undertaken in the UK, soliciting views and practice of coaching psychologists, have been used as comparators where appropriate (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007; Whybrow & Palmer, 2006).

A sub-agenda at the outset of this project was to differentiate practice between psychologist and non-psychologist coaches, as reported by Bono et al. (2009). The geographic focus of that paper was the USA and obtained a coach psychologist/coach non-psychologist ratio of approximately 40:60 (N = 172:256). In this UK survey, the response rate of the British Psychological Society (BPS) registered psychologists was 9.8% (N = 24:245). When all responses to the UK survey are analysed together there appears to be a clearly defined business orientation towards both coaching practice and the composition of the UK coach, irrespective of academic discipline or background.

Throughout the discussion the terms coachee and client are used interchangeably and refer exclusively to the person who is being coached. The survey under review is referred to throughout as the UK survey, and the 2011 CIPD report is referred to by its title, ‘the coaching climate survey’.

Methods

The research was questionnaire based. The questions were subdivided into five key sections and were mostly quantitative, with occasional ‘free ranging’ questions. A large number of the questions were presented as frequency tables, and were coded from 0 = Never to 5 = Always. A full copy of the questionnaire is available on request.

The wording of the questions was drawn from the Bono et al. (2009) paper with agreement from the questionnaire’s authors. In addition the research team identified a small number of additional questions.

Raw data were coded and entered into SPSS v 17 for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistical analysis was used predominantly to generate frequency tables for ranking of responses, etc. Where correlations were required to compare means, Paired T Tests were used, and cross tabulations were used where comparisons/similarities between categories were deemed to inform the discussion.

The survey was posted on on-line fora for Coaching Psychology (BPS), and the Association for Coaching (AC). These fora have a joint potential audience of over 4000 members, but not all members will be practising coaches and dual membership is not uncommon. It is, therefore, impossible to establish an accurate response rate, as the number of fora members who read the posting is unknown. Both groups have membership which is over 90% UK based.

The web-based survey ran from October 2010 to January 2011. A total of 548 coaches responded to the survey. However, 303 surveys were subsequently disregarded due to a substantial amount of missing data (final N = 245). Possible explanations for the disappointingly high number of incomplete responses could include the length and the complexity of the survey itself.

Results

The results of the UK survey indicate that coaches use similar tools and approaches in their practice, irrespective of their coaching background. Equally,
there are tools that are seldom used by any of the coaches, for example, mentoring is seldom cited as a reason for initiating a coaching relationship, and it is seldom practiced in ongoing coaching conversations. The coaching focus is heavily business oriented and the typical coaching client is in middle management. UK coaches are well qualified academically, with nearly half of respondents reporting that they hold Masters’ level degrees, across a broad range of academic disciplines. In this study, not surprisingly due to the promotion of the survey over professional body fora, the respondents are likely to be professionally qualified through recognised professional coaching bodies; and they tend to be members of professional bodies. Over 77% (\(N = 190\)) of respondents are members of, or affiliated to, the AC, which is the largest single grouping. The second largest group is CIPD, which has nearly one-third of respondents as members or affiliates; the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) and the International Coach Federation (ICF) both have approximately 13% of respondents as members or affiliates. The vast majority of respondents to this survey classify themselves as independent consultants (\(N = 177\)).

The gender divide is 36:64 male/female. The overwhelming majority of respondents are ethnically white, and some 54% are over 51 years of age, with only 1% being 30 years of age or less. Coaching between one and five clients at any one time is the most common category, with between 6 and 10 clients being the second most common number of clients at any one time. And 35% of respondents have been coaching for over 10 years, whilst 26% of respondents have had more than 200 clients. Conversely, only 2% of respondents have been coaching for less than a year and only 3% of respondents have coached 10 or less clients in total. Therefore the majority of respondents who completed the survey were experienced coaches.

**Discussion**

We have organised the discussion of the results into two sub-sections, one focusing on the nature of coaching in the UK, the second on the context of coaching in the UK.

