



Group Executive Coaching – 2008 Global Survey

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Executive Summary

- From the broad geographical spectrum of respondents, there is growing global interest in the power of Group Executive Coaching. Although it is taking place around the world, the dominant locations for group executive are Europe (70%), Asia (63%) and North America (30%)
- 52% of respondents have been coaching for five years or more, compared to 13% who have been coaching for less than one year. This would seem to indicate that the group coaching tends to be conducted by more experienced coaches.
- 70% of Group Executive Coaching was undertaken on a regular basis as part of leadership development initiatives
- The majority of group coaching tends within the same organisation. 60% of group coaching happens within intact teams ie: individuals from the same team in the same organisation while 50% was same organisation but different business units.
- Group size is important – 48% coach groups of between 2-6 coachees and 48% between 7 and 12. The optimal size of group coaching seems to tail off dramatically after 12 coachees, where it becomes more difficult to differentiate between coaching and facilitation.
- Duration of assignments – over a third of group executive coaching takes place over 3-6 months, with only 7% exceeding one year
- The coach's ability to building trust and rapport was the top unsolicited critical success factor (23%)
- Critical success factors for Group Executive Coaching were seen related to the coach, the coachees and the coaching process itself.

Methodology

The survey was undertaken as an online survey and was run between August to October 2008. Coaches from around the world were invited to participate. Survey invitations were sent to professional coaching associations such as the Association of Coaching, European Mentoring & Coaching Council (EMCC), International Association of Coaching (IAC), International Coaching Federation (ICF), Worldwide Association of Business Coaches (WABC) etc, as well as institutions known to be involved in Group Coaching. Invitations were also extended to numerous regional, national and local coaching groups. Coaches were encouraged to forward the invitation onto other coaches in their professional networks.

The survey was comprised of both closed and open-ended questions. As this was an exploratory survey, open-ended questions were used for discussion related topics such as advantages and benefits, cultural and generational differences and so on. This was to

encourage the fullest of participants' expression of their professional experiences and observations.

There were 176 respondents to the survey however 5 surveys were deemed unsuitable. One was a duplicate of a previously submitted survey and the remaining four respondents had answered only 1 or 2 questions before abandoning the survey. This resulted in 171 surveys being used for this study.

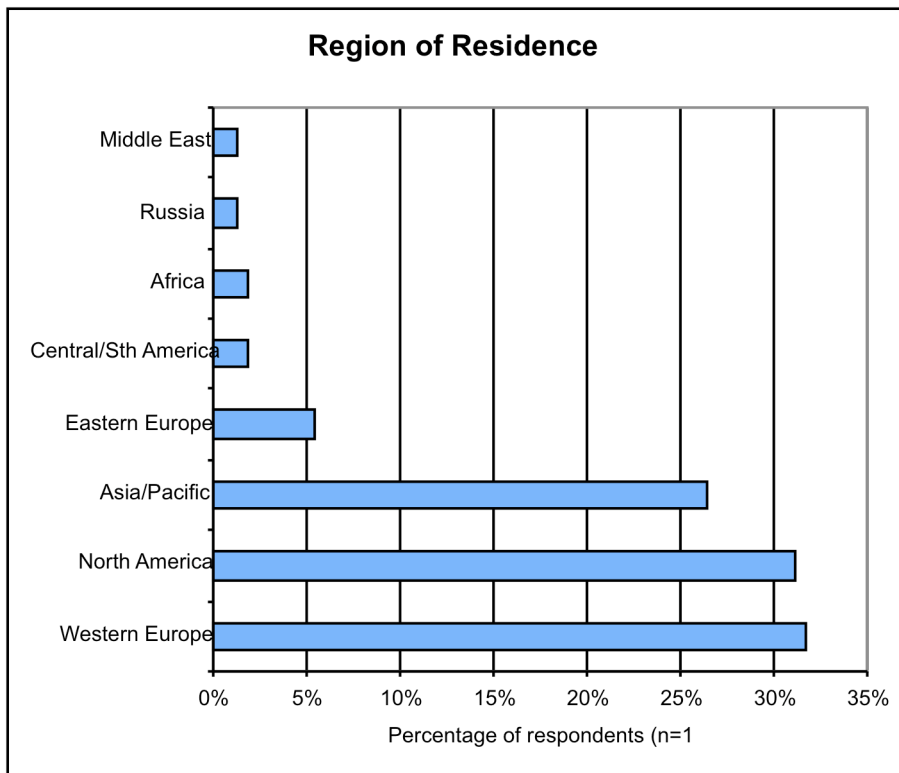
Profile of Respondents

Gender

Survey respondents comprised 107 (63%) females and 64 (37%) males.

Location of Respondents

Figure 1 shows the location of Respondents according to region, with 32% residing in Western Europe, 31% in North America and 26% in Asia Pacific.



Respondents came from 40 different countries around the world. The largest number of respondents came from the United States of America (26%) followed by the United Kingdom (14%), which included England, Scotland and Wales, and thirdly, Singapore (7%).

Table 1: Country of Residence, reflects the diverse nature of respondents.

Table 1: Country of Residence

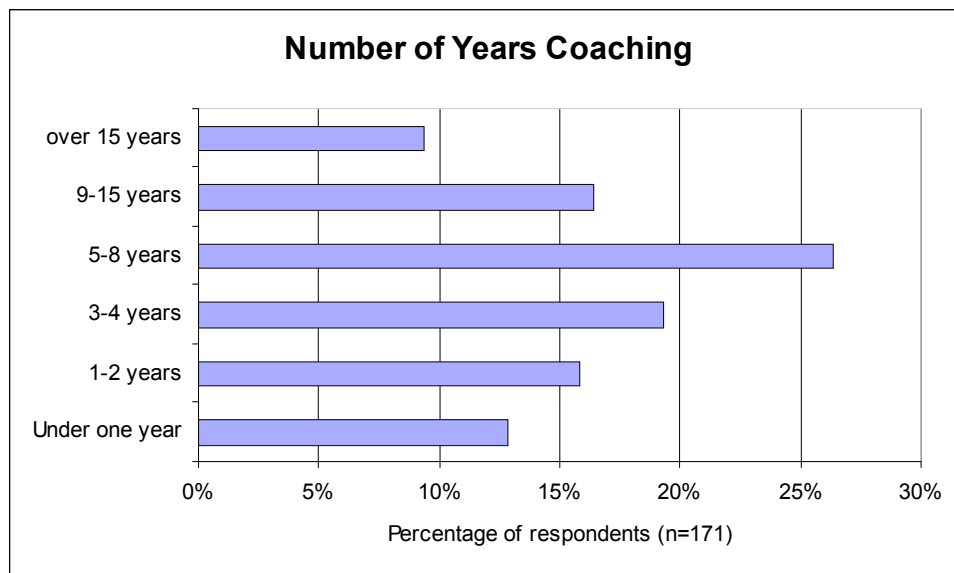
| Total | % | Countries |
|-------|------|---|
| 45 | 26% | USA |
| 24 | 14% | UK |
| 12 | 7% | Singapore |
| 9 | 5% | Australia |
| 5 | 3% | Belgium, Canada, France, The Netherlands |
| 4 | 2% | Czech Republic, Germany, Indonesia |
| 3 | 2% | China, Denmark, India, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Philippines, South Africa, Switzerland, |
| 2 | 1% | Luxembourg, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Thailand |
| 1 | 1% | Brazil, Ireland, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Peru, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Romania, Sweden, Taiwan, United Arab Emirates |
| 171 | 100% | Total |

Number of Years Coaching

Figure 2 shows the numbers of years the respondents have been coaching. Respondents showed a wide range of experience from less than one year to over 15 years. 52% of respondents had been coaching professionally for 5 or more years. The majority of respondents (26%) have been coaching for 5-8 years, followed by 19% with 3-4 years experience. Even those clusters where you would expect less coverage i.e. those with very

little time in the industry or those with a lot of time in the industry represented 13% and 9% of respondents respectively.

Figure 2:

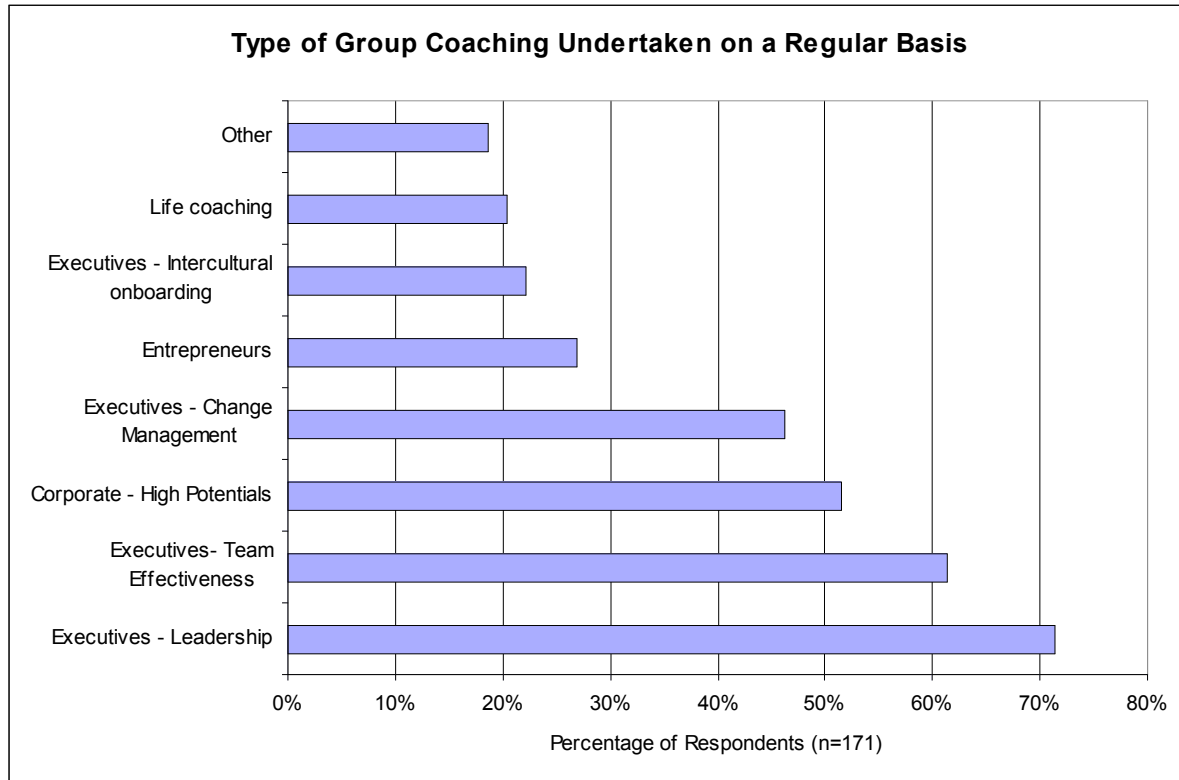


Coaching Activities Undertaken on a Regular Basis

Figure 3 shows the type of coaching the respondents have undertaken on a regular basis. Again there was a diverse spread with the majority of respondents (71%) having undertaken Executive - Leadership coaching and more than half of the respondents having coached in Executive - Team Effectiveness (61%) or Corporate - High Potential (51%) areas.

19% of respondents undertook other types of coaching. This category covered a variety of activities from the familiar career coaching (management, transition, exploration), to more niche areas such as coaching disabled people to return to the community as active citizens, and the coaching of high performance sports personalities.

