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*I write this book with a deep sense of
gratitude and dedication
to the people who have been the strongest
inspirations and support for me*

Gabriele B. Kohli[†]

13.04.1965–15.01.1994

My first Coach and beloved wife

Anke Kohli

My beloved wife and the sunny side of life

Mrs Mohini Kohli

My mother and the iron pillar of my life

Neeru and Ritu Kohli

*Two strong women and most wonderful
sisters without whom I would not have
mastered many challenges in India*

&

David Ben Adam and Anna Mohini Kohli

*My wife's and my reincarnations with a
superior operating system*

Foreword by Stefan Rau

Coaching and Leadership



Stefan Rau

You are not born a leader. Your rise on the career path is often very fast. The problems of leading teams or individuals are often ignored or underestimated, and potential or rising new leaders are often not sufficiently prepared for their new roles—to both the new leader’s and the corporation’s disadvantage.

The requirements and demands of employees are very different and more involved today than they once were. The consequences can be seen in the culture of your company which reflects your style of leadership! Employee satisfaction is significantly influenced by your communication through your leadership style and also your personal behaviour. To lead and inspire employees

in a manner that they follow you is a key to your success within the company—this is true for all management levels.

With personal coaching you are supported in personal development through self-reflection; you learn about the differences between your self-image and your public image: what you think of yourself and what others do. With coaching it is easier to interpret and to relate to employee reactions to certain management challenges and consequently, where necessary, bring about changed behaviours and increased or better performance.

For me the professional, critical, and honest feedback on my behaviour was the key benefit and opportunity I gained from personal coaching.

It was also important for me to understand the clear difference between managing and leading—for me, personally, it assisted in considering how to lead my reports and reflecting about how to motivate employees. I found that knowing more than their names . . . admitting mistakes does not weaken me but strengthens their respect for me as their leader. Employees value an authentic leader who does not

simply copy an off-the-shelf idealistic management style. Coaching has given me the opportunity to discover my own leadership style, on my own terms. I found it was extremely productive to get insight about my self-hood and on the effect I have on others through an honest and unbiased self-reflection, conducted with my coach. The outcome was that it led to an improvement in my leadership style, which affected those around me in a positive way.

Stefan Rau, coaching client. Managing Director/Geschaefstfuehrer: Global Process Plants Director, TI Automotive (Heidelberg) GmbH. Heidelberg, Germany March 2013

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This book is about coaching, and about the fallacy that unconditional, sustainable change is possible through coaching. You could ask why there is a need for a book on these two subjects. Of the many claims and books on coaching I have consulted, I think it is important to discuss the ambiguities and distortions in order to remove misconceptions about what a coach does and what coaching is. For example, Astrid Schreyoegg, in her book, *Coaching, eine Einfuehrung fuer Praxis und Ausbildung* (2012, p. 27) (*Coaching, an Introduction for Practice and Education*), talks about coaching as a form of professional management consultancy (Coaching als professionelles Managementberatung), and claims that coaching offers therapy for professional ailments, ‘Coaching als Therapie gegen berufliches Leid’ (p. 84). The confusion around coaching is prolific. Schreyoegg’s publishers claim the book is ‘Das Standardwerk ist der fundierteste Leitfaden für Coaching profis und interessierte’ (The standard work, the most profound guide for coaching professionals and those interested in it). If there is anything further away from coaching, then it is that coaching is a therapy or professional management consultancy. Another claim is that coaching comes from psychoanalysis; this was broadcast in a TV channel¹ in Germany. Besides my own disagreement and opinion that such claims are detrimental to coaches and clients alike, I am particularly pleased that Manfred F. R. Kets de Vries, a professor at INSEAD, in France, a graduate business school for leadership development and organisational change, writes, in ‘Coaching’s “good hour”: creating tipping points’ (in *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice* (2013) ‘outdated perceptions of coaching (confusing the coaching process with more traditional forms of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy) continue, making for the often great hesitancy about asking for help from someone in a helping profession’ (p. 153). Other claims around coaching include that coaching comes from business psychology or human resources—see

¹A German TV channel called 3Sat broadcast the programme on the 6 October 2015 at 20:15 pm. It was called *Der Coaching–Wahn* (*The Coaching–Madness*).