The coaching nature identifies the composition of, interalia, the UK coach, educational and professional background and qualification, approaches to practice and types of assessment tools used. This section features frequencies of responses to paint a picture of current coaching practice in the UK.

The coaching focus looks at the coaching context, how clients are introduced and by whom, is it via self-referral, organisation or other third party introduction, what are the presenting reasons for the initial referral and do these continue to be the focus of the ongoing coaching discussion? How do coaches categorise their particular specialisms, that is, are they executive coaches, business coaches, life coaches and does the type of coaching specialism have an impact on the ongoing coaching discussion? To do this, cross tabulation and correlations are run to identify relationships, or non-relationships, between prescribed entities.

Both sub-sections draw comparisons with the coaching climate survey (CIPD, 2011) and the findings of Bono et al. (2009) where appropriate.
The UK coaching nature

At the very outset of the survey, respondents were asked to identify what tools they used to assess new clients. Figure 1 itemises the responses.

Holding an interview with the coachee is the overwhelming popular assessment tool used to assess the prospective coachee, or client. At the other end of the spectrum, interviews with family members are very seldom undertaken. These findings are repeating those of the Bono et al. (2009) research study. This may be a reflection of UK coaches moving away from counselling and more overtly psychotherapeutic spectrum of coaching, where wider interviews may be undertaken. Alternatively it may be in recognition of a more person and business environment-centred approach. The extreme ends of these findings are consistent with those of the Bono and associates survey (Table 3, Bono et al. 2009), where interviews with clients are ranked highest and interviews with family member are ranked lowest across all coaches.

Personality Questionnaires and verbal interviews with managers run second to direct interviews with the client, in terms of frequency of uptake, followed by 360° assessment, similar to the findings in the Bono et al. (2009) survey. This would support the contention that coach/client relationships are predicated on a business imperative. The next most frequently used approach is to hold interviews with direct reports, or peers.

This combination of approaches beyond interviewing the client suggests that UK coaches are interested in the context in which their client is operating and being assessed, as well as in the individual client per se. However, only 21.2% of
respondents frequently have access to client performance appraisals (see Figure 2); this may be more a question of confidentiality and data protection on the part of employer organisations than lack of interest on the part of the coach. It will be established later in the discussion that over 70% of respondents to the UK survey are independent consultants, and as such will be external to client organisations. However, whilst they seem to enjoy slightly below average frequencies alongside internal coaches, occupations least likely to have access to performance appraisals are HR employees and those most likely to have access are employees within management consultancy firms.

Respondents were then asked to identify how frequently specified approaches were used in their coaching practice. The least frequently used approach in respondents’ coaching practice is psychoanalytic/psychodynamic. It has a marked difference to all other approaches reported upon (see Figure 3).

It would be tempting to conclude that this is a reflection of the very low number of respondents who have a psychology background, fewer that 1 in 10. However, other researchers (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007; Whybrow & Palmer, 2006) report a correspondingly low take up of psychodynamic approaches used specifically by coaching psychologists between the years 2003 and 2006/2007. Futhermore, the UK survey identifies the four most frequently used approaches as facilitation, behaviour modification, cognitive/behavioural and goal focused. Palmer and Whybrow’s (2007) research on the approaches used by coaching psychologists also reflects these findings; among the most commonly used practices, they list facilitation, cognitive behavioural, goal focused and behavioural.

Equally, in the Bono et al. (2009) study, the three predominant scientific or philosophical approaches used by psychologist and non-psychologist coaches alike are goal setting, process/facilitation oriented and cognitive behavioural. It would not be unreasonable to conclude, therefore, that in so far as scientific and philosophical approaches to coaching practice are concerned, there is little or no discernible difference between psychologist and non-psychologist coaches.
approaches were reported as being used by coaching psychologists in the Palmer and Whybrow (2007) survey.