Figure 3:



Cultures Coached In

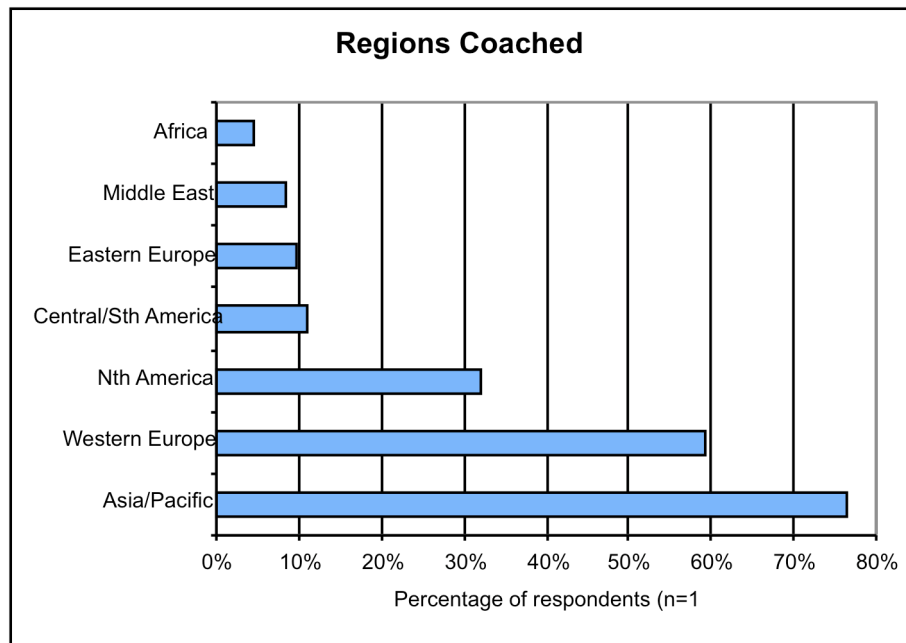
Coaches responding to the survey came across a wide variety of cultures in their Group Coaching assignments which have spanned 64 countries, see *Table 3*. 32% of respondents have coached in the United States, but this is also likely to be a function of the fact that 31% of respondents resided in North America. Seventeen per cent of respondents have coached in the United Kingdom, 14% in Singapore and 12% in China. It is also interesting to note that some coaches have undertaken Group Coaching in relatively unusual countries such as Ghana and Angola. It will be interesting to track changes in such figures as Group Executive Coaching becomes more widespread in the coming years.

Table 3: Countries where respondents have coached

| No. of Respondents | % of Respondents | Countries Where Group Coaching Took Place |
|--------------------|------------------|---|
| 43 | 25% | USA |
| 29 | 17% | UK |
| 24 | 14% | Singapore |
| 20 | 12% | China, including Hong Kong |
| 13 | 8% | Australia |
| 13 | 8% | France |
| 12 | 7% | Malaysia |
| 11 | 6% | Thailand |
| 10 | 6% | Germany |
| 9 | 5% | Belgium, India, Indonesia, New Zealand |
| 8 | 5% | Canada, Switzerland, The Netherlands |
| 7 | 4% | Czech Republic |
| 6 | 4% | Philippines |
| 5 | 3% | Denmark, Japan |
| 4 | 2% | Brazil, South Africa, Spain, United Arab Emirates |
| 3 | 2% | Cambodia, Dubai, South Korea, Mexico, Russia, Serbia, Vietnam |
| 2 | 1% | Colombia, Egypt, Ireland, Italy, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Romania, Taiwan, Venezuela, |
| 1 | 1% | Angola, Argentina, Austria, Bahrain, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Ghana, Israel, Monaco, Norway, Oman, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Slovakia, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Trinidad |

The spread is probably largely due to the geographic location of the respondees. It also indicates, however, where more group coaching is taking place. For example, although more respondents have coached in the United States and Canada (31%), when individual countries are grouped regionally, see Figure 3, there are in fact more coaches undertaking group coaching in Asia Pacific (76% of respondents) and Western Europe (59% of respondents).

Figure 4:



Percentage greater than 100 as respondents could choose multiple answers

Composition of Coaching Groups

Size of Group

Figure 5 shows the usual size of a coaching group. The respondents mainly coached groups that were either 2-6 persons (48%) or 7-12 persons (48%), although 6% of respondents had coached groups larger than 20 persons. Some respondents had coached over 30 people at one time:

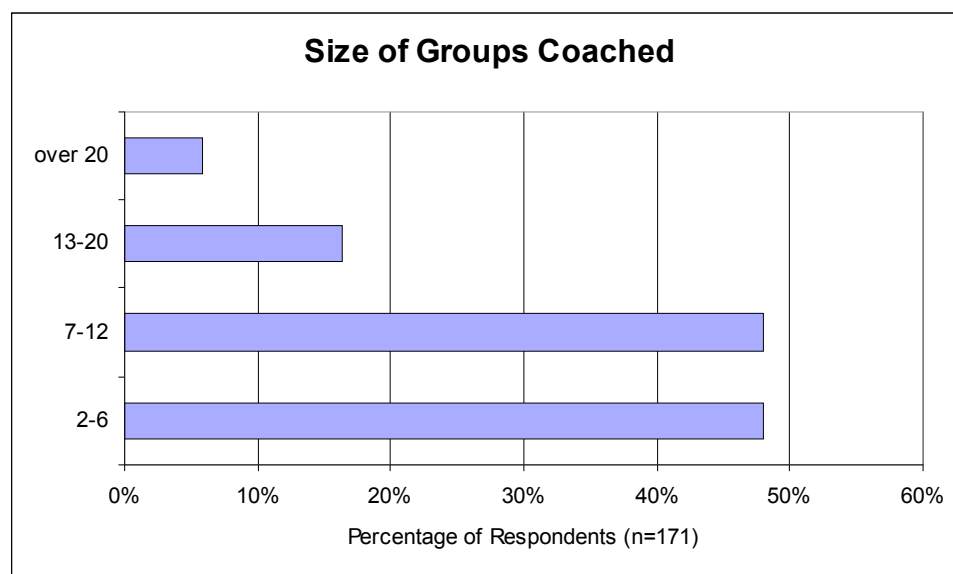
- "Depending on the participants of the 1-year programs there may be between 25 and 30"
- "Have done one group coaching event that was with 35 leaders"
- "I have run events with up to 30 participants."

Although not specifically asked in the survey some people offered views on what the optimal size of a group should be. These views varied but fell within the 2-12 person range, for example:

- "12 is the ideal size to coach as it allows individual participation and for the group to be broken into pairs, threes or fours"

- *"We find 7 is optimal"*
- *"I like groups 2-10"*
- *"No more than 10, if possible."*

Figure 5:



Percentage greater than 100 as respondents could choose multiple answers

Types of People Coached

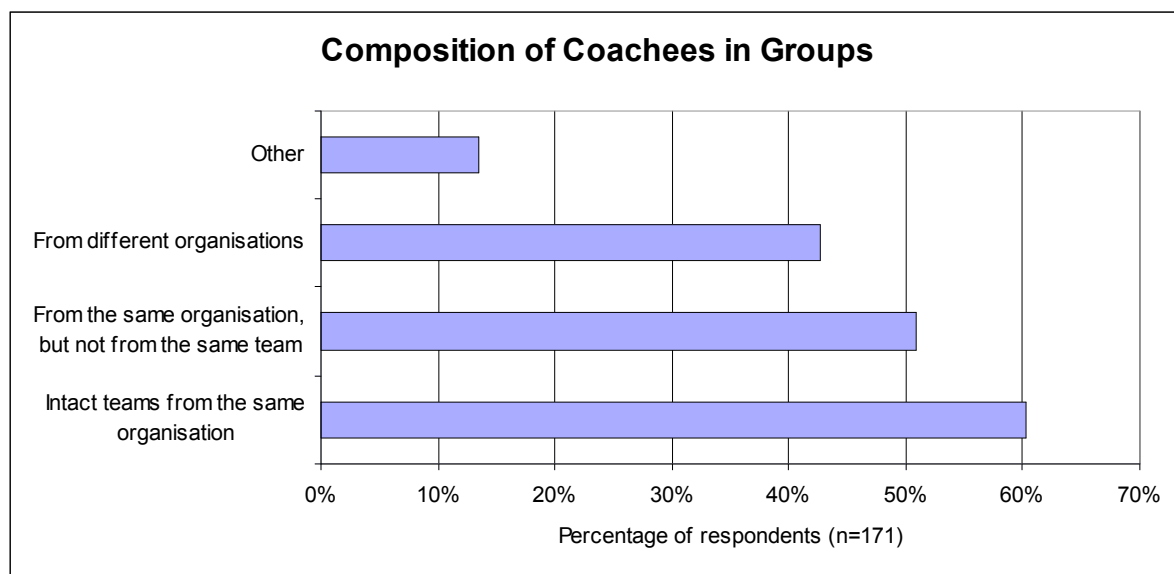
The type of people coached in a group was fairly evenly distributed across the three main types:

- Intact teams from the same organisation (60%);
- Groups from the same organisation but not from the same team (51%); and
- Groups comprising people from different organisations (43%).

Other groups accounted for 13% of responses and included groups such as:

- *"I group coach members of disability organisations."*
- *"Levels, for example the Board of Directors, then Second Level, Third Level etc."*
- *"From the same program and level, e.g., doctoral level or master level"*
- *"Individuals from the same profession but different organisations."*

Figure 6:



Percentage greater than 100 as respondents could choose multiple answers

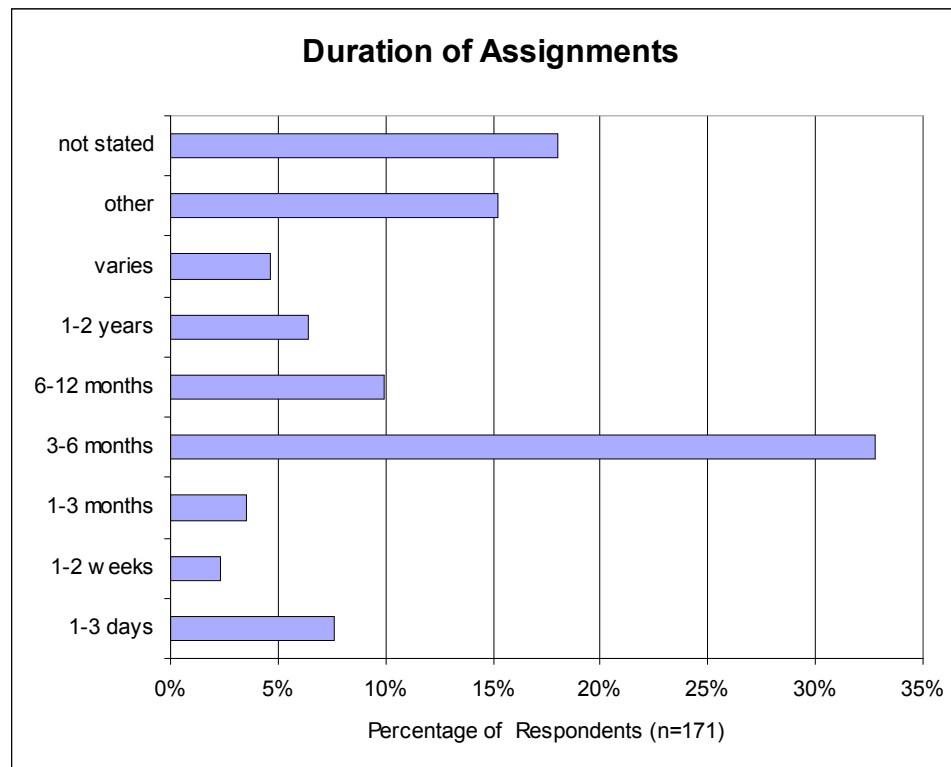
Duration of Coaching Assignments & Sessions

Coaching Assignments

This question was designed to find out the total length of time a group coaching assignment usually lasts. Some respondents interpreted 'assignment' to mean the exercises given to the group and therefore gave answers such as 15 minutes and one hour, instead of the entire coaching programme. *Figure 7: Duration of Assignments* indicates the wide spread of answers, which ranged from 15 minutes to 5-10 years. Those responses which were less than one day and over two years are indicated as "other" (accounting for 15% of responses.)

The most common length of an assignment was 3-6 months (33% of respondents) followed by 6-12 months (10%). 18% of coaches did not respond to this question and 5% said that the length of the assignment varied.

