

Developing Coaching Supervision Practice: an Australian case study

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Abstract

This paper describes a coaching supervision framework and practice and the effects of it on participants in the monthly supervision groups¹. The framework was originally developed in an action research process aimed at improving and standardising supervision practice and consists of a conceptual model and a structure for the supervision conversation². In 2008, in the spirit of continuous improvement, a qualitative researcher was invited to explore the effects of this revamped supervision practice. The paper draws on three sources of data: observation of supervision groups in action, written reflections from supervisors and interviews with supervisees.

Key words: coaching, coaching supervision, qualitative practitioner research, coaching supervision effectiveness, action research.

Introduction

In 2004, supervision was formally launched with membership open to graduates of the Institute of Executive Coaching's (IEC) coach training programs. Members responded positively to the creation of a space in which they could come together and talk about their work with peers. Now these monthly supervision evenings are well established and are an integral part of the training and the ongoing professional development provided to coaches. There are now typically up to 120 people (in three locations) who attend these sessions each month. The evenings are structured into peer supervision groups of six to eight people who meet for one and a half hours. The sessions begin with a plenary introduction and case studies from the work of Institute coaches. This is followed by the groups (we have a variety of formations including years of experience, levels of training and self-selected groups). Each month there are different people in a group – because the attendance is floating – however there is also the opportunity for a group to agree on its membership and remain the same for a negotiated period. Each group is facilitated by a coaching supervisor who is supported in a separate and ongoing peer learning group.

When we initiated coaching supervision we were acutely aware that supervision was relatively new for coaches. At the time we started (2004) we surveyed the literature and found that there were no published models for coaching supervision (in 2008 this had changed, for

¹ Institute of Executive Coaching (IEC) in Australia

² A report of the workings of this forms a separate paper (Geddes and Armstrong, 2008)

example, Hawkins and Smith, 2006; Hays, 2007). In 2004 we were the only coach training organisation offering supervision in Australia and we drew our knowledge from personal experience of the sister fields of psychology, counselling and social work. Having said this, it was the philosophy and practice of our community of practice that was the starting point for developing the supervision process. A community of practice is a space in which practitioners with a shared interest/field of endeavour come together and contribute experience and learning through collaborative processes to generate new knowledge and shared understandings (following Wenger, 2000). Our early supervision evenings were therefore based around organising practitioners into groups of six to eight to talk about practice. After a very short time we received feedback that the effectiveness of the groups was inconsistent and the learning erratic. We therefore invited experienced practitioners to join an Action Research Group (ARG) to develop supervision practice. We chose the action research approach because it is compatible with the IEC coaching approach of experiential learning³. The outcome was a conceptual model that maps the holistic, systemic approach we have to coaching, and a conversation structure in three phases to use in practice (Geddes and Armstrong, 2008).

This paper describes the model, illustrating its use through case studies from supervisor learning journals. It then draws on the findings of a qualitative research process into supervisee experience that drew on two sources of qualitative data: independent observation of supervision groups in action and interviews with supervisees.

Background to Conceptual Model

Until recently coaching supervision was largely absent in the coaching literature⁴. In the related fields of counselling and psychology, however, supervision is a mandated part of training, and an activity that most practitioners engage in on an ongoing basis. But it had not filtered into the culture of organisational coaching until 2006 when, from the UK, there was a rush of publications emerging about coaching supervision (Hawkins and Schwenk, 2006; Hawkins and Smith, 2006; Butwell, 2006; Hays, 2007). Texts agree on the lack of knowledge and understanding of supervision in organisational coaching and variously describe its definition, function and value with associated practice models. These texts have been a valuable and validating source of knowledge. However, our approach, in their absence, was to work from the ground up and use our experience to generate and conceptualise our local supervision practice with the aim of improving it.

Coaching supervision in the context of the IEC community of practice is a systematic conversational process for the ongoing development of the executive coach in which any personal, relational, professional and contextual issues arising from coaching practice are explored through experience, reflection, inquiry and action. Its effectiveness depends on the quality of the interaction in eliciting reflection and self knowledge. This, in turn, leads to shifts in thinking that are then applied to coaching practice. Supervision has three functions: a **learning** function (enhancing professional craft knowledge), an **insight** function (enhancing self-awareness for self-regulation), and an **outsight** function (enhancing consideration of influences from the whole system and including them in the reflection (Armstrong, 2008).

Supervision in other contexts also has a monitoring function (Proctor, 1987; Kadushin, 1992) but, within an as yet unregulated field, there is little place for this except in certain

³ Experiential Learning and Action Research as methodologies use a similar cyclic process of building on experience, reflection, making sense and formulating new actions.

