

*The truth indeed has never been preached by the Buddha, seeing that one has to realize it within oneself. -Lamkara Sutra*

The way I see it, coaching certification is going in the wrong direction! In many professional certifications, there is a proven or accepted link between the certifications and what the certification produces in terms of a specific set of tangible results. Currently, almost ALL coaching success or lack of success is being measured incorrectly. It is being measured from a coaching effectiveness point of view, rather than from a client effectiveness point of view.

## **Coaching produces no repeatable tangible results by and of itself.**

In coaching, there is no established link or correlation between what a *coach does* and what a *client can expect* regarding results. Oh, yes, the coach may be certified, but there is still no causal link between what a coach does in business reality and the tangible results gained from coaching interactions.

## **The Biggest is not the Best.**

Coaching certification is being influenced heavily by people from other professional disciplines; the assumptions they are using are creating a huge blind spot. They are focusing coaching certification on the **WRONG** thing! Yes, you can create standards in coaching, but setting standards does not assure effectiveness and results with clients.

There is a spreading wave of certification fever that will do nothing more than cause regulation, in my view. Yet, with the regulation and consequential, "governing boards," there will be no link between coaching and results, only a link between coaching and the process used to govern it by regulation. Presently, these same issues appear in the professions of medicine, psychology, law, accounting, and insurance.

If coaching is to become something all of these disciplines are not, it must abandon the framework of certification evident in these disciplines and serve the client in a way that guarantees **client effectiveness**, NOT merely coaching effectiveness.

## Coaching is not a discipline?

Other disciplines have used this formula of certifying processes to establish a “market” for their services. I suspect coaching will also. Yet, something in my gut tells me it will not work. Coaching will become fragmented by the powers that be and coaching will become the step-child of various constituencies. At present, in my opinion there is not any question that it is not a discipline. Rather, it is a core competence of other disciplines such as leadership, psychology and consulting of various forms. Organizational Development and Human Resource Development are two of the disciplines that I can think of that will morph coaching into their camps over time.

## Coaching is about results!

The only clear measure of client effectiveness is a correlation between the person’s theory in use (behavior) and results that are rewarded and generative, as deemed by both the environment of choice and the nature of all results as effected by this choice. Even in those cases where a clear correlation is established between the client’s theory in use (behavior as observed by others) and results that are clearly desirable from all perspectives, what caused the client’s theory in use is not always attributable to the external environment. (Hawthorne Studies, Mayo)

In business, we do not hire a CFO, a CIO, or CXO of anything unless we suspect there will be a link between their actions and results. So, why would anyone hire a coach if there are no clear linkages between what coaches *do* and the results that people being coached *create*?

Before I attempt to answer that question, let me establish a bit more context. Please review the [table](#) that outlines three specific agenda items.

1. Is governance of a process likely to produce results?
2. Is locus of control important to client effectiveness?
3. Is coaching successful in spite of a set of standards?

## Measure coaches on the right thing!

What if every coach was measured on his or her client’s effectiveness as a result of the coaching interactions over time?

Forget about how you get that effectiveness. (Read the [disclaimer!](#)) The underlying theory and practices of coaching effectiveness are that everyone is correct some of the time, and never all the time. There are many paths to the top of the mountain. It will take a variety of coach approaches to achieve client effectiveness in a variety of existential conditions. Therefore it is not a matter of having the right model but paying attention to client effectiveness over time, through a specific set of criteria—none of which are mentioned on the left side of Table 1.

## **We must take the focus OFF the coach!**

This won't be easy. While it is a LOT easier to define a set of standards for coaching based on a particular philosophy of coaching, a coach-focused approach is the danger—NO "one" set of standards will guarantee client effectiveness in all situations. Just as there is no set of accounting standards that will guarantee business success, no insurance policy that will cause business to be profitable, and no recipe that will taste good to everyone. Therefore, why not help the client define effectiveness in his or her personal, professional, business, and network domains, and proceed from that basis?

*Take one example.*

## **What is an effective conversation?**

It is different for different people. Coaches need training in their own awareness, meaning-making and order of mind to remain separate from projecting their own meaning-making into the meaning-making system of the client. Effective conversations can only be measured as to their results in creating client effectiveness. Otherwise, according to definition, they are not effective, while in fact, they may meet a standard. If we proceed to measure effectiveness from the coaching position as opposed to the client position, we run the risk of creating competencies that don't matter and that are actually *inefficient* in creating client effectiveness.

## **Coaching is what coaching does.**

The other critical issues are the links between what the coach does and what the client accomplishes as a result of the coach's interaction with the client. I realize that in defining the purpose of life, work, or results, we enter into a significant number of issues outside the premise of this discussion. However this question is central to the discussion.