Figure 7:



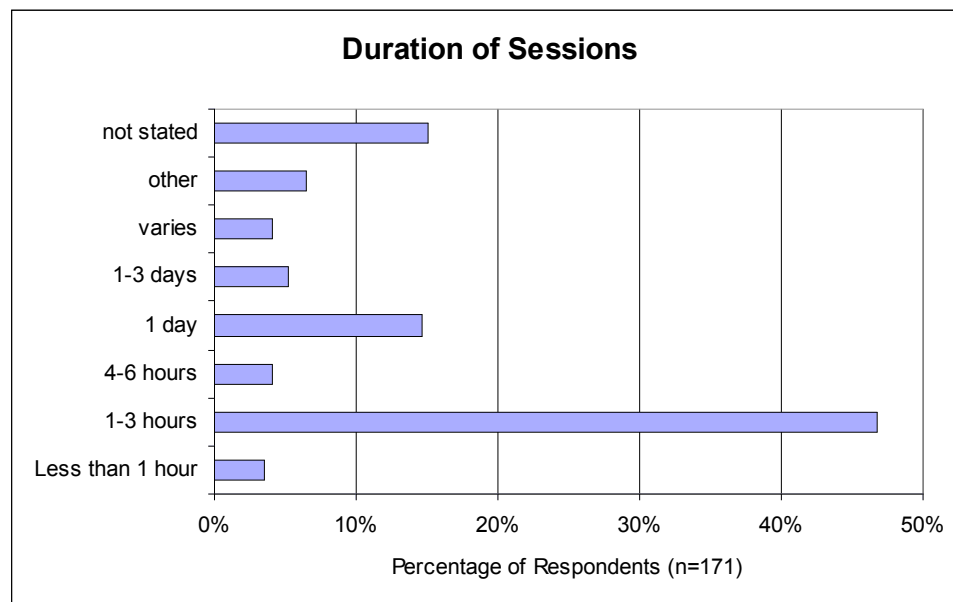
Coaching Sessions

This question may also have posed confusion for some people, as the typical duration 'coaching session' provided responses ranging from 30 minutes to six months. *Figure 8* shows the duration of sessions with those responses not falling into logical time spans shown as "other". This group comprised 6% of answers.

The majority of coaches (47%) held sessions from one to three hours, followed by 15% of respondents holding sessions for one day. Those who chose not to respond to this question accounted for a further 15%. 4% of respondents said that the length of their sessions varied:

- "Varies from one day workshops to one hour refreshers"
- "Range from several hours to several days."

Figure 8:



Advantages & Disadvantages of Group Coaching

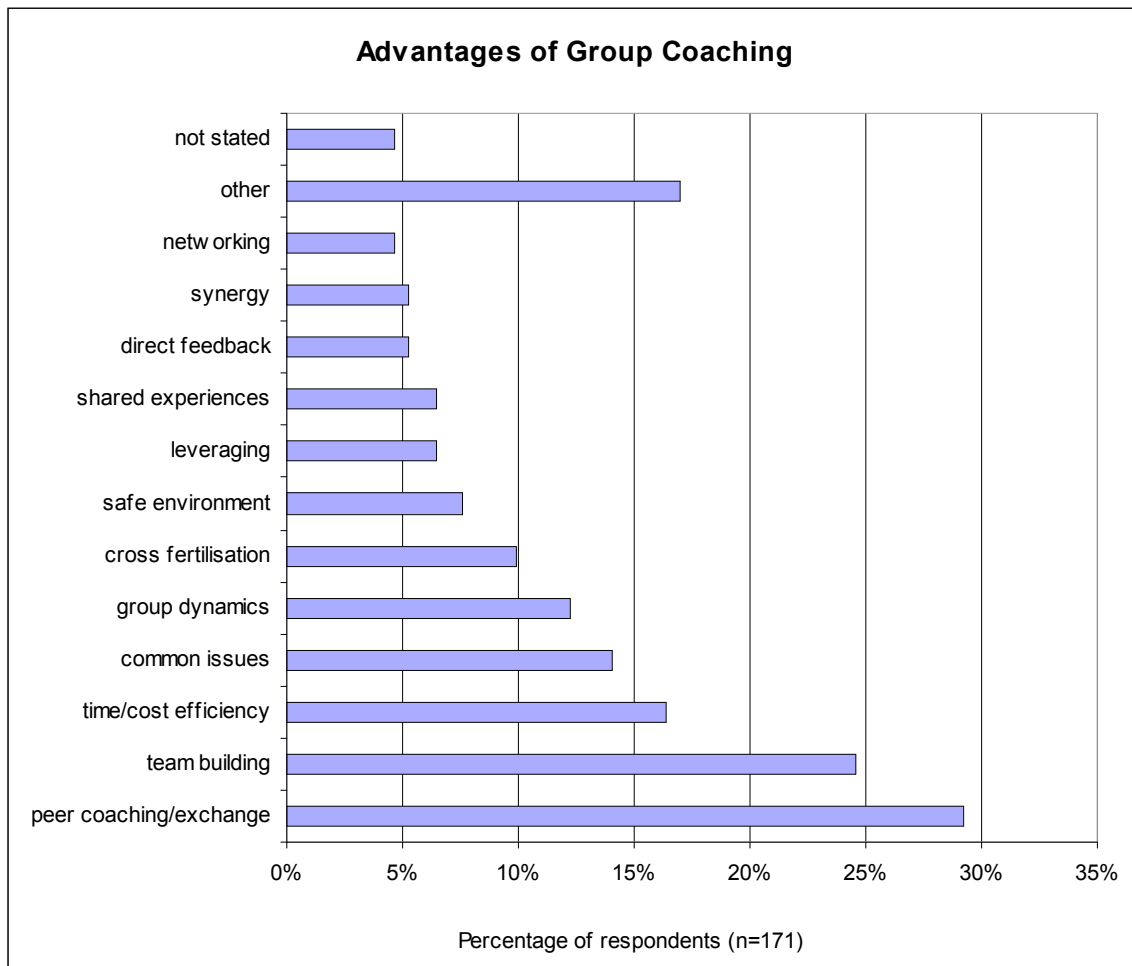
This section of the survey looked at the advantages and disadvantages of group coaching over one to one coaching. This question was open ended in order to elicit a broad range of responses. Many respondents cited a number of advantages and disadvantages, although the number of advantages outweighed the disadvantages. Many themes became apparent, and these were coded to produce the results in *Figure 9: Advantages of Group Coaching* and *Figure 10: Disadvantages of Group Coaching*.

Advantages

The foremost advantage of group coaching was the opportunity it provided for peer coaching and exchange, which was cited by 29% of respondents.

- "It offers peer coaching opportunities when they are onsite and 'off session'; more sharing of ideas/feedback; increases commitment to the process through 'peer pressure'"
- "Peer coaching, follow-through with peers, sharing and learning through peers experiences."

Figure 9:



Percentage greater than 100 as respondents could give more than one answer

The second main advantage was the opportunity for team building (25%), followed by time/cost efficiency (16%). Respondents gave comments such as:

- "Builds team dynamics & collaboration"
- "Team really gets to see personalities, styles, strengths and weaknesses of colleagues"
- "Effectiveness, speed to impact, side benefit of team building, motivation to exceed team ambitions ahead of plan"
- "Faster and cheaper for client org[anisation]"
- "More support from others in similar situations;
- "Lower costs."

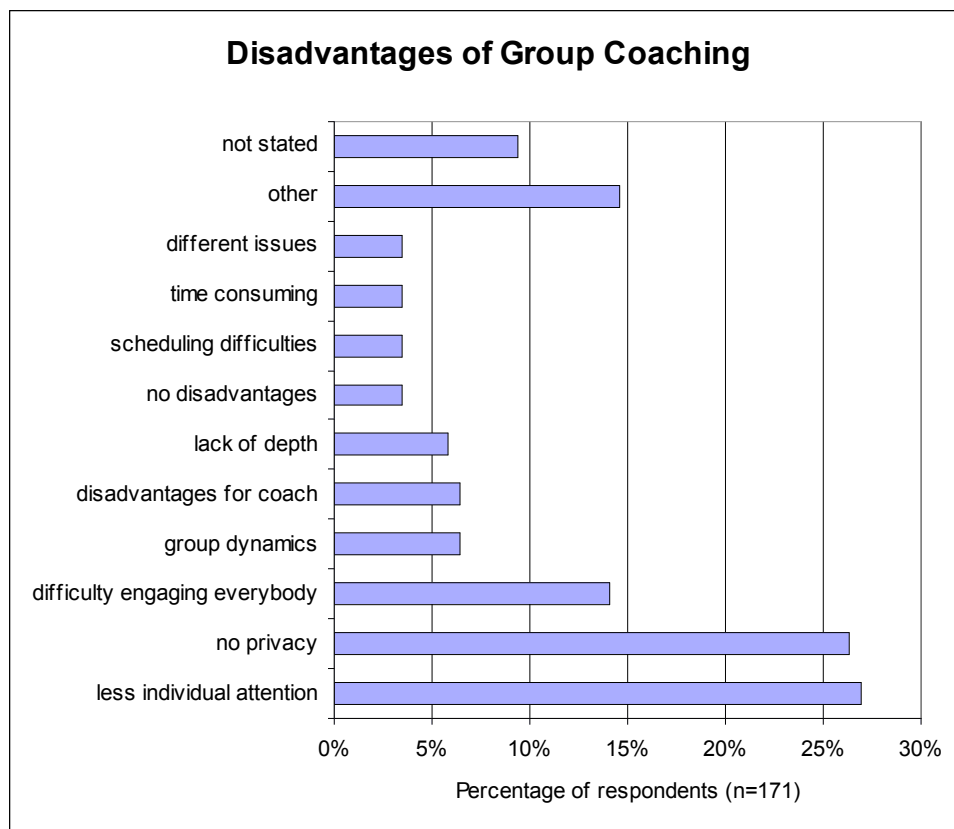
It is interesting to note, however, that time efficiency can be diluted when the group is cross-cultural, as 8% of respondents said that it took longer to achieve results with these groups (refer section on Cross Cultural Groups.)

Disadvantages

Figure 10 shows the possible Disadvantages of Group Coaching. Two issues far outweighed the others with approximately one quarter of respondents citing that it afforded less individual attention (27%) and offered no privacy (26%).

- "Lack of opportunity/time to address specific individual situations in-depth"
- "Don't have the same level of connectedness / intimacy"
- "Losing 'face', fear to share"
- "It takes longer to open individuals and get to the truth."

Figure 10:



Percentage greater than 100 as respondents could give more than one answer

A further 14% thought that can be difficult to engage everybody in the session. For example:

- *"Sometimes individuals who do not relate to the hot seat issue can disconnect; skill levels can differ dramatically [within the] team, so contribution can be uneven"*
- *"Groups over 8 leave too little individual time."*

9% of respondents did not answer this question and 4% said there were no disadvantages to group coaching:

- *"None if done as 'fit for purpose'"*
- *"None, high quality team coaching is an effective intervention in it's own right."*

While "common issues" was generally seen as an advantage of group coaching, the fact that the group had "different issues" was sometimes seen as a disadvantage. In cross-cultural groups, however, these different issues were seen to provide the advantage of diversity.

"Group dynamics" was seen as both an advantage and disadvantage. We expect that this viewpoint might be related to the group facilitation skills and confidence of the coach.

Confidentiality was seen by some as a disadvantage in the group situation but was also cited by as a possible advantage as it was;

- *"...Easier to report to management on [group] trends versus giving individual results (confidentiality)."*

A number of respondents (6%) gave examples of disadvantages for the coach, including that group coaching:

- Is far more taxing for the coach;
- Is much more difficult to manage the process; and
- Has the added burden of maintaining confidentiality in the session if the coach is also engaged in one on one coaching.

For example:

- *"It is demanding [to] make rapport with each member of group and keep it [throughout] the whole session"*
- *"Requires group management facilitation beyond straight coaching."*

It is possible that many of these disadvantages of group coaching can be alleviated through:

- Effective selection of groups to create both commonality and diversity
- The skills of the group coach, including facilitation skills
- Keeping group size relatively small to enable trust and engagement.