⁴ An exception was Mary Beth O'Neill's *Executive Coaching with Backbone and Heart*

situations, for example, for an accredited training provider and employer of coaches, coaching supervision provides a context in which coaches can be informally monitored in action.

The fact that we consider systemic issues is a point of difference for IEC coaches. Although we regard 'insight' practices as essential to coaching practice, it is only half the picture. A coach working in contemporary organisational environments needs to understand and respond to complex issues of power and social dynamics, including class, gender and ethnicity. Organisational coaches are increasingly working in multi-cultural environments, across national boundaries and through virtual practice (Moran and Abbott 2008). To assist the acquisition of a systemic and holistic view, we include questions that develop a person's 'outsight' as well as insight (Armstrong, 2008).

Coaching supervision is a system with multiple levels of relationship. We have identified three for the purpose of supervision in the group (See Figure 1). Each of the three levels is characterised as either 'present' (the relationship is in the 'here and now' of the group) or 'distant' (the relationship is not present in the group but is part of the system, so influences the group):

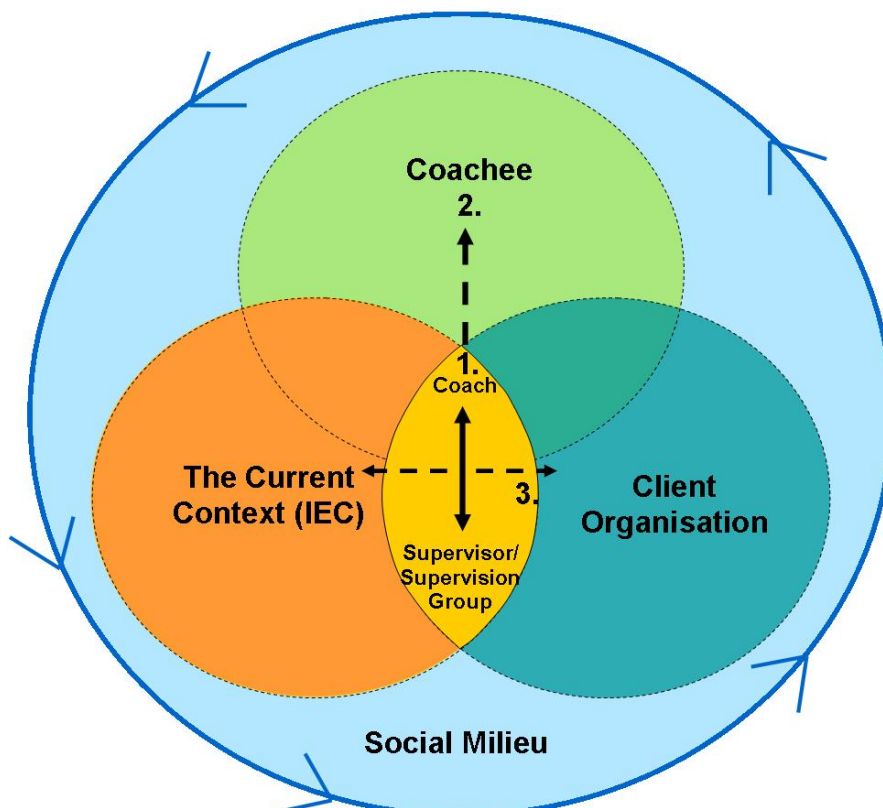
Level 1: The relationship between the coach and supervisor/supervision group (present).

Level 2: The relationship between the coach and coachee (distant).

Level 3: The relationship between the coach/supervisor/group and the client organisation/wider social milieu (distant).

This distinction between present and distant is important to supervision practice and is explored further in the detailed description of the process.

Figure 1: Levels of Relationship in Supervision



The supervision conversation is structured into three phases of conversational practice plus a set up and closing. The different phases have different questions associated with them that elicit the three levels of relationship above. The following table summarises each phase:

Table 1 – Summary of Phases

Group Phase	Process	Group Metaskills Suggested Questions	Supervisor and Supervision Function
Beginnings	<p>Introductions to each other and overview of process for evening.</p> <p>Sharing Stories of Success.</p> <p>Identifying number of issues to be worked with and allocating time</p>	<p>Metaskills: Empathy, openness, listening</p> <p>Introducing people</p> <p>Questions about what worked well in coaching and what they learned from it.</p> <p>Questions to structure group time</p>	<p>Building safety and trust.</p> <p>Energetically contain group</p> <p>Encourage reflection rather than opinion</p> <p>Organise time and content for the session.</p>
<p>Phase 1:</p> <p>Narrating the story</p>	<p>First volunteer narrates their story to the group, emphasis on critical moment for supervision.</p>	<p>Metaskills: Empathetic listening, curiosity, non-judgement.</p> <p>Questions designed to understand content and identify critical moment(s)</p>	<p>Manage responses</p> <p>Focus reflection away from content detail</p> <p>Encourage a ‘thick description’ of critical moment(s)</p>
<p>Phase 2:</p> <p>Developing Insight</p>	<p>Shift of focus from content to process.</p>	<p>Metaskills: Curiosity, non-judgement, challenge</p> <p>Questions designed to elicit self reflection, awareness and regulation</p>	<p>Externalising and normalising the story</p> <p>Maintain distinction between content and coaching process.</p>
<p>Phase 3:</p> <p>Developing Oversight</p>	<p>Shift of focus from intrapersonal process to interpersonal and context focus.</p>	<p>Metaskills, Social intelligence, openness, challenge</p> <p>Questions include hypothesis questions, other-directed questions, and role analysis</p>	<p>Develop coach ‘outsight’ - awareness of systemic influences and how they impact the here and now.</p>
<p>Endings</p> <p>Identifying</p>	<p>Identify “sparkling” or “ah-hah” moments</p>	<p>Inviting, challenging to accountability for learning</p>	<p>Identify new learning and translate it into action with</p>

new learning		For each group member question to identify learning and actions	commitment.
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In practice, the relational levels are not so much discrete but interweaving threads that appear throughout the supervision conversation. Part of the supervisors' role is to make sure that questions elicit all levels of relationship. Other functions of the supervisor role are to structure the group time evenly, manage the flow of content and reflective learning process, manage group dynamics such as airtime and relationship quality, and maintain a strength/solution focus rather than a problem focus.

In the session, each group is provided with the model and questions to assist their practice. The beginning of the groups is always the same. It consists of a welcome, agenda, group introductions and the organisation of airtime for individuals to share and talk through experiences.

Likewise, group endings are always conducted in a particular way. Supervision is aimed at improving practice, so the supervision conversation ends with a reflection on the session as a whole with the purpose of identifying 'take-aways' for each person including what they will do differently as a result. It is always interesting to note what peoples' 'take-aways' are, because they are often unexpected and provide another opportunity for group learning.

The phases are now described in more detail through a case example from supervisors who keep a learning journal, and an explanation of the rationale of the phase.

Phase 1: Developing Trust: Telling the Story

A manager/coach told a wandering story about a member of her team who was a "difficult" person and who was affecting the results and process of the team. She described him as whingeing and constantly undermining others' efforts. The story was difficult to follow because she kept commenting to herself as she told it that she should do something, but no matter what she did the team member would not change. She had given up and presented the story because she wanted ideas from the group about how to coach him. The group immediately started giving suggestions 'Have you tried...?' She in turn continually blocked their suggestions and seemed to withdraw from the group, saying it didn't matter because she knew it was hopeless anyway. It was as though she had lost trust that anyone could help her.

I intervened and said to the group that we were not there to solve the problem. There was a silence, then one group member understood and asked:

'What thoughts have you had now after telling us the story?'

This question heralded an important shift of focus for the group and in the end was the thing that guided the supervisee to her own solutions.

The telling of the story has two important purposes, the first the obvious one of supplying the content for the supervision conversation – the 'matter at hand' to be worked on. However, the second purpose is just as important. Through the telling, the associated verbal and non-verbal responses of group members, as well as any re-telling that occurs in the account (as the storyteller listens to themselves) the quality of relationships in terms of trust and safety are

formed. This is the phase of the supervision conversation therefore, which sets the tone of group interactions.

The primary relationship in the supervision space (following Hawkins and Shohet, 1989) is the 'here and now' relationship between the supervisee-storyteller and the supervision group. The coachee (the main character in the story) and usually the 'presenting problem' is only present to the group through the eyes of another (the storyteller). It is impossible to relate directly to this absent third person, and therefore to coach them. The only relationship that is present is between the storyteller and the group. When a group focuses on problem solving around an absent person their attention is on fixing the problem for the supervisee rather than empowering the supervisee. This results in advice giving, a process, we would argue, that it is not supervision, but training. Advice-giving practices in this context disempower people and therefore reduce trust. If the focus is on the relationships present in the room, group members will more likely ask questions that will guide the supervisee to reframe his/her thinking and maintain the locus of control.