Interestingly, both the UK survey and Palmer and Whybrow (2007) identify Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) as occupying the lower end of frequency of use as an approach. The Bono et al. (2009) survey reflects these findings too, identifying NLP as the second least likely approach used by both psychologist and non-psychologist coaches, with psychoanalytic/psychodynamic approaches bringing up the rear. It should be noted that the Palmer and Whybrow’s (2007) longitudinal survey identifies NLP as enjoying a small but steady growth from 2003 to 2006/2007. However, this growth rate still leaves NLP at some distance from the main approaches identified. It is worth noting that when respondents to the UK survey were asked how often they used particular assessment tools, cognitive abilities or aptitude tests had the second lowest frequency, next to interview with family member (see Figure 1).

How does this tie in with the predominance of cognitive/behavioural approaches used in coaching practice, as illustrated in Figure 3? Can it be explained away as a consequence of a shortage of appropriately qualified respondents to run such tests, for example BPS Level A qualification?

An analysis of the BPS qualified respondents simply reaffirms the relatively small numbers of such practitioners responding to this survey (see Figure 4) and such qualification does not automatically carry Level A with it. Whilst there are healthier numbers of respondents who are affiliated to the BPS Special Group in Coaching Psychology ($N = 49$), it cannot necessarily be assumed that such affiliation
automatically carries with it qualification, or indeed inclination, to undertake aptitude or ability tests. However, Bono et al. (2009) acknowledge that psychologists were more likely to use aptitude tests than non-psychologists, but that the difference is relatively minor. That notwithstanding, the comparatively low uptake in the use of cognitive abilities or aptitude tests cannot be directly attributed to a paucity of coaching psychologists in this survey.

The higher membership and qualification profiles enjoyed by the CIPD, as indicated in Figure 4, however, may go some way to explaining the frequency of use of Personality Questionnaires, as illustrated in Figure 1. The relatively high level of CIPD membership does not appear to be directly reflected in the employment status of respondents, as can be seen from Figure 5, where only six respondents are employed in Human Resources specifically.

The largest groupings are Accredited Coaches, whilst only 22 respondents have no coaching qualifications whatsoever.

The overwhelming employment status of the respondents to this survey is independent consultant; there are no further data on the type of consultant. Performing a cross tabulation between independent consultant and the type of coaching practised simply confirms the predominance of coaching categories; unsurprisingly as the overwhelming majority of respondents count themselves as independent consultants and their categorisations will skew the coaching title results by sheer weight of numbers. Clearly, the same scenario applies to academic discipline prevalence within independent consultants.

However, there is also a small number of respondents who are affiliated to coaching or consulting firms, and a marked absence of employees in psychology consulting firms. Precisely why this may be is beyond the remit of this discussion, but given that almost one in 20 respondents purport to be graduates in one of the listed psychology disciplines (see Figure 7), it can be concluded that such graduates integrate better into other forms of employment that are not overtly psychological in nature, but which may benefit from employees with a psychology background.
The educational profile of respondents reports a significant proportion with Higher Education qualifications, with 47% of respondents holding Masters’ degrees; more interesting is that 20% do not hold a degree at all (see Figure 6).

There is a broad spectrum of academic disciplines represented by these graduates. Among those who could respond positively to the list, there is a clear bias towards business, HR and management qualifications, jointly numbering nearly one-third of all respondents. The most notable feature, however, is the 46% return for ‘other’ disciplines not listed in the question (see Figure 7).

Another aspect of the UK coaching culture, as described in this survey, is the nature of the coaching undertaken. Once again a strong bias towards business/managerial coaching is evident from the responses provided. Performance coaches, leadership coaches, business coaches, career coaches and executive coaches being the
predominant composition of this UK coaching profile, whilst educational coaches, life coaches and health coaches languish at the other end of the spectrum.

The most frequent responses are from coaches identifying themselves as firmly with a business locus: leadership coaches, business coaches and executive coaches comprising the top three areas coached by the survey respondents (see Figure 8). This is also reflected in the nature of referrals received from organisations, which will be discussed in more detail in the coaching focus section below. This raises the question of who exactly do they coach? (see Figure 9)

Mid-level managers are the most frequently coached groups, followed by Presidents/Directors; whilst non-supervisory employees and CEOs are the least likely groupings. The number of coaches working at this level may reflect the number

Figure 7. Academic qualification focus.