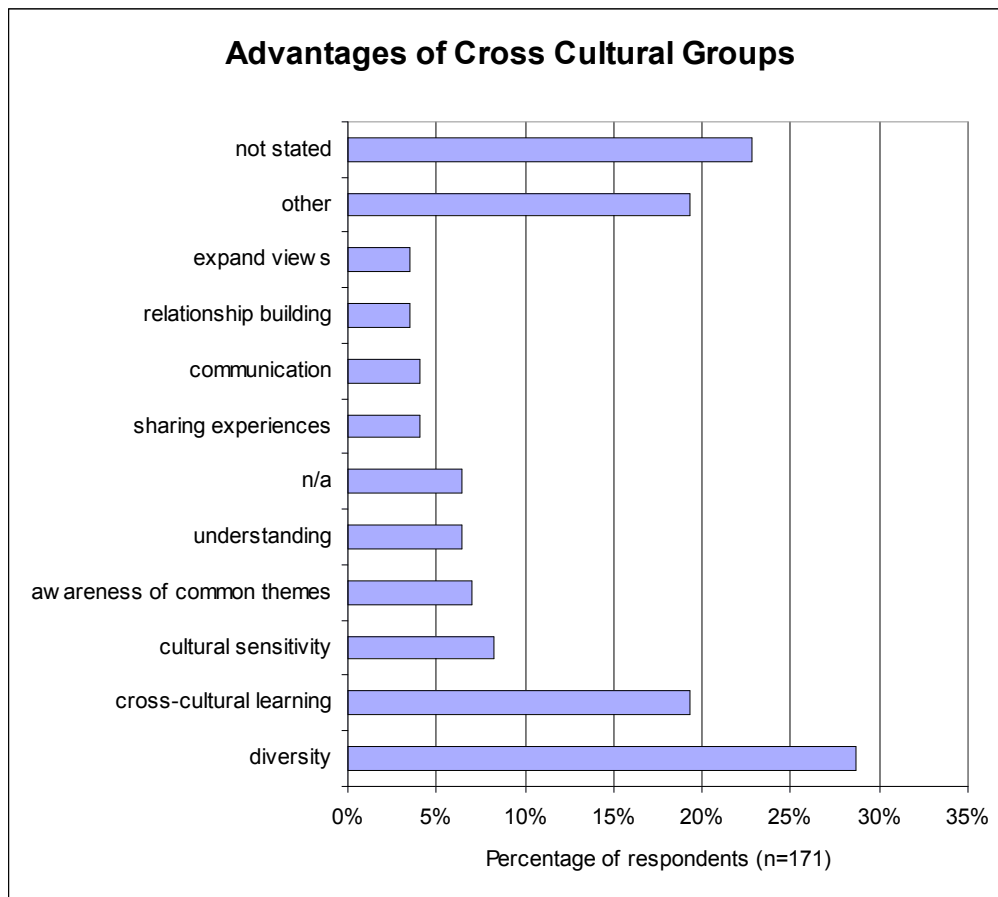
Cross Cultural Groups

Advantages

Figure 11 shows the advantages of working with cross-cultural groups. Diversity was the main advantage of working in cross-cultural groups (29%) along with cross-cultural learning (19%) and the development of cultural sensitivity (8%). All responses however shared the common themes of shared communication and understanding.

- *"Different perspectives and points of view are always enriching. However one of the beauties is getting people to realize that the basic needs and wants of humans expand neatly across varied cultures."*
- *"Celebrating differences and learning more about how others think, feel, work and live"*
- *"Diverse groups share same problems - enlightenment!"*
- *"Learning, respecting other cultures; recognizing similarities; celebrating sameness."*

Figure 11:



Percentage greater than 100 as respondents could give more than one answer

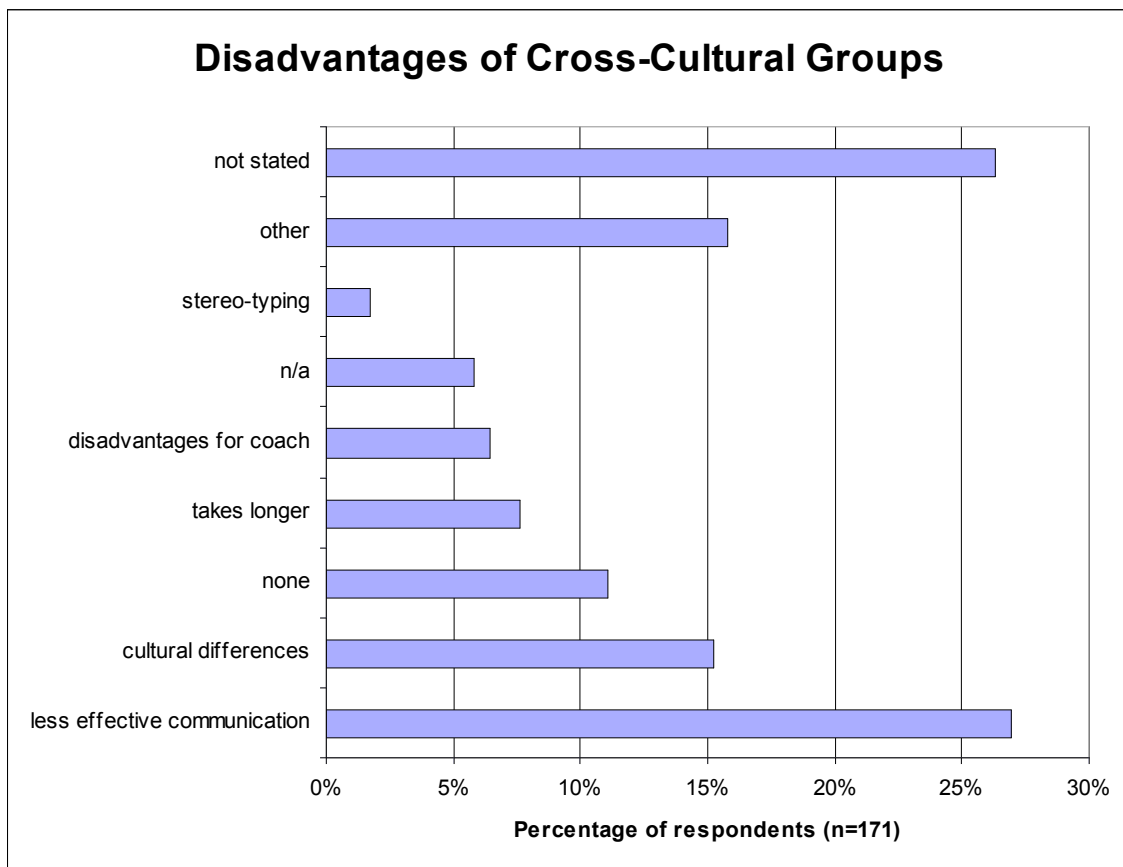
29% of respondents gave no answer to the question in the form of either, 'not stated' (23%), or not applicable (6%). The majority of the people who answered 'not applicable' had not experienced coaching a cross-cultural group. Of those who left the answer blank approximately half had worked in single culture environments.

Disadvantages

By far, the biggest disadvantage with cross-cultural groups was 'less effective communication' with 27% of respondents citing this as a problem (see Figure 12). This category took into account language barriers; misunderstandings, including "same words different meaning" scenarios; messages being diluted; and people missing cues. Examples of comments included:

- *"Language may mean different things depending on your frame of reference and where you learned the language. You may think you are speaking the same language, but how it is used can create cultural clashes."*
- *"Frustration and misunderstandings"*
- *"Some display little interest and often if the group is too diverse messages are diluted."*

Figure 12:



Percentage greater than 100 as respondents could give more than one answer

'Cultural difference' was named as a disadvantage by 15% of respondents. This covered factors such as the 'losing face' and the reticence of some cultures to speak out; the dominating/submissive behaviours of certain cultures; or the fact that an issue may not be perceived as a problem in certain cultures.

- *"The cultural implication on how the people express themselves (directness, losing face etc.), language skills problems"*

- *"Westerners can easily dominate in Asian setting"*
- *"Can be difficult for participants from 'quiet' cultures"*
- *"Sometimes, the coachees don't understand the point behind the conversation due to cultural differences."*

We expect that some of these disadvantages can be alleviated through the coach's intercultural understanding and their group facilitation skills.

32% of respondents replied with a 'not applicable' or left the answer blank, as many of these respondents worked in single culture environments. A further 11% did not believe there were any disadvantages to cross-cultural groups.

Some respondents (6%) cited disadvantages for the coach in coaching cross-cultural groups. Issues included that it:

- Is more challenging for the coach
- Is difficult to generalise
- Can be harder to focus the group
- Is more difficult to explain principles; and
- Requires a variety of communication strategies to be effective.

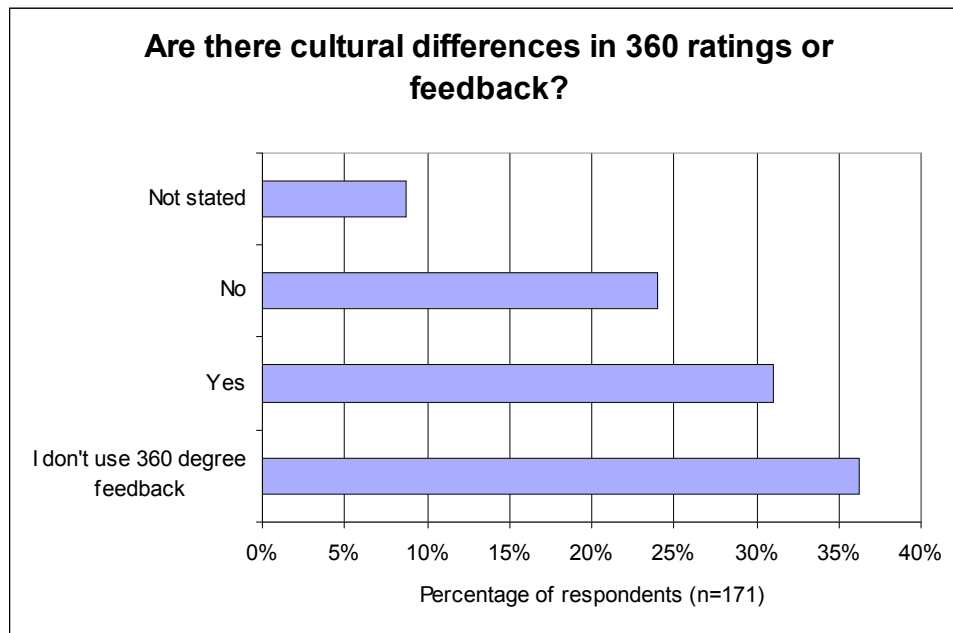
For example:

- *"It can become very demanding & coach needs to be extremely aware."*
- *"Need to get point across in several ways to reach all."*
- *"Requires constant feedback about whether everyone in the group is in a learning mode and that language is accessible to all."*

Cultural Differences in 360 Ratings and Feedback

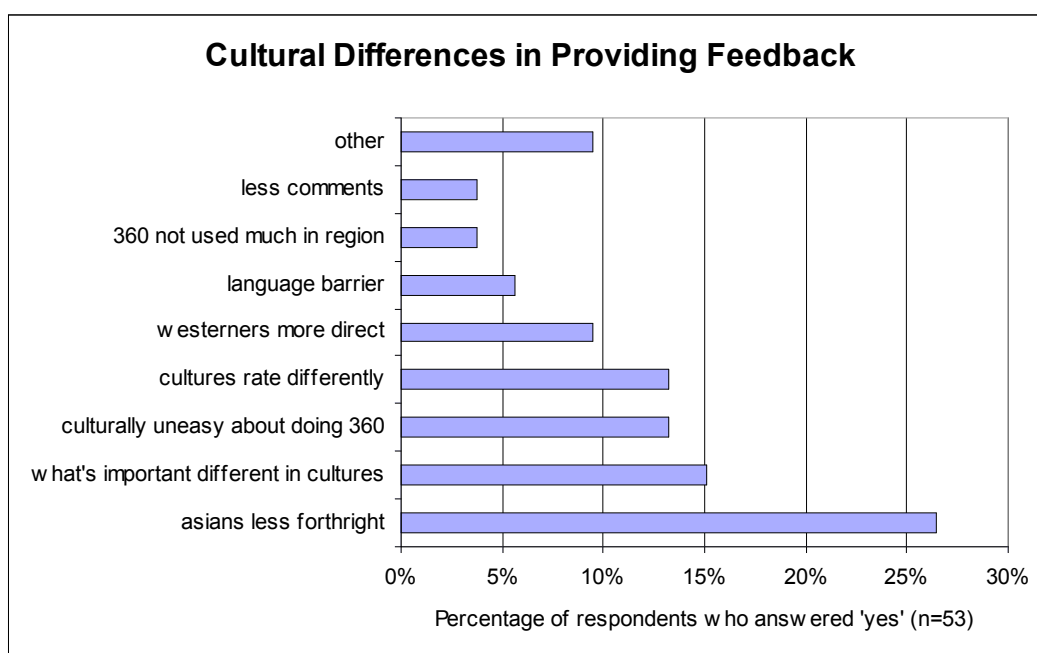
The survey asked whether the coaches noticed any cultural difference trends in 360 degree feedback and ratings (see *Figure 13*). The spread of responses was fairly even although the majority (36%) of respondents said they did not use 360 degree feedback. Of those who did, 31% cited cultural differences versus 24% who cited no cultural differences in 360 degree ratings.

