

An Independent, External Coach's Perspective on the Trend of Coaching Supervision

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I have been a successful, self-employed "single shingle" executive coach since 2002, and I keep abreast of trends and developments in our industry. I have been closely following and researching the coaching supervision trend since July 2014, and have the following thoughts to offer – **that may be of particular interest to other experienced, self-employed, independent external coaches who work under contract to various businesses and organizations.**

1. The coaching supervision "trend" is currently the subject of great debate – especially within the main professional/regulatory body for coaches, the ICF. There is currently no real agreement on a clear definition of coaching supervision (exactly what it is and who is truly qualified to "supervise"), nor can be it clearly articulated (or demonstrated) as to how it is separate and distinct from mentor coaching, or even just highly skilled regular coaching.

There is no research or validated information to *prove* that coaching supervision ensures high performance or provides additional quality assurance – with particular respect to external coaches who are independent business people/contractors (versus internal, salaried coaches, whose employers may choose to "supervise" them).

2. If a contracting employer were to require contracted external coaches to undergo coaching supervision (the pro-supervision faction *is* out there telling employers they should only contract with supervised external coaches), there would be serious implications to consider - such as the significant economic cost for the external coach who would have to pay out of their own pocket for the service, plus forgo income as they cannot be delivering coaching services while being supervised (unlike an internal coach who is getting paid their wage *while* they are being supervised, and who does not have to pay anything for their own supervision).

It would be an extraordinarily onerous and expensive burden to place on contracted external coaches, *without any visible or reportable gain for the contracting employer*. The ICF Coaching Supervision Phase 1 Task Force recommended between 18 to 24 hours of coaching supervision per year. At a (very low) estimated cost of \$250.00 USD per hour for supervision, that would add overhead costs to your business of between \$4,500.00 to \$6,000.00 per year. Add in forgone income and the net business cost easily doubles. Would you have the time or funds left to pursue any other Continuing Professional Development each year – CPD that you may prefer far more than just talking to one coach supervisor all year?

3. Coaching confidentiality means there is no way of knowing, measuring, or reporting on whether or not coaching supervision provides additional quality assurance to the employer re: contracted external coaches' skills and expertise. There would not be any key performance indicators (KPIs) or performance measures, beyond the external coach providing basic proof they are actively engaging in coaching supervision.

4. There is dissension and turmoil in the coaching industry (and ICF) currently – with factions apparently vying both for and against coaching supervision:

The “pro” coaching supervision faction openly references the "marketing niche," lucrative "revenue opportunities," “enormous sales volume” and “manifold markets,” that would be created if coaching supervision was made a requirement for the thousands of current and future ICF-accredited coaches (tuition/training fees from coaches becoming supervisors, and then coaches supervising other coaches). This industry trend appears driven *less* by quality assurance concerns, and more by revenue generation concerns.

The “anti” mandatory coaching supervision faction is not against supervision per se, but thinks there should be a choice as to whether or not to undergo supervision as part of your ongoing professional development (the ICF already requires 40 hours of ICF-approved training and development for ICF credential renewal every 3 years). Many credentialed coaches regularly participate in peer-to-peer consultation and have a strong network that provides ‘critical friendship’ and “coach consultation” as needed.

5. I personally maintain that coaching supervision is a solution in search of a problem, and that problem is one of revenue generation in the industry. If this is not true, someone has yet to make a compelling case by clearly explaining the problem(s) that *only* the modality of coaching supervision can adequately address and solve.

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