Die Professionalisierung von Coaching—Ein Lesebuch für den Coach (2015, p. 105) (*The Professionalisation of Coaching—A Reader for the Coach*). In addition to the examples cited above, a simple search on the Internet will show the confusion is widespread and coaching is often linked with some other discipline such as psychological coaching. Coaching is a psychological process and it is a standalone service and does not need additives; it is also not an advisory service: *Coaching Theorie—Eine Einführung* (2015, p. 20) (*Coaching Theory—an Introduction*). Even though coaching is not any of these things, people practising different professions can easily learn and implement coaching methods to enhance their competency. That does not give them the right to change the concept of coaching and attempt to refashion it into something other than what it was conceived by the founding fathers.

Of the many books I have read on coaching, let me cite a few: *So Coache Ich* (2012) (*Coaching My Way*); *Coaching—Erfrischend Einfach* (2008) (*Coaching—Plain Simple*); *Führen, Fördern, Coachen: So entwickeln Sie die Potenziale Ihrer Mitarbeiter* (2007) (*Lead, Encourage, Coach: This is how you develop the potential of your employees*); *Coaching Jenseits von Tools und Techniken* (2015) (*Coaching Beyond Tools and Techniques*); *Die Professionalisierung von Coaching—Ein Lesebuch für den Coach* (2015) (*The Professionalisation of Coaching—A Reader for the Coach*); *Emotionen im Coaching, Kommunikative Muster der Beratungsinteraktion* (2015) (*Emotions in Coaching, Communicative Pattern of the Advisory Interaction*); and *Coaching Theorie—Eine Einführung* (2015) (*Coaching Theory—an Introduction*)—with few exceptions, hardly any of them mention where coaching originated.

Why is that necessary? Understanding the origins of coaching will clarify that the new forms of coaching are idiosyncratic, and help both the coaches and clients approach coaching with a sense of clarity and certainty. Yes, they all agree that coaching originated in the USA, but few books about coaching mention that it took its present form due to the contribution of certain people who were responsible for inventing the methodology that underpins modern coaching. A natural consequence of this oversight is confusion.

To validate this point, I asked Sabine Asgodom why she had chosen to call her book (mentioned above) *So Coach Ich (Coaching My Way)*. To me the title of the book seemed as if she was saying, I coach like this, whatever the others may be saying about it or perhaps, whatever it may be. In an email from her office dated 3rd December 2015 I received the following answer: ‘Um Ihre Frage zu beantworten, Frau Asgodom hat das Buch so genannt, weil sie darin die von ihr entwickelte Coaching-Methode vorgestellt hat.’ (‘To answer your question, Mrs. Asgodom has given her book this title because she presents the coaching method developed by her in it’). There is nothing wrong with developing a style that is personal. I think most coaches do it during their career. Imagine a potential client who is looking for a coach and comes across a title that says, this is how I developed it. What would he think? I think the first thought would be, perhaps there are other ways of coaching too. If that is so, he needs to identify which one is the appropriate one for him. This

contributes to his insecurity and causes hesitancy in seeking help through any coach.

The reasons cited above make it difficult to demarcate between what coaching is and is not, and between who is and is not a coach. In the last 10 years, in particular, some of the existing professions have adopted the term ‘coach’. A person who once offered his services to tweak your curriculum vitae to increase the likelihood of you getting a new job now calls himself a ‘future coach’. The mystical shaman who drummed to communicate with the other side now calls himself a ‘shaman coach’. Many management consultants now sell their services as ‘business coaches’. Can the ‘future’ or a ‘business’ or even ‘spirits’ on the other side be coached?