Figure 13:



The comments of those people who answered, yes, they did find differences in 360 ratings and feedback, were examined for themes. These results appear as *Figure 14*.

Figure 14:



The main cultural difference cited was that Asians were seen by many coaches (26%) as less forthright in their feedback. Some respondents believed this stemmed from culture norms where, for example, it is not polite to speak ill of someone, especially an elder. Conversely, Westerners were seen by some coaches (9%) as more direct and willing to provide feedback.

- *"People from Confucian cultures may be more reticent in giving feedback, especially to their superiors."*
- *"Feedback from Asian people is more modest, polite, less direct."*
- *"Asian people tendencies is to protect the status quo."*
- *"North Americans are more direct, while Asians may be less willing to criticize directly."*
- *"A Westerner's notion of assertiveness may be very different from an Asian's perspective of it."*

Another difference was the notion of what was deemed as important to different cultures with 15% of respondents commenting on this. This could be based on socio-economic differences or differences in expectations and work life balance.

- *"Each Company culture differs - so do Country cultures."*
- *"Fundamental differences of perception based on whether individuals come from developing or developed cultures. By that I mean different views on the importance of work life balance or the importance of having a vision versus following a plan."*
- *"There are common, although not always, stereotypical nuances for cultures linked with history and socio economic opportunities."*

Some countries were viewed as culturally uneasy about doing 360 degree feedback. While the 26% of respondents said this was mainly true of some Asian cultures, one respondent noted that Southern European countries, such as Italy, Spain and Portugal were also reticent in providing comments.

It was interesting to observe that there is some evidence that different cultures may rate people differently, noted by 13% of respondents. Coach observations included Westerners tending to have high self scores and Asians low self scores, and American having higher scores than their European counterparts.

- *"Asians tend to have low self scores while Europeans have higher self scores who also provide more insightful narratives in Bio Data. Asian coachees tend to be more reticent though can be more participative when in an all Asian group."*
- *"Americans [rate themselves] higher on the scale, Germans and Dutch are lower."*

Also the way the culture came to the final result differed:

- *“Anglo-Saxon respondents tend to orient themselves on the upper end of the scale and deduct if they are displeased (e.g. my rating is 'ten' or less). Respondents from Latin countries tend to start from an average rating and then add if they are please/like.”*

In general, Asians were seen as:

- less critical, especially to superiors;
- culturally uneasy about doing 360 degree feedback;
- provided less comments; and
- having lower self scores.

Westerners were generally viewed as:

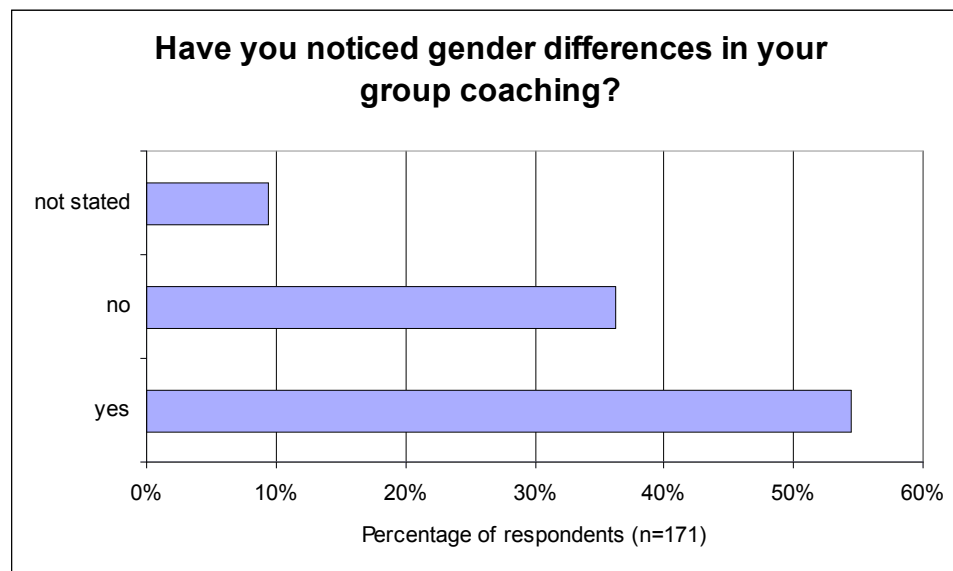
- more assertive;
- more comfortable giving feedback, even to bosses; and
- having higher self scores.

It is important to note that these findings are based on coach perceptions. It would be interesting to see if actual 360 degree assessment data supports this hypothesis of cultural variation in rating tendencies.

Gender Differences

Respondents were asked whether they noticed any gender differences in their group coaching experiences, and if so, to provide their observations. 54% of respondents observed gender differences, 36% observed no difference, and 9% did not answer the question. (See Figure 15).

Figure 15:



From coaches who did observe gender differences, females were seen to:

- Be more open;
- Be comfortable with the group coaching process;
- Talk more freely about emotions;
- Be very active in the process;
- Be better listeners; and
- Adopt a more holistic approach to common goals.

Males were seen to:

- Be more guarded;
- Be less comfortable talking about emotions in a group situation, although were more likely to open up with women in the group;
- Be keen to “get the problem sorted out and get on with things”; and
- Be more focussed on getting ahead individually.

The following comments illustrate some of the gender differences observed by respondents in their group coaching:

- *"Yes; men are more focused on concrete issues; women are more sensitive to emotional context."*
- *"Yes, IQ versus EQ, practical versus emotional."*
- *"Women are very active, men more protective and conservative."*
- *"Women talk more about relationships and are typically more animated and open to new experiences; men are open to experience but like to know what's in it for them."*
- *"Yes. However, I've found the differences are either more pronounced or less pronounced depending on the culture of the company."*

Mixed Groups

Respondents also noted there were differences in how the genders behaved when coaching a mixed group as opposed to a single sex group, although mixed groups tended to be male dominated.

Some respondents observed that some females tend to overcompensate in mixed groups, acting either too 'macho' or too subservient. Their presence, however, sometimes meant that group became more comfortable in the "emotional realm", for example:

- *"In a group with one female, the men find it hard to address her in their language, men find it difficult to deal with female emotions, females find it difficult to level, see themselves on the same level, females have the tendency to either show too much macho behaviour or too much of behaviour which is described by words as modest, shy, silent, observant, but innerly angry, fighting, feeling neglected etc."*
- *"Female execs/leaders tend to be more open, naming and working with emotions; and when women are present in the group, the overall group ends up more comfortable in the emotional realm, more quickly than if I'm working with only males."*

Some respondents observed a range of issues in mixed groups including, males having a tendency to discount female contributions, and there sometimes be less posturing of the males in a mixed group, for example:

- *"Nothing huge, however sometimes there's more initial 'posturing' in an all male group vs a mixed or all female group."*
- *"Women tend to self-assess lower; female senior execs are more likely to express 'imposter syndrome.'"*
- *"Yes, to have women involved vastly enhances the process."*

Culture-based Gender Differences

Some respondents believed that the gender differences were mainly culturally based, especially in those cultures where women were not seen as leaders. These women would tend to be less forthcoming and participatory, especially in mixed groups. For those cultures with more women executives there tended to be little difference in behaviour.

- *"Women are in general more sensitive and emotional, if they work in a male dominated environment they can demonstrate a certain lack of self confidence, women who work in countries/cultures where women in business are normal, the self evaluation and image is more in line."*
- *"Yes, since in some culture, women should not put as a leader or as someone whose views should be taken into considerations."*
- *"Some in the Arab community - Women are seen differently to men - i.e. the leadership positions are mainly taken by men, yet pleased to see that is changing in Dubai and more programmes are being designed to empower women."*
- *"Especially in Hispanic women – they don't want to stand out & there's too much conformity."*

Coaching Cross-Generational Groups

Respondents were asked what they saw as the key issues working with multi generational groups. 8% of respondents did not think there were any issues, and a further 8% had not coached cross-generational groups. 20% of respondents did not answer the question, and 64% thought there were issues.

Generational Differences

Some of the key differences between the generational groups, as noted by our respondents can be seen in *Table 4*.

Table 4: Differences between generations

| Key Differences | Explanation |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Difference in work/life balance | Generation Y wants more balance, Baby Boomers tend to put work first |
| Expectations | Generation Y wants immediate results |
| Patience | Generation X and Y are less patient than Baby Boomers |
| Values between generations different | |
| Openness | Baby Boomers are less open than Generation X and Y |
| Understand coaching | Generation Y less fearful of process |

Examples include:

- o "Gen Y expect more Life Balance than Gen X; Risk taking, sense of urgency & impatience in Gen Y."
- o "Under 30's seem to focus more on social and w/l balance issues- less willing to sell their souls for money."
- o "Gen Y are a lot less patience with the process and are very keen to get ahead."
- o "The self driven productivity on the job tends to be part of the Baby boomers mode, while Gen X and Gen Y are more likely to have and expect a rounded life."
- o "20s - 'what do you want - just tell me and make it quick.'"
- o "Elder people develop more self defence mechanisms, less open for feedback. Younger are more hungry to improve but also more ambitious to be 'perfect.'"
- o "Gen Y is totally into coaching."
- o "Boomers: seems we often begin with a bunch of stories, justifying why it's OK to be coached/get coaching, how they are 'ready' for coaching at this time, etc. With Millennials / Gen Y my experience has been that they 'show up' from minute one already 'getting' the concept of coaching and ready to dive in and get moving."

Issues When Coaching

When coaching cross-generational groups the key issues noted by respondents included:

- o Creating a link between the generations, where people felt comfortable sharing ideas and experiences;

- Recognising everybody's skills;
- Getting consensus from the group on the expected outcomes; and
- Using different techniques, to take into account different learning styles.

Comments included:

- *"Coming to a place where each generation is listening to the other."*
- *"Setting an expectation of equality across the group and valuing the contributions of all."*
- *"Teaching from both sides. A great way to engage older generations as they mentor the younger up and comings and the younger generation teaching the older group about how they think, technology etc. It's a fantastic energy and really promotes engagement."*

Factors Governing Group Coaching Success or Failure

Respondents were asked what they believed were the critical factors that determine the success or failure of a group coaching intervention. Their open ended comments were coded into whether the success / failure was dependent on the:

- Coach
- Coachees, and
- Process itself.