Figure 8. Areas of coaching specialism.
of managers at this level rather than a perception that coaching is less suitable for CEOs.

When cross tabulations were run between coach type and managerial level of clients, the only statistically significant result indicated that where specific coach categories claim to coach specific managerial levels, the overwhelming nature of frequency is often/always.

The coaching nature in the UK indicates that coaches are generally well educated, they come from a wide variety of academic disciplines and belong to a variety of professional bodies, across the broader, general management spectrum. The trend is not overtly psychological, but tends to be rather more business oriented. The majority of respondents (61%) are accredited with a coaching qualification.

According to the coaching climate survey (CIPD, 2011), coaching accreditation is one of the criteria increasingly demanded by organisations looking to engage external coaches. The CIPD recognises the drive towards formal coaching accreditation to produce coaches, which comes from professional coaching bodies such as the AC, EMCC, ICF and the Association for Professional Executive Coaching and Supervision (APECS):

who are able to deal with the complex demands of organisational coaching and operate within stringent professional codes and standards. Our data show that there has been a fairly significant increase in the proportion of respondents insisting on accreditation—just over two-fifths compared with just a third in 2009. (CIPD, 2011)
It is encouraging to see that there is a high number of Accredited Coaches in the UK, given that coaching and its associated professional bodies are relative new comers.

According to CIPD (2011) demand for external coaches has increased, despite the recession. They establish that external coaches formed 20% of coaching engagements in 2011, increasing from 14% in 2009, whilst the number of internal coaches reduced from 29% to 23% between 2009 and 2011, and the number of line managers with responsibility for coaching delivery also shrank from 37% to 32% in the same period (CIPD, 2011). Given the findings of the UK survey, there is a healthy climate of professional coaches meeting the demands of organisational clients. This conclusion is reinforced when the coaching focus is analysed and compared with what is being sought by organisations within the UK.

The coaching focus

This section will examine the context in which coaching takes place.

The coaching focus was tested by asking respondents to state how frequently referrals were made for specific, identified reasons. The most common referral issues for survey respondents are specific skill development, job performance and career development, and these form the centre of the discussion below. And yet in Figure 3, skill training does not seem to be as frequently used in coaching practice, as specific skill development appears as a source of referral, according to the results presented in Figure 10. Preparation for retirement is patently not a major concern within this context.

These findings are consistent with the findings of the coaching climate survey published by CIPD in September 2011, in which the purpose of coaching, from the organisation perspective, is identified as ‘a remedial and talent acceleration proposition’ (see Figure 4 of CIPD, 2011). In the coaching climate survey (CIPD, 2011) job performance is broken down into two sub-categories: improving poor performance and building on good performance, both aspects having witnessed a twofold increase in the 2 years since their last survey was undertaken. These sub-categories achieve 43% and 48%, respectively, as against the UK survey, in which job

![Figure 10. Coaching development focus.](https://example.com/image.png)
performance, undifferentiated, which achieves 49.4% coaches addressing job performance always or often. Both surveys imply that a substantial minority of referral activity revolves specifically around job performance.

In much the same vein, the coaching climate survey (CIPD, 2011) identifies a 47% response for coaching that is focused on skills and capability improvement; this compares with the 56.7% of respondents in the UK survey, who cite specific skill development as a reason for referral ‘often’ or ‘always’.

Career development, the most frequently cited reason for referral in the UK survey, does not appear directly for analysis in the coaching climate survey (CIPD, 2011). However, that survey’s discussion on the purpose of coaching alludes to something akin to career development in as far as it reports on ‘talent and succession planning’. Here the relative emphasis is rather underplayed, occupying the lower end of the high categories. It is difficult to draw too many comparisons in this instance as the precise nature of career development and talent and succession planning are undefined. One area that is not addressed in this section of the survey on the coaching focus, but which heads the league table in the coaching climate survey (CIPD, 2011), is leadership development. This aspect of coaching appears later in the UK survey, and will be discussed in more detail below.