The word ‘coach’, which is now added to many professional titles, is completely whimsical and so are many meanings that are being attributed to it. How can I say that with confidence? Besides learning coaching—personal coaching, as it was introduced for the first time around 1992 in the USA—from an institution that was founded by the person who is recognised as being ‘the founder of coaching’ in *The Coach U Personal and Corporate Coach Training Handbook* (2005), as a professional coach by conscious and diligent effort and not by accident, I have years of experience in coaching, and the word ‘coach’ does not signify anything other than the profession I pursue and as it is defined by the people who created coaching for us. I have implemented coaching methodically and observed my clients reap its benefits. The ambiguity that surrounds coaching as a new profession is not solely caused by the idiosyncratic interpretations of people who wilfully add the word ‘coach’ to their old professions. Coaches and clients alike grapple with the ambiguities of the term ‘coaching’. I find some of the claims for coaching extremely problematic.

There is also a common belief with personnel managers that human resources managers are also by default good coaches, as if to imply that, since they have always dealt with human resources, they are best placed to provide coaching. Is that true? Does human resource management training provide the relevant prerequisites of a coach? To substantiate this claim, you will later on encounter Matt (See Sect. 9.5); it is a case study of a person who was coached by a human resources manager engaged by a multibillion-euro company whose decision makers based their selection criteria on this misconception. In addition to the case study of Matt, during my interaction with my clients, I regularly meet with senior personnel managers. It is not uncommon that many discuss their future plans with me. I have recorded 17 statements of HR managers who claimed that after retiring they could become a coach. What is wrong with that? Nothing, but it becomes problematic when they claim that they had been working with personnel and that the natural consequence of their professional experience is to move into coaching. When I wanted to know whether they would learn coaching after retiring, I received different answers but the gist of all of them was, they did not need to. One such statement from an HR manager of a worldwide well-known pharmaceuticals company, who was also on the board of directors, was ‘I have done it all my life; I know what coaching is’. Exploring these and many other questions about the nature of coaching occupied my research; they inform the basis for this book.

What about the sustainable change from coaching promised by practically every second brochure or website? A change, yes; I agree that coaching can trigger a change, but I disagree with those who claim that coaching provides unconditional, sustainable change.

My conclusion is that the coaching profession does not deserve either the prevailing ambiguity or the confusion surrounding it; neither should it be hijacked by anyone looking for a cosmetic facelift for their profession or job title. The distortion of the definition of coaching from its origins has led to its mutation into something that has nothing to do with coaching, except the use or perhaps abuse of the expression. In my opinion, the problems emerged because the people who created coaching and also the original methodology of coaching are overlooked. Due to the lack of a common understanding of the definition of the words ‘coaching’ and ‘coach’, potential clients, as well as coaches, suffer from an inferior quality of service from self-styled coaches, which is handed out to experienced professionals, even those within very large corporations. These practices are not short of shameful. Besides the hesitancy of potential clients to ask for help (as mentioned by Kets de Vries above), coaches face enormous resistance when they offer their services to potential clients. During my research I discovered, due to these difficulties, more than 85 % of new coaches pursue the profession only part-time, because they are unable to sell their services: ‘it just does not provide enough revenue to sustain oneself; I have to take up a job where I can earn money regularly’, said one coach who I interviewed. Some begin to offer coaching classes to find new ways to use their coaching skills, while others return to their old profession. In all about 8–10 % of the coaches I interviewed pursued coaching as their core profession.

When a coach approaches a client, the client is extremely insecure, if not suspicious, because he is unclear about the efficacy and outcome of coaching. The origins of coaching have been pushed into oblivion and unfortunately a client does not have a benchmark to see what coaching really can do for a person or a company. During my interviews, some clients said that the existing ambiguity became worse when coaches offered fanciful versions of coaching, for example, family constellations or metaphysical solutions for management issues—this adds to the existing difficulties of choosing a coach. One measure of what this confusion has caused in the general public is my personal example: whenever I introduce myself to someone new, I am asked what I do for a living. The moment I say I am a coach, the invariable question that follows in most cases, I would speculate 97 % of the time, is ‘what coaching do you do?’