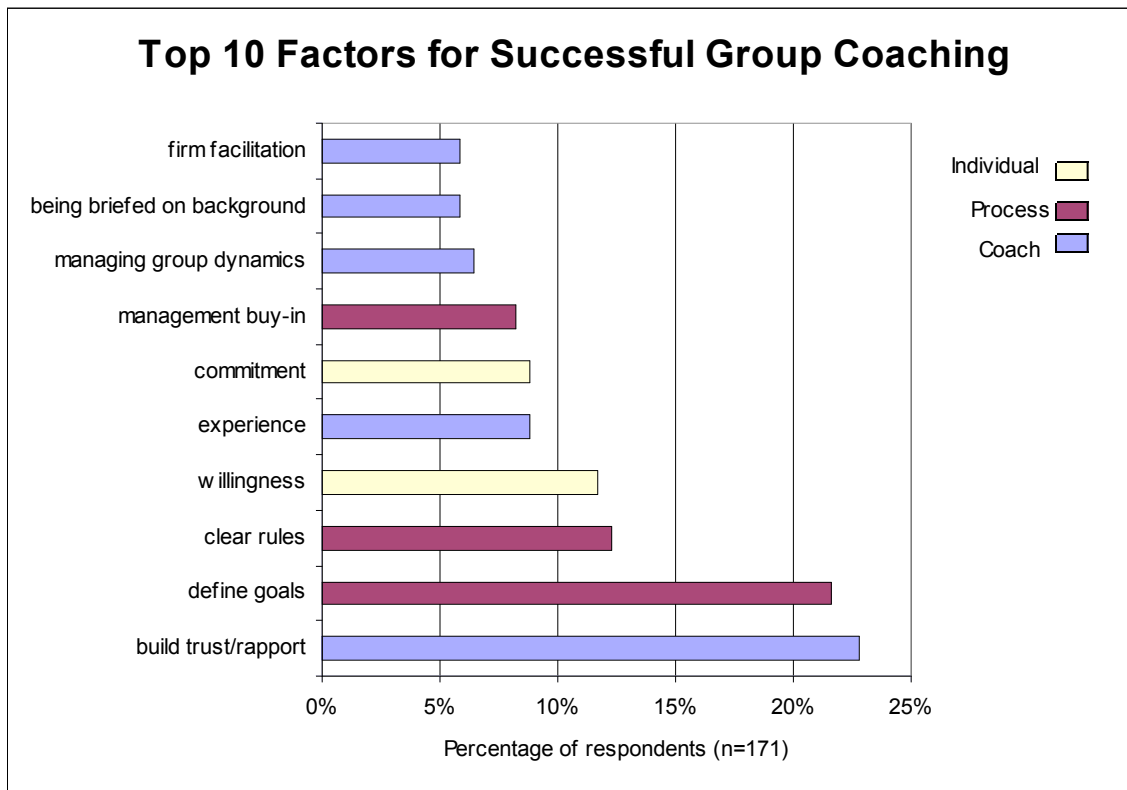
It is pleasing to note that most respondents were optimistic about the process with more positive comments than negative.

Critical Success Factors

Based purely on the number of respondents' comments, success was more likely to be influenced by coach behaviours and process, than the individuals in the group.

Figure 16 shows the top 10 factors for successful Group Coaching and covers the three areas of coach influence, individual being coached and the process.

Figure 16:



The data showed that the most cited critical success factor is the coach's ability to build trust and rapport (23% of respondents). This was closely followed by the process of defining goals with 22%. Ensuring there were clear rules (another process oriented factor) was mentioned by 12% of respondents, and a further 12% stated willingness on the part of the individuals being coached was important.

Coach-Influenced Success Factors

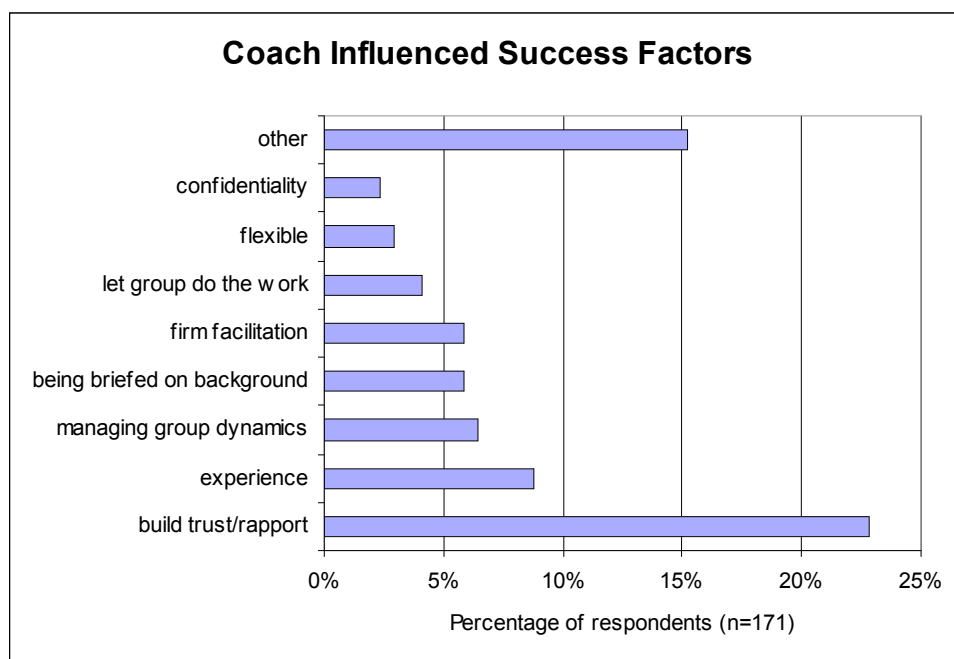
Along with building trust and rapport in the group other significant factors for a successful outcome included:

- The coach's experience,
- The coach's ability to manage group dynamics, and
- Their being successfully briefed on the project by management.

Figure 17 shows other coach-influenced factors that respondents felt were critical to success, for example:

- *"Trust, trust and trust"*
- *"The coach's integrity!"*
- *"Managing group dynamics; building an agreed set of "group operating principles" for how we will all work & behave."*
- *"Briefing of coach beforehand so they are aware of the background to the engagement."*

Figure 17:



Another success factor cited by respondents was letting the group 'do the work'. This involved the coach not imposing his or her ideas, but letting the group go through the natural process of sorting the problem out for themselves. This not only gave great buy-in to the solution but provided a valuable lesson in how to problem solve, for example:

- *"Coach: ability to confront, align, involve the group, let them do the work, speak to each other instead of to the coach."*

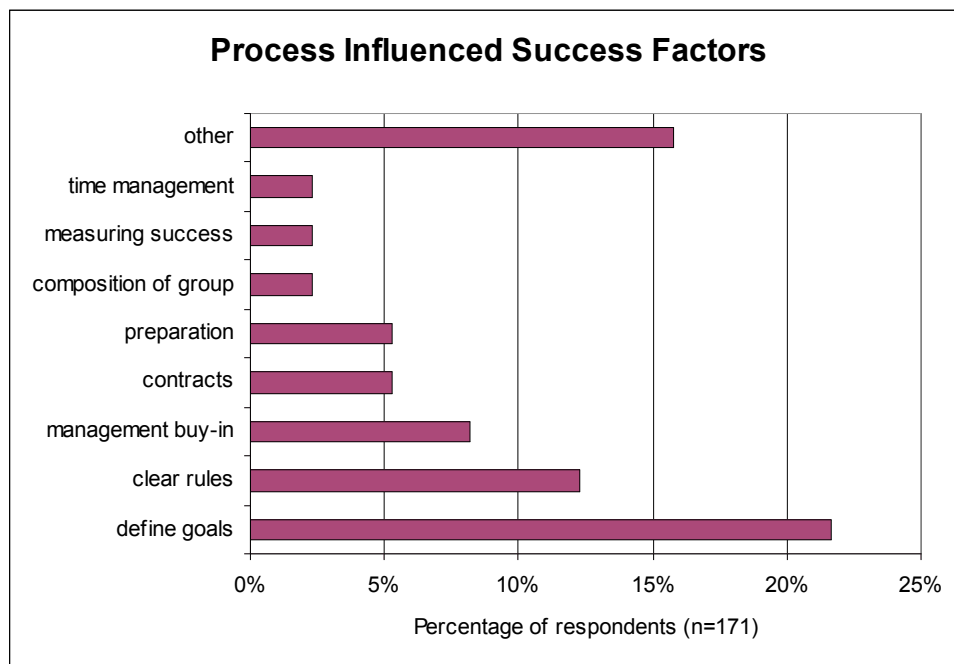
Process-Influenced Success Factors

The main Process influenced success factor was ensuring that the group had defined specific goals that were relevant to all. This was followed by clear rules of engagement which allowed people to feel comfortable to open up in a trustworthy environment. Management buy-in to the process was also seen as a critical success factor. Comments included:

- *"Establish a common purpose and commitment."*
- *"Openness, rules of engagements, clarity about 'safe' environment, clarity about discretion etc."*
- *"1) Clear understanding - between all parties (HR, management, coach and coachees) - of the context, the purpose, the process, the expected impact, the deliverables; 2) a topic relevant and significant to all participants."*

Figure 18 shows other Process influenced factors that respondents felt were critical to success.

Figure 18:

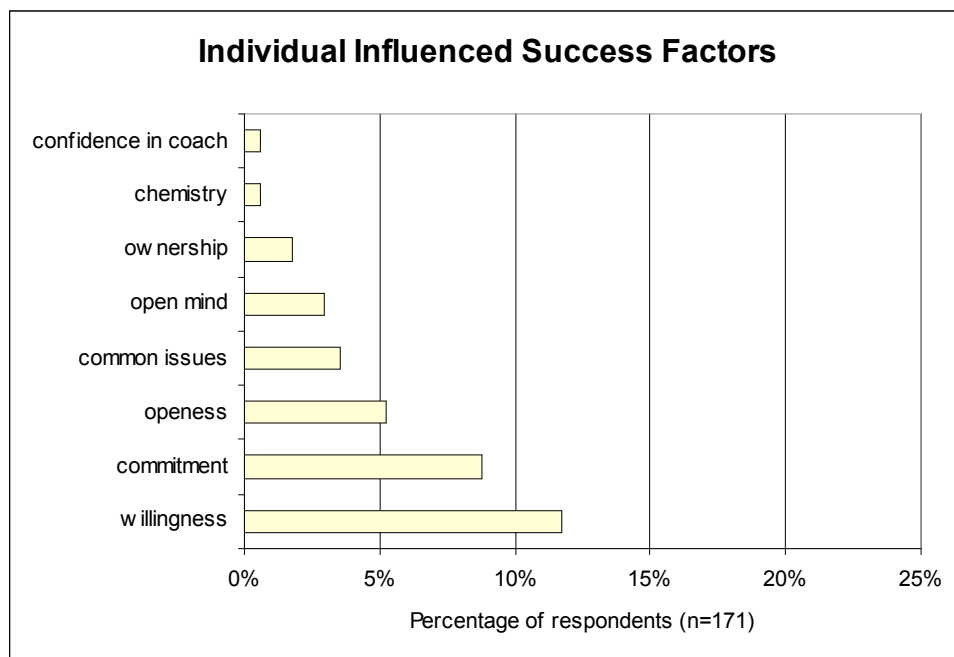


Coachee-Influenced Success Factors

Figure 19 shows the influences that an individual can bring to the Group Coaching experience that will help make it successful. Respondents felt that the greatest success factor was the willingness of the individual to be coached and not have the process forced upon them. This was followed by a commitment from individual to the process not only in time but also in meaningful participation. Thirdly in order for meaningful discussion to take place each person needed to be open, sharing their thoughts and feelings with others....