These three key reasons for referral, namely job performance, skill development and career development, within the UK survey, were correlated against the nature of coaching that the respondents undertake, via a series of Paired T tests. Only the figures with statistically significant correlations, that is, at the 95% confidence level, have been published. As a general rule of thumb, only correlations above 0.7 would confidently demonstrate a strong relationship between two entities. The correlations returned in the Paired T Tests below indicate, at best, a medium to weak relationship. However, there is an interesting pattern emerging amid the three key referral areas of job performance, specific skill development and career development that indicates that there is an association between coaching specialism, that is, business, career, executive, etc. This once again suggests a more overtly, and statistically significant, business orientation in these key areas.

It can be seen from these sample correlations that, when paired against the type of coach receiving referrals in these areas, the business orientation predominates (see Tables 1–3). Life coaches and educational coaches do not appear, as a genre, to have any significant referrals in these areas, as no correlation was identified at all.

Specific skill development attracts the broadest spectrum of coaching categories: business and leadership coaches being the only categories that address all three areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>Specific skill development and business coach</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.281</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 2</td>
<td>Specific skill development and career coach</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 3</td>
<td>Specific skill development and executive coach</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.362</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 4</td>
<td>Specific skill development and leadership coach</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.361</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 5</td>
<td>Specific skill development and performance coach</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.493</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 8</td>
<td>Specific skill development and team coach</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.312</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Respondents were then asked to identify presenting issues, where clients are referred for specific issues. It follows then that the nature of referrals and the types of coaching provision will reflect this business orientation (see Tables 1–3).

However, this dimension is not reflected in the type of coaching provision received by those clients who are self-referring. Whilst no strong correlation is identified, per se, between the type of coach and self-referred clients, it can be seen that statistically significant, albeit small, correlations exist among life coaches, personal coaches and career coaches and self-referrers. Once again, only pairs with statistically significant, albeit weak, correlations have been reproduced. These results are strongly significant (see Table 4).

According to the UK survey, coaches are two and a half times as likely to be contacted directly by a client (56.3%) than they are to contact a client following a referral from someone other than the client’s employer (23.2%).

Referrals by either the client’s managers or HR professionals both enjoy a similar response rate of slightly over one third of clients each. Where employer-generated referrals occur, leadership, interpersonal skills and communication provision are the three dominant presenting issues overall (see Figure 11). Once again, this result is consistent with the coaching climate survey, (CIPD, 2011) which establishes that building leadership capability occupies the coaching agenda, either always or frequently, for 62% of respondents, as against 69% of coaches in the UK survey. Sales and financial provision is seldom a presenting issue, with mentoring placed a distant second from bottom in the UK survey (see Figure 12).

Table 2. Paired samples correlations key skill: career development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Career development and business coach</th>
<th>245</th>
<th>0.237</th>
<th>0.000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 2</td>
<td>Career development and career coach</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.415</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 3</td>
<td>Career development and executive coach</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.297</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 4</td>
<td>Career development and leadership coach</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.289</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Paired samples correlations key skill: job performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Job performance and business coach</th>
<th>245</th>
<th>0.176</th>
<th>0.006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 4</td>
<td>Job performance and leadership coach</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.154</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 5</td>
<td>Job performance and performance coach</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.526</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 8</td>
<td>Job performance and team coach</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.312</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Paired samples correlations self-referring clients and coaching specialism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Coachee contacts me direct and career coach</th>
<th>245</th>
<th>0.230</th>
<th>0.000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 6</td>
<td>Coachee contacts me direct and personal coach</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.240</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 9</td>
<td>Coachee contacts me direct and life coach</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.254</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This contrasts sharply with the CIPD’s coaching climate survey findings on mentoring, which state:

Mentoring is a distinct intervention using coaching skills but with different timescales and agendas. About 75% use mentoring in some way and most are happy to see it established as an informal set of relationships affording the time for individuals to pair up. Mentoring is available to most employees. (CIPD, 2011)

In comparison, less than one in five respondents in the UK survey provides mentoring frequently (see Figure 12).