Should a coach be judged as effective using criteria for coaches or using criteria as determined by the client?

In many cases, the client could be judged as ineffective even though the coach was judged as being competent or proficient in meeting a set of *coach-based standards*. The key here is to not lose sight of the link between what coaching does and what the client does as a result.

## **The Key:**

If we are to remain *client-focused*, the relationship between the “competences” of the coach can only be assessed as effective if the client is successful or effective.

## **A Rule:**

This would then be a rule of client-focused standards.

If the client is not successful or effective, then under no circumstances could the coach be deemed competent—regardless of whether or not the coach met a particular set of standards.

## **The next economy has to change the way we judge competence.**

I realize this is somewhat r\evolutionary. Again, I draw your attention to accounting standards, medical standards, etc., they are all based on a set of competencies drawn to judge the actor, rather than the client. In times leading up to the knowledge economy, the client has not always been able to judge competence. Even today as we approach the next economy, the client is not always able to judge effectiveness in many ways.

*Yet, does that mean we continue to develop systems that result in poor links between coaching competence and client effectiveness?*

## **Caveat: Coaching is not always the answer!**

**The key issue is that if coaching is to be effective, the client must be effective.**

If it is any other way, then the focus is on the wrong element of the situation. *Coaching is merely one subset of solutions that might be effective.* Without proper matching or problem identification, coaching

could not only aggravate but prove inefficient as a solution set, in some cases, even being harmful to the client.

While I am going to cover this in another discussion, suffice it to say that if client effectiveness provides the locus of control, then decisions made outside of that locus of control will run a continuum from *guessing* to poor matching of solution and problem. Keeping client effectiveness as the factor of production is the only way to eliminate inefficient solutions and tighten the link between coaching competence and client effectiveness. In general, we must resist or prevent the focus on attaining competencies not directly causal to client effectiveness from being established as a set of standards for judging competence. In the minimum, the client must dictate what is effective either through their results or willingness to continue to contract with the coach.

## Factors in Client Effectiveness

In a recent discussion, the following factors were mentioned as a possible metric of client effectiveness. If we are to correlate what a coach does versus what happens as a result, then perhaps some of these factors may be important as an example of the kinds of things we might employ in identifying a correlation between what takes place between a coach and a client.

Additional factors are listed in the comparison that follows.

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| ➤ Distraction rate                | ➤ Increased growth and profitability       |
| ➤ Get-to-do versus got-to-do      | ➤ Alignment with organization's objectives |
| ➤ Intent versus results           | ➤ Value-added ratio (time spent)           |
| ➤ Clarity around what's important | ➤ Meeting-to-outcome ratio                 |
| ➤ Comfort versus stress           | ➤ Energy and engagement                    |
| ➤ Greater self-awareness          | ➤ Improved retention                       |
| ➤ Productivity                    | ➤ Loyalty                                  |

Here is a quick look at another paradigm of effectiveness for comparison.

From *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, by Stephen Covey

1. Be proactive.
2. Begin with the end in mind.
3. Put first things first.
4. Think win/win.
5. Seek first to understand, then to be understood.
6. Synergize.
7. Sharpen the saw.