- *"Everyone wants to be there. Everyone has an open mind."*
- *"Commitment on the groups part - coach included - are you prepared for the journey"*
- *"Comfort, openness, humor, shared insights."*

Figure 19:

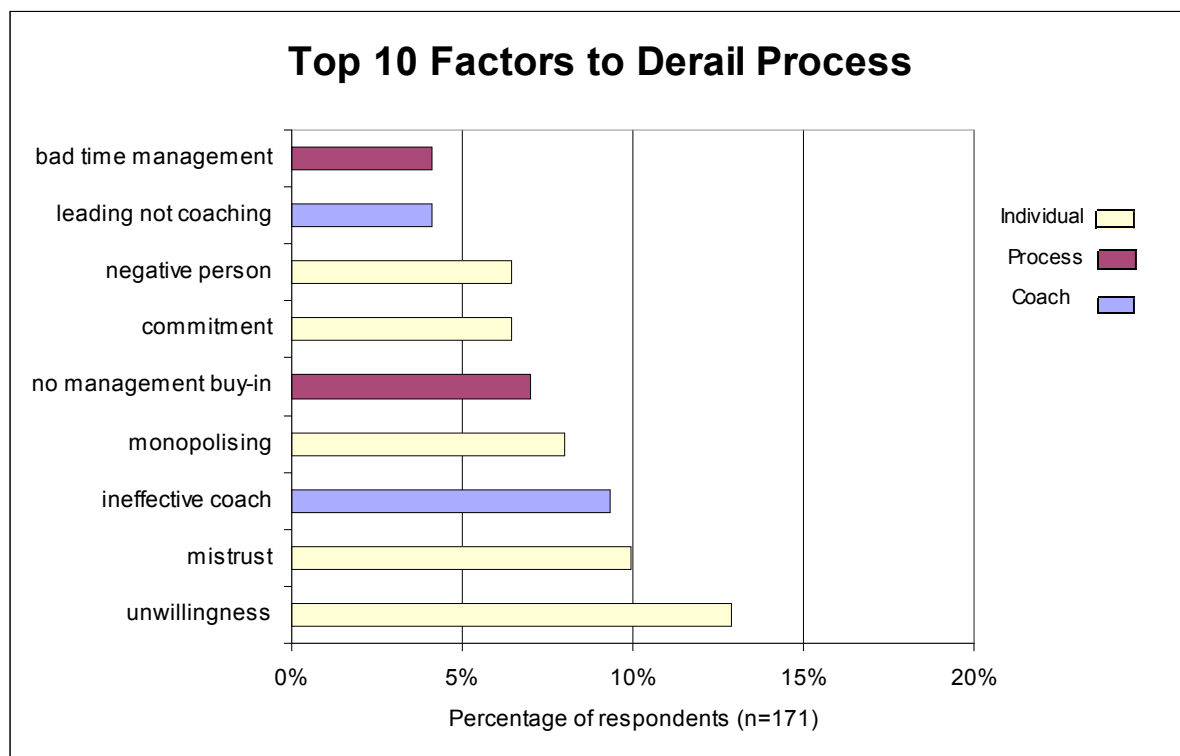


Derailers

Based purely on the number of respondents' comments, failure was seen to be more likely to be influenced by the Coachees than by Coach behaviours or Process.

Figure 20 shows the Top 10 factors that respondents cited could derail the Group Coaching process and covers the three areas of Coach influence, Coachees and the Process. Although divided into these groups many of the factors under these groupings can be influenced by the Coach's approach and capability.

Figure 20:



The unwillingness of the individual to be coached was named by 13% of respondents as the number one problem area. This was closely followed by mistrust on the part of the individuals (10%) and an ineffective coach (9%).

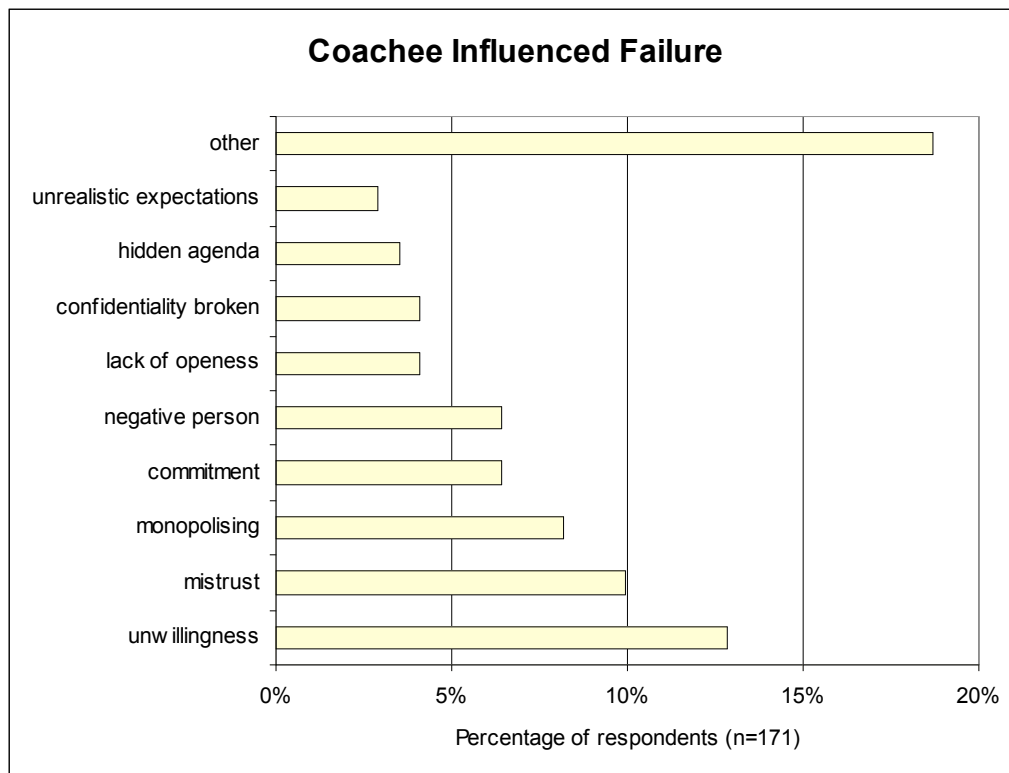
Coachee-Influenced Failure

Figure 21 shows the influences that a Coachee can bring to the Group Coaching experience that may cause problems. Respondents felt that the unwillingness of the individual to be coached, which stemmed from being forced to attend, has the greatest influence. This was followed by a mistrust of others in the group, which ultimately led to a lack of openness in discussions. Thirdly, having individuals monopolising the group's time would also influence the outcome of the group coaching process:

- *“Coachee was forced to attend the group coaching so hardly to get the alignment and trust.”*
- *“Trust in the group and each member.”*
- *“A highly ego centric person who makes it all about them- dominates/controls the conversation.”*

The ‘other’ category included items such as ‘not listening’ and ‘not focussed’ which can also be a function of the coach’s ability to engage the group.

Figure 21:



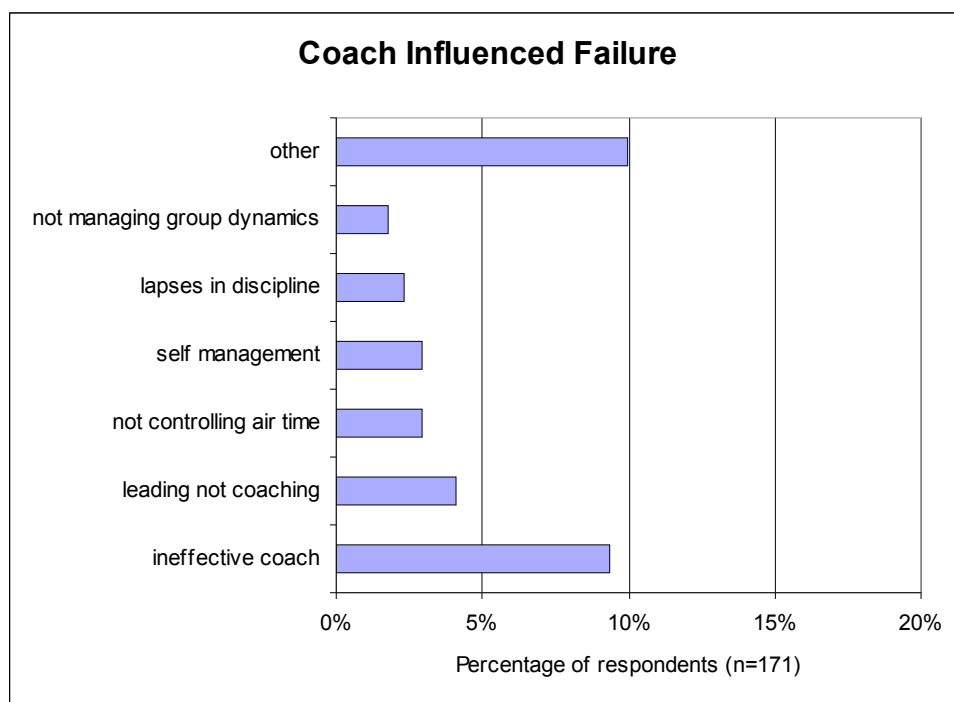
Coach-Influenced Failure

The coach being ineffective was seen by respondents as the biggest coach related cause of failure, with the ineffectiveness mainly coming through a lack of experience. A coach that led rather than coached would also derail the session, and one respondent notes that a silent coach was just as bad as one that overtook the process. Outcomes would also be influenced by a coach that did not “control the air time”, allowing dominant personalities to control the group.

- *"An inexperienced coach who doesn't lead and facilitate effectively."*
- *"A non respect of confidentiality."*
- *"A non experienced coach, wanting to force things instead of pacing the tempo of the group."*
- *"Rigid coach-led agenda."*
- *"Inexperienced team coach."*
- *"1 or 2 individuals taking up more time and energy of the group, disengaged group."*

These observations point to the importance of having a skilled, experienced coach facilitating the Group Coaching process.

Figure 22:



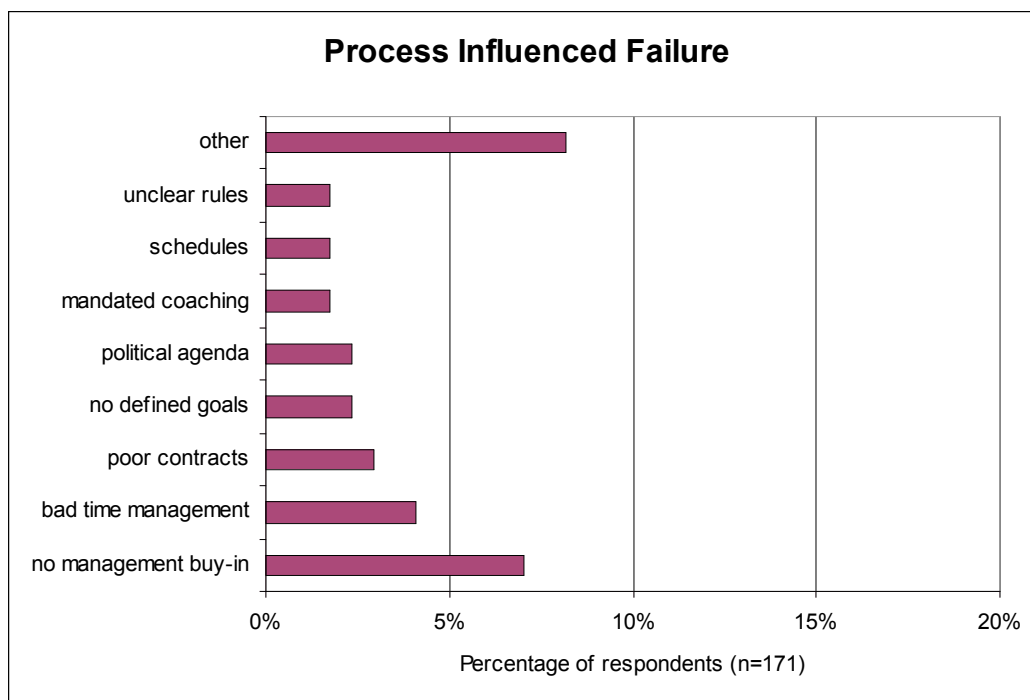
Process-Influenced Failure

The main process influenced failure factor was the lack of management buy-in into the process which meant that any changes realised in the group were very hard to actually implement in the workplace. This was followed by bad time management, although this could also be seen as a coach related failure. Poor 'contracts', where individuals either do not hold up their end of the bargain, betray trust, or outcomes were not clearly defined, was also cited a potential problem, for example:

- *"Limited buy-in from the management, so the development is continually sabotaged in the workplace or limited buy-in from the group."*
- *"Lack of time to spend on issues, agendas held back."*
- *"Hidden agendas, mistrust, attempts to benefit individually, lapses in discipline / time management, open warfare in the organisation, ambiguity about intended results."*
- *"Lack of time, lack of clear and coherent contracting; hidden agendas."*

Figure 23 shows other Process influenced factors that respondents felt could derail the process.