Is this indicative of a gap in the market for UK coaches; would the results have been different, had there been more respondents affiliated to EMCC; is mentoring...
something that is undertaken strictly in-house; or does it simply revisit the debate on the distinctions, or otherwise, between coaching and mentoring? Or do coaches and mentors see themselves as largely separate entities? The absence of a precise, and universally acknowledged, definition of mentoring serves only to pose more questions here.

There is some evidence of disparity between the responses to issues identified in client referrals and issues addressed in the actual coaching provision. The relationship between clients who are referred having leadership as a presenting issue, and leadership being addressed as an issue, is fairly consistent. However, interpersonal skills and communication display a marked upward trend from referrals to provision (see Figure 13).

This is corroborated further when a Paired T Test is run to consider the relationship between the two means in each set of pairs, as illustrated in Table 5. Once again a very strong correlation is identified between leadership coaching and communications. However, only a medium correlation exists within the interpersonal skills aspect where, it would appear, there is more interpersonal skills provision than there are interpersonal skills referrals among the respondent population.

This might be explained by a closer analysis of (1) how respondents first link up with their clients and (2) the managerial level of the client in question.

Where clients are referred by employers, there is a high likelihood that coaching provision will correspond closely with the reason for the referral; this correspondence

![Figure 13. Cross tabulation of type of provision against type of referral.](image-url)

**Table 5. Paired samples correlations referrals v provision.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interpersonal skills referrals and interpersonal skills provision</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.415</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Leadership referrals and leadership provision</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.858</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Communication referrals and communication provision</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.628</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6. Paired samples correlations key presenting issues v manager referrals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Key Presenting Issues</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Key Presenting Issues</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interpersonal skills referrals and coachee’s manager contacts me direct</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.299</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>Interpersonal skills provision and coachee’s manager contacts me direct</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Communication referrals and coachee’s manager contacts me direct</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.228</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>Pair 2</td>
<td>Communication provision and coachee’s manager contacts me direct</td>
<td>0.168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Leadership referrals and coachee’s manager contacts me direct</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.469</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>Pair 3</td>
<td>Leadership provision and coachee’s manager contacts me direct</td>
<td>0.469</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Paired samples correlations key presenting referrals v HR professional referral.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Key Presenting Issues</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Key Presenting Issues</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interpersonal skills referrals and HR professional contacts me direct</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.259</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>Interpersonal skills provision and HR professional contacts me direct</td>
<td>0.214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Communication referrals and HR professional contacts me direct</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.136</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>Pair 2</td>
<td>Communication provision and HR professional contacts me direct</td>
<td>0.071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Leadership referrals and HR professional contacts me direct</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>0.395</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Pair 3</td>
<td>Leadership provision and HR professional contacts me direct</td>
<td>0.385</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
almost directly reflects the rank order of the three main areas identified by respondents, namely leadership, communication and interpersonal skills (see Tables 6 and 7).

These three key areas do not appear to be the main drivers or focus for discussion on the occasions when the client approaches the coach independently of their employer. Clients who contact the coach direct, that is, not referred by employers or other agencies, do not appear to be receiving any of the identified criteria provided during coaching sessions, where no clear relationship is established among any of the specified criteria and self-referring clients.

It can be concluded then that the majority of coaching activity has a distinct business orientation to it, especially when referred from an employer organisation. Further paired sample correlations indicate that there is no discernible relationship between the three key presenting issues, namely job performance, skills development and career development and clients who self-refer, or who are referred by third parties independent of employing organisation. Table 4 establishes that life, career and personal coaches are more likely to have self-referring clients.

This is in stark contrast to those clients who are referred either by their manager or HR professionals. Tables 6 and 7 demonstrate a statistically significant relationship between what can be loosely bracketed as organisational referrals, as distinct from third party or self-referrals.