It's all about the COACH		LOCUS OF CONTROL	It's all about the CLIENT!	
Measure the Coach (Judge Process)		Measure the Client (Judge Effectiveness)		
<p><b>ICF Core Competencies</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meeting Ethical Guidelines and Professional Standards</li> <li>2. Establishing the Coaching Agreement</li> <li>3. Establishing Trust and Intimacy with the Client</li> <li>4. Coaching Presence</li> <li>5. Active Listening</li> <li>6. Powerful Questioning</li> <li>7. Direct Communication</li> <li>8. Creating Awareness</li> <li>9. Designing Actions</li> <li>10. Planning and Goal Setting</li> <li>11. Managing Progress and Accountability</li> </ol>	<p><b>Coachville Proficiencies</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Engages the client in profoundly effective conversations.</li> <li>2. Shares observations that help to educate the client on who they are, what they want and how they operate.</li> <li>3. Has the courage to ask for a lot from the client.</li> <li>4. Is willing to question what the client says and does.</li> <li>5. Easily presses the client for what is needed.</li> <li>6. Is demonstrably curious.</li> <li>7. Sees the perfection of every situation or dynamic.</li> <li>8. Responds to what is most important to that client.</li> <li>9. Easily adjusts his/her relating style to fit the client's needs in that moment.</li> <li>10. Asks the right question at the right time.</li> <li>11. Believes in his/her client, and it shows.</li> <li>12. Crafts fitting strategies/solutions on the fly.</li> <li>13. Enjoys truth immensely.</li> <li>14. Offers to install sustainable support structures.</li> <li>15. Respects reality with no resistance.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Client Effectiveness</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Know what is important and what really matters. Use this knowledge to guide behavior to achieve personal and organizational results.</li> <li>2. Make appropriate response to environmental demands. (Get desired results.)</li> <li>3. Capability to integrate personal freedom and business reality, while integrating life and work toward mutual enhancement.)</li> <li>4. Become self-correcting, adaptable, self-directed and resilient.</li> <li>5. Solve more problems than create.</li> <li>6. Use efficient action to serve ends with appropriate legal, ethical, and moral means</li> <li>7. Be intrinsically motivated.</li> <li>8. Be responsible.</li> </ol> <p><b>Post Conventional Effectiveness</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Achieve internal and external consistency and control within role while <i>reaching out</i>.</li> <li>10. Invite and include multiple perspectives.</li> <li>11. Create and maintain healthy systems</li> <li>12. Become more capable over time—less co-dependent--more integrated with self/all.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Emotional Competencies</b></p> <p>Self-Awareness</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Emotional self-awareness</li> <li>2. Accurate self-assessment</li> <li>3. Self-confidence</li> </ol> <p>Self-Management</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Self-control</li> <li>5. Transparency</li> <li>6. Optimism</li> <li>7. Adaptability</li> <li>8. Achievement drive</li> <li>9. Initiative</li> </ol> <p>Social Awareness</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Empathy</li> <li>11. Service orientation</li> <li>12. Organizational awareness</li> </ol> <p>Relationship Management</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13. Inspirational leadership</li> <li>14. Developing others</li> <li>15. Influence</li> <li>16. Conflict management</li> <li>17. Change catalyst</li> <li>18. Teamwork &amp; collaboration</li> </ol>	

[From *EI Theory of Performance*]

## It is NOT about the Coach!

As you review the Table, you will find one clear distinction.

In the first part of the chart, in the left two columns, I've pulled the basic guidelines from the two largest certifying bodies in coaching, or at least they claim to be. You'll notice that the competencies or proficiencies, as they are called, are about the coach and what the coach does with or "to" a client.

In the second part of the chart, in the right two columns, I have provided some basic guidelines. The results are drawn from my personal experience along with the heavily researched EI Theory of Performance put forward by Goleman and Boyatzis. You'll notice a rather distinct difference between these client-centric competencies or results and the coach-centric competencies. Even though they may look similar, you have to understand the left side of the columns are owned by the coach; the right side owned by the client. On one-hand you have someone doing something to the client, on the other-hand you have the client doing something on their own. While my *factors of client effectiveness* are not researched, but anecdotal, the Emotional Competencies have been extensively researched from several angles; they form the EI Theory of Performance mentioned above and at [www.eiconsortium.org](http://www.eiconsortium.org).

## The argument will center around this question: "does A = B?"

Literally hundreds of coaches are emerging each month. I suspect that soon, there will be claims that we have as many coaches as we do attorneys—more than 600,000 alone in the USA. In my view, however, coaching will "do itself in" through its own failure to link its actions with results. Therefore, it will NOT create a market for itself; the standards it chooses to proclaim will fall on deaf ears and a splintered marketplace. Thus, what has worked for the American Medical Association and others who use the competency model, is inefficient for coaching as it attempts to become an *industry without a market*.

In the field of coaching today, much of the coaches' efforts produce little tangible result for business and organizations. Oh, I'm sure you've seen reports that *coaching does this* and *coaching does that* from a variety of sources, even some major players. Yet if you look at the "research," those claims fall victim to the common flaws of invalidity and a lack of reliability required for a singular set of results to be generalized across a population. Based on some of the claims, I think I'm being kind here.

I could go straight to the bottom line and make my point. In fact, I will, then I'll add some additional thoughts.

**It is about them . . . client effectiveness is the leading indicator of coaching effectiveness, NOT the other way around.**

It doesn't matter what the coach does—only what the client can do as a result.

## Disclaimer

Client results are the broadest measure of coaching effectiveness, when considered or judged in a coaching interaction. Let's assume here that results come inside the domain of ethical, legal, and moral boundaries. We've had enough results-oriented leadership lately—which can be deemed clearly ineffective when you apply the measurements I've listed in my column on client effectiveness. In my view, creating fewer problems than you solve would limit a significant number of leadership actions from being judged as effective.

## Facts?

Until someone establishes a clear link between coaching core competencies or proficiencies as some insist and client effectiveness—*predictable, reliable results*—then it is pure speculation that the competencies listed by the ICF and Coachville are leading indicators of client effectiveness.

In many cases, client effectiveness in most cases is, *in fact*, due more to the “Hawthorne Effect” —an effect on performance created as a result of factors not directly related to the reason given for effectiveness—than to anything directly correlated to competence on behalf of the solution provider.