Figure 23:

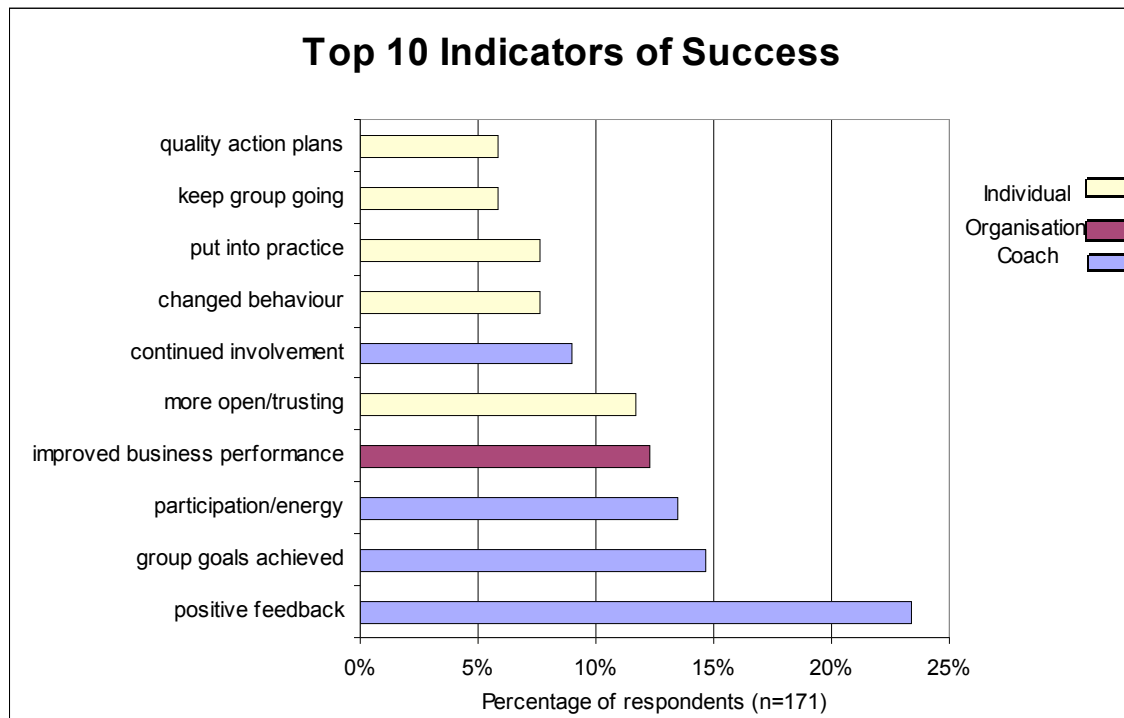


Measurements of Group Coaching Success

The respondents were asked to share how they deemed whether or not a Group Coaching session was successful. The comments were coded and grouped into whether the success was from the point of view of the Coach, Coachees or Organisation.

Figure 24 shows the Top 10 factors that indicate success coaching programme and covers the three areas of Coach, Coachee and Organisation.

Figure 24:



Indicators of Success for the Coach

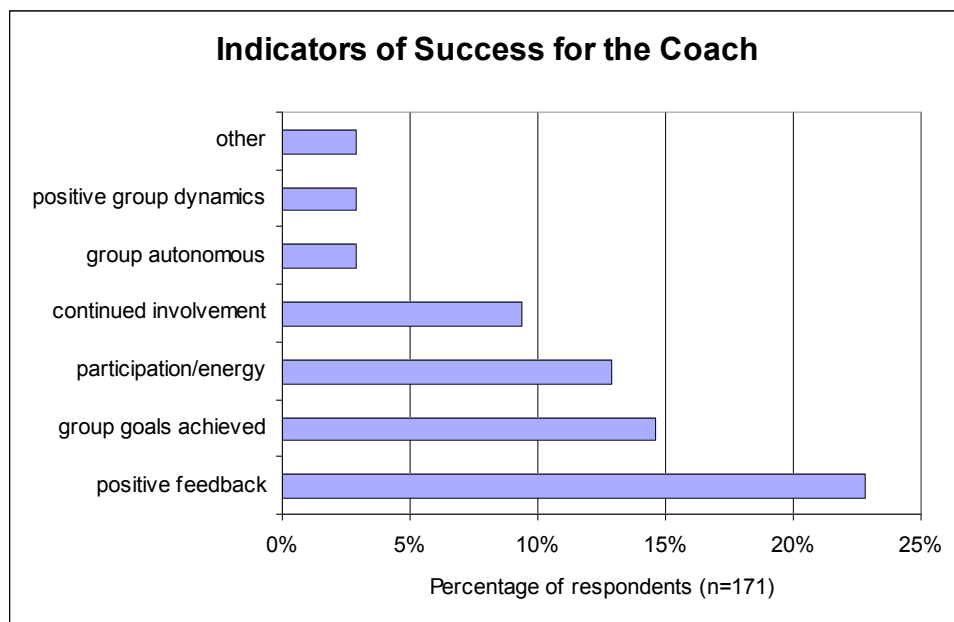
The main indicator for the coach of a successful programme was the positive feedback received from those being coached (23%). This was followed by the group achieving the goals that were agreed at the beginning of the programme (15%). The third most important indicator for the coach was the energy in the group fuelled by increased participation by all involved (13%). Some coaches believe that you can 'feel' when things are going well. Comments included:

- "Spontaneous feedback to the coach."
- "People feeling that have tangible action items that they can realistically work on."
- "Increased self-awareness."
- "Positive formal and informal feedback, constructive comment."
- "Achievement of originally identified outcomes - increase competence, sustainable peer to peer working relationships."
- "When goals were reached, when people can see and feel some positive changes."
- "Feedback, result of the session."
- "I can feel it - you feel the energy in group."

- *"Greater cohesion, improved motivation and performance, you can feel it 'on the air.'"*
- *"The buzz in the room."*
- *"Sometimes cathartic abreaction indicating that a core issue has finally been surfaced & acknowledged."*

Figure 25 shows other success indicators for the coach.

Figure 25:



Group autonomy, both within and out of session, was another interesting indicator of success, with comments such as:

- *"The coach becomes unnecessary the group has its own momentum and is working together effectively and creatively."*
- *"When the group, after a time, can engage in the coaching themselves, with the coach as an observer and being able to pull back and watch, versus have to manage the conversation. In other words, IMHO, the degree to which I become unnecessary, the sessions have been successful -- if I can see evidence that they've 'learned how to fish for themselves.'"*
- *"The extent to which individual and group outcomes are achieved. The group's capacity to self coach as a result of their experience."*

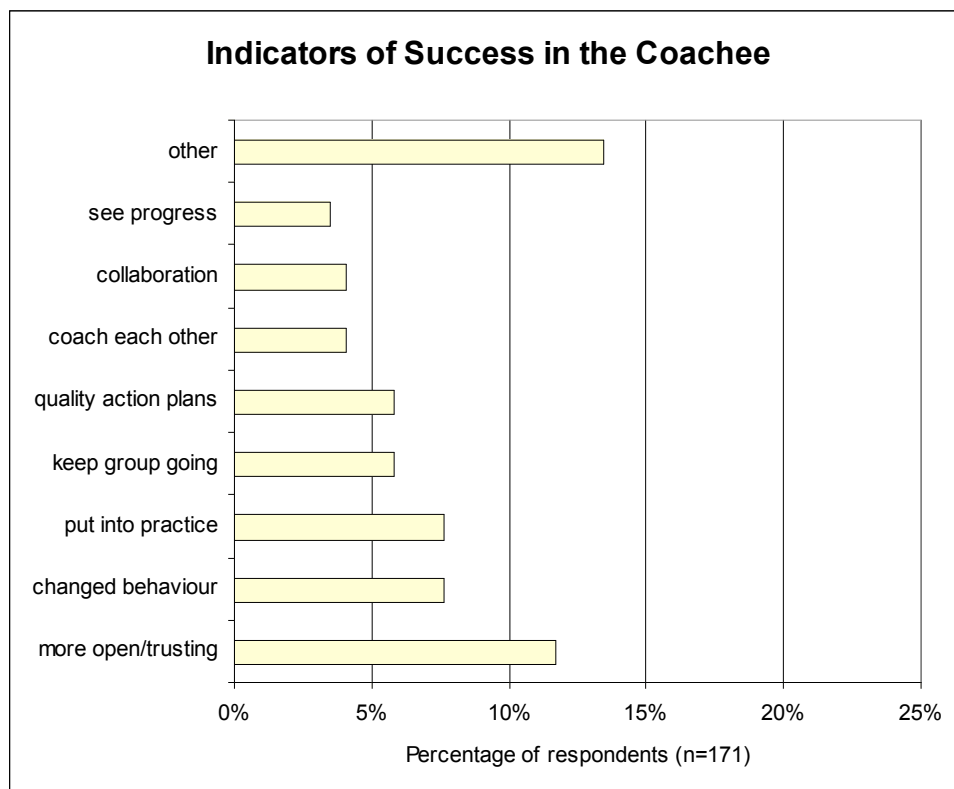
Indicators of Success in the Coachee

Respondents believed that an indicator of a successful coaching experience was when

coachees were more open, trusting and willing to share their successes and failures, i.e. the group felt comfortable with each other. Changed behaviour was another sign, as was the ability of the coachee to put into practice on a day-to-day basis what they had learnt in the group.

- *"Esprit de corps, 'can do' attitude, people talking to each other."*
- *"Energized group, stronger fellowship and willingness to trust one another."*
- *"Powerful changes in the individuals' lives."*
- *"Comments re changed behaviour 6-12 months after the process."*
- *"What they do differently on a day to day basis in the workplace."*
- *"Practical observations of it working in the workplace and when combined with some 1-1 coaching also, for a blended approach."*

Figure 26:



Another indicator of success was the Coachees' interest in keeping the group going, either meeting outside formal sessions or recruiting new members to join the group and reap the benefits.

- *"The people want to continue, participants recruit others."*
- *"Group gelling well, maintaining contact with each other outside sessions."*

Indicators of Success for the Organisation

There were relatively few comments for indicators of success from within the organisation which could be attributed to the coaches not being closely involved with the organisation after the programme is finished. The main indicator however was seen to be improved business performance, which was cited, by 8% of respondents, followed by perceptible changes in people's performance (5%). A further 4% of respondents said that success could be measured by the fact that the action plans created during the programme have been implemented in the workplace. Other indicators for the organisation included a 'happy' workplace, the installation of a coaching culture and finally *"the boss is happy"*.

Final Observations

Respondents were asked for any final observations and 36% provided comments, which were varied. Some recurring themes included:

- the possibility of combining Group Coaching with one on one coaching to reap the optimal benefits;
- that Group Coaching is a powerful process; and
- that Group Coaching is rewarding work.

For example:

- *"I prefer to mix group and individual sessions to maximise the transformation and sustainability of the development."*
- *"When it works well it's a hugely powerful process."*
- *"It has to be some of the most rewarding work I do - I completely enjoy the people I work with, and I enjoy watching them realize their dreams!"*
- *"I LOVE GROUP COACHING!"*

Conclusion

As one of the first global survey on Group Executive Coaching, this study was intentionally exploratory in nature, relying largely on open-ended questions in order to elicit unbiased feedback from respondents. This rich data source from a sound basis from which to refine specific avenues for further research and discussion. Issues of particular interest include:

- o Advantages and disadvantages of Group Coaching versus 1-1 coaching;
- o Success factors and pitfalls related to Coach, Coachee, the Coaching Process and Organisations;
- o Differences and similarities between Group Coaching and Group Facilitation;
- o Group size;
- o Generation issues between Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Millennials;
- o Cross-cultural issues; and
- o Gender issues.

I would welcome comments, observations and discussion from coaches, academics, HR professionals and senior executives interested and active in Group Executive Coaching.



Jacki Nicholas is a Founding Partner of The Air Institute, an organisation dedicated to strengthening the authentic leadership in individuals, teams and organisations across Asia Pacific and beyond. Jacki is a certified Executive Coach and has coached regularly on Executive Education programmes at the INSEAD Global Leadership Centre since 2004.

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