It should be noted that client referrals from HR Professionals (see Table 7) are more likely to centre on interpersonal skills and leadership skills with communication skills having no statistically significant correlation; whilst referrals from managers are weighted towards leadership, but communications and interpersonal skills enjoy a broadly similar profile (see Table 6).

The coaching climate survey (CIPD, 2011) discusses at some length the perceived coaching focus, stating:

coaching assignments tended to focus more on developmental and personal effectiveness issues than on issues such as business awareness, which was always addressed by only 5% of respondents, and never in 10% of settings. Personal effectiveness was the focus of coaching in about 25% of respondents’ organisations. (CIPD, 2011)

These are consistent with the findings from the UK survey.

Conclusion

In summary, a clear business orientation has emerged from the data and is consistent with the findings of other surveys undertaken by organisations under the auspices of the CIPD and other parties.

This UK survey has established that UK coaches are highly qualified, both professionally and academically and this addresses the demand identified by the CIPD for professionally qualified coaches. This puts UK coaches in a good position to respond positively to the increasing market demands from sponsoring organisations. A further opportunity for expanding the services offered by UK coaches has been identified here; whilst there appears to be a demand for mentoring from organisations (CIPD, 2011), relatively little mentoring is provided by UK coaches as yet.
The specialisms which UK coaches use to describe themselves also reflect this growing business orientation, where executive, business and leadership coaches predominate with relatively small numbers of life coaches, personal coaches, being identified. There are also clear distinctions in the sources of referral, with life coaches and personal coaches having the majority of self-referring, or other third party referred, clients and executive, business and leadership coaches having referrals from organisations, line managers or HR departments.

This emerging dichotomy further determines the focus of the coaching conversation which ensues from these initial referrals. The life or personal coaches have no predominating issues at the start of the relationship, or further on in the coaching relationship the issues remain equally eclectic; whereas the business-oriented coaches focus on the three key areas of career development, job performance and specific skill development ab initio, and the ensuing coaching conversation addresses the three key areas of interpersonal skills, communications and leadership development.

Notes on contributors

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Dr Jonathan Passmore is a chartered psychologist and accredited AC coach. He has worked for a range of consulting and training providers including PricewaterhouseCoopers, IBM Business consulting, OPM and UEL. Jonathan is the author/editor of 13 books including editing the AC series – the latest of which is Supervision in Coaching. He has also published over 50 papers, the majority of these on coaching and leadership. He currently works in private practice.
Stephen Palmer PhD is Director of the Centre for Coaching, and the International Academy for Professional Development, London, UK. He is Director of the Coaching Psychology Unit at City University London, a Visiting Professor of Work Based Learning and Stress Management at the Institute for Work Based Learning, Middlesex University, and a Director of adSapiens, Gothenburg. He is also Honorary Consultant Director of the Coaching Psychology Unit at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He is an APECS Accredited Executive Coach and Supervisor, and also an International Society for Coaching Psychology (ISCP) Accredited Coaching Psychologist and Supervisor. He is President of the ISCP and former President of the AC. He has written/edited 40 books including The Coaching Relationship: Putting People First (with McDowall) and the Handbook of Coaching Psychology (with Whybrow). He is Executive Editor of Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice and UK Coordinating Editor of International Coaching Psychology Review. In 2008 he received from the BPS Special Group in Coaching Psychology a ‘Lifetime Achievement Award in Recognition of Distinguished contribution to coaching psychology’. His pastimes include jazz, astronomy, travel, coastal walking, writing and art.

Dr Emma Short is a chartered Health Psychologist and senior lecturer at the University of Bedfordshire. She has developed courses in coaching and counselling and is also a practicing coach and researcher. Her research is focused in two main areas, cyber harassment/stalking and the application of peer coaching. As a coach, Emma works with adults who have specific learning difficulties and is developing coaching interventions for responding to bullying behaviours in the workplace. She is also the Research Officer for the BPS Special Group in Coaching Psychology.

References