Those who participate in psychotherapy and self-improvement programs for weight control, smoking cessation, and exercise show only modest improvement on average. Yet they often claim considerable benefit.

David G. Myers, [Intuition](#), 2002

The competencies posted and used by the two largest coach-certifying bodies have no research background—no legs to stand on—outside of anecdotal evidence. Therefore my factors of client effectiveness are valid for the same reason because they meet those same tests of *validity and reliability*? If the products of the interactions cannot be linked, then the theory constructed by the ICF and Coachville is flawed. Right now, a whole lot of people are staking their money and their reputations that the ICF and Coachville know what they are doing! In my view, most business organizations will not make and are not making hiring decision based on coaching competence but measures of client effectiveness. They may be hiring those coaches, but for reasons not directly related to the coaches' affiliation or certification, although the organizations claim membership and certification is vital to earn contracts.

At the time of this writing, Fall 2002, coaching in general is largely done at the executive level in business; it is delivered on such a wide continuum of models that no one theory or set of competencies could possibly describe a singular theory of results or effectiveness. In fact, it is considered generally to be *black box work*. Basically, I think

most people operate from the theory that doing something is better than doing nothing. If coaching does not work, there is no harm done.

I do not want to become the single voice of dissent here, but someone has to provide leadership that is not blinded by the very thing it represents—the dependence on competencies on the part of the provider, rather than creating capability in the client.

If more coaches were trained to create client effectiveness, rather than to focus on coach effectiveness, someone would have figured this out by now. Clearly, the industry has not, and is therefore perpetuating its own blind spots through its theory in use, while espousing a theory of action that is proving ineffective in placing coaches successfully into a skeptical marketplace!

The current *certification* theory in use—*it's all about the coach*—will become the industry's undoing because what it is producing is not linked to the market's needs.

My assumption has a good deal of face validity because newly minted coaches are not getting work or clients. The “coach training schools” will tell you that it is not their fault. I will state that it *is* their fault. They are simply “skillfully unaware” of the blind spots as Chris Argyris explains in [Flawed Advice and the Management Trap](#). The coaches who are successful are in large part operating as consultants; they are not buttering their bread with the coaching processes they have been instructed to follow, but with referrals based on successful consulting practices.

## **It is NOT about process; it is about people and results!**

I know many of you reading this are experiencing feelings from anger to disappointment. Let me bring you hope! If you can begin to understand the distinction between coaching effectiveness and client effectiveness, you are half-way home. While I am not aware of any research that links a specific method of coaching to personal, professional, business, and network (organizational) results, several pieces of research link the improvement of emotional competence to results. You can find that information here: <http://www.eiconsortium.org>.

My goal is not to plug a particular method, but to help you integrate what you do with what you get. To do that, you must link what you *do* with what you *cause*, for present and future clients. This means you will have to take the focus off what **you** are trying to do and place it on what **the client** is doing or being. You will have to leave your reliance on process and recipes and start listening, observing, and discerning with deference to the client. In most cases, the “client” will be made up of an organization of people, usually identified through sponsorship (who hired you) and the customers of the person being coached—internal and external.

I am not here to teach you how to coach clients to get results. I am here to help you and the coaching industry understand a clear distinction—it is all about *them*. Identifying “them” may be the critical first step in the process. Continuing to focus on

coaching processes as a certification tool is an exercise in futility, designed to pad the pockets of certifying organizations, mentor coaches, and coach training schools.

## A Final Word

It is not just about them, it is about you and what you have to do to be fully present available, masterful and aware of what has you. Because what has you, is what you project on your clients to meet your own unknown needs and ends. What is required to take your coaching to the next level? *Take yourself there first!*

## Now, just so you know, I train coaches.

The developmental system I created is named B\Coach: [www.b-coach.com](http://www.b-coach.com).

Actually, I am pleased with the direction we are moving in our system of promoting client effectiveness. I founded our program on the EI Theory of Performance along with the support of many theories in individual and organizational learning, growth and development. Using the anecdotal experience I have enjoyed throughout my tenure as an independent leader, consultant, and coach to synthesize real world results, I have synthesized a spiraling system of development at <http://www.developmentalist.com>.

We are finding a number of our graduates are actually working as coaches as they follow a path leading to client effectiveness. There are still a lot of unanswered questions about getting results. I do not know all the answers. But I have a good idea of where to go to find them—*the client*—and as many touch points that may be included in the construct of client effectiveness.

I would be happy to hear your comments on this whitepaper, as well as any information you feel may provide insights into the issues I have presented.

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If you would like more information on creating coaching programs for managers, leaders or executives, we welcome your inquiry for your coaching and development requirements.

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