Coaching is not about ‘what’ it is about ‘who’.

These and other reasons make it imperative to begin a new discussion on coaching. Through practical examples and case studies, I will demonstrate the shoddy treatment some professionals in world class corporations have undergone under the name of coaching, paid for by their employers. I will also offer a contrast, showing when and why coaching works; what changes it can bring about, and why it is a fallacy to promise sustainable change.

Research included field research—mainly qualitative—and interviews with many CEOs, entrepreneurs, senior managers, potential clients, and coaches. As a ‘participant observer’² I enrolled in various courses in order to research the different training methods employed by institutions who offer coaching classes and certificates. The wide-ranging research meant I was able to differentiate between what is and is not coaching. One final and highly significant factor that goes a long way to substantiate my claims is my extensive coaching experience.

Since opening my coaching practice in 2010, my focus and quest, alongside offering a first-class coaching service to my clients, has been to find evidence of the visible and effective results of my coaching methodology. While my clients reported experiencing a positive difference from coaching, particularly the kind of difference they had desired in various areas at the outset of their coaching sessions—such as leadership, personal relationships, and sometimes, extremely challenging situations in many areas of their lives—I wanted to discover why they felt coaching had worked for them.

As I developed my coaching practice, I realised that formal knowledge would enable me to more effectively implement coaching methods in order to bring concrete benefits to my clients, while, at the same time, enhancing my skills. There was also the question of how to determine the difference between a coach and a psychoanalyst, a management consultant, a hypnotherapist coach, an NLP trainer coach, a Systemic coach, an adviser, or a human resources manager. For these reasons, in 2013, I enrolled in a distance-learning psychology degree at a German University. My intentions were very clear: I did not want to study psychology to practice as a psychologist; I enrolled in the course to study psychology to explore one aspect: I knew that in coaching I would primarily face questions about human personality, how human behaviour, emotions and perceptions are influenced by their environments and genetic inheritance. With all the scientific studies and its long history, there is no better discipline than psychology to give in-depth knowledge in this area. In addition, I also undertook around 20 online study courses, offered by institutions, such as, Stanford.³ The online courses were a blessing because they were instrumental in helping me to understand which subjects to study in detail. I was able to gauge whether I needed more knowledge in methodical and critical thinking, Gamification, irrationality, discipline of logic, research methods, studies in leadership and emotional intelligence, psychology, or philosophy.

The book is ordered according to the different relevant questions arising from the research:

- What is coaching?

²The expression has its origins in anthropology. It was coined by Bronislaw Malinowski. I interpret the phrase to mean being part of those who I am with but not being one of them.

³The courses were offered from the following institutions: www.coursera.org, www.khanacademy.org, lagunita.stanford.edu, www.udacity.com and www.edX.org

- Can a coach claim to bring about a sustainable change for his clients?
- Do clients want to change through coaching?
- Who needs coaching?
- Does coaching work?
- Why does coaching work?

The reference point of this book is the German coaching and business community and society in general, although my professional activity extends beyond Germany. The decision to focus on the German business community is because the ambiguity around coaching is more prevalent in Germany. That is also the reason why I focused most of my research, interviews, schooling, further studies, and observations there. The German TV programme mentioned earlier, broadcast on 6 October 2015, claimed that there were 16,000 coaches in the US and they were mostly personal coaches or life coaches. In Germany, it was reported in the same broadcast, there are about 8000 coaches. I have no possibility to verify these figures and have quoted them on their face value.

For the sake of inclusiveness, I use gender interchangeably throughout the book. This I have done for convenience of reading and without any intention to disregard gender: reference to one gender should be understood as to the gender of your own preference.

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