Phase 2: Developing Insight: moving between content and process

Through the process of narration, as the group reacts and responds, and the storyteller hears her/himself tell the story, the story morphs and changes. This occurs because as human beings we are uniquely able to be reflexive, that is, we have the ability to witness ourselves as we act in the world (in this case, we can hear ourselves as we speak). Reflexivity is a means of detachment and the process of detaching from our stories is an important step in the development of insight (and effective coaching). The content presented therefore is the vehicle for what is the substance of supervision, the process (of the telling), because it is this process that leads to new insights and therefore new actions.

The group member described above asked, 'What thoughts have you had now after telling us the story?' This question facilitates the shift from content to process that characterises the second phase of the supervision conversation structure. The story continues with the person replying to this question:

She replied: "I was thinking of an incident the other day... once again he hadn't delivered and I had to stay late to do his job... I'm getting to the stage that if I don't avoid him, I'll punch him!"

The group laughed and one member commented that it was possibly a career limiting moment and a good thing that she avoided him. Others disagreed. The group started sliding back into content. Then a group member asked: "What's your feeling now?"

There was silence. The group waited. Finally she said: "That this is more about me than him!" She looked a little forlorn. There was silence, and then a group member asked, "So knowing that, what would you say to yourself about it now?"

She suddenly laughed, "That it's not his fault that I take responsibility...I should stop feeling sorry for myself and focus back on him and his bad behaviour."

The group continued to coach her towards options and actions as a result of this realisation.

Phase 3: Developing Oversight: including the system's influence

The third phase of supervision is the most complex. It is concerned with the systemic influences on the supervision encounter that are expressed in individual and group behaviours. Influences present in the room include different social, psychological, cultural, and organisational systems and roles. They manifest in a variety of phenomena, including transferential and counter transferential issues, mirroring and parallel processing.

A supervisee was complaining that her coachee was not holding to his commitments between sessions. I remembered that she had told the same story a month before about another client. On that occasion we had questioned her and she realised that she didn't put the pressure on because she felt sorry for him and she hated challenging men who were vulnerable. Her action was to be aware that this was her process (from her personal history) and not necessarily his and she said as a result of this reflection her action would be to discuss with her coachee his lack of commitment to his actions.

One month later we were recycling the scenario again with another client. I asked, 'I'm wondering, are there any similarities between the story you tell today and last month's story?' There was silence, and then she said in a small voice:

"It's the same?" (pause) I'm doing it again...but I just can't, he is too overwhelmed."

I did not comment, but asked, "Is there any similarity between this and what happened after last week?" She was silent, and after a period of time said she couldn't make any connections. I asked the group. One of them said, "I've been thinking about parallel processing –the coachees are not sticking to their commitments, but neither is the coach!"

This is an example of parallel processing. What the coach was not doing in her life, her coachees were not doing, as a result of her unconsciously influencing her relationships. After this realisation, she was able to make sustainable changes to her practice. Another common example of parallel processing occurs when a supervisee continually deflects any questions from the group after talking about a "resistant" coachee. The supervisee, in deflecting assistance, is paralleling the coachee's resistance. Other forms of systemic influences commonly occur in the group dynamics when group members use power inappropriately by taking up airtime, or compete with each other or challenge for the sake of it. The process that needs to happen is to notice and introduce questions to make the systemic influences in the group explicit. In this phase, particular questioning forms ('other directed' and hypothesis questions) are used to assist people to have an "other" focus or "outsight" (Armstrong 2008). Outsight entails identifying the current system and the role that we are assigned as part of that system, including how this influences the here and now relationships alongside awareness of ourselves as also more than this role, and asking questions to raise peoples' awareness of these influences.

After two years of practice using the new framework, the Institute initiated a research project to inquire about the experience of supervisees in the monthly coaching supervision sessions. We wanted to know how effective people found them and why. The qualitative methodology included observation of groups in action, semi-structured interviews, and a thematic analysis⁵. The research findings presented here draw on the observation by the researcher of three supervision groups in action, and interviews of a self selected cluster of 10 group participants (supervisees) using the semi-structured approach.

Common themes about why supervision was effective were:

⁵ For full research reports and findings see Geddes (2008).

1. It was a **reflective space** where they could talk about and reflect on events in their practice and themselves,
 2. It was a place where they were **challenged, validated and held accountable** by peers and the supervisors,
 3. It provides a **community of practice** and therefore a place for networking and professional development,
 4. It was an **extension of the learning space** where people shared expertise and experience,
 5. The **quality of the supervisor's facilitation** of the group.
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Overall satisfaction with supervision was high. As attendance is voluntary we were interested to know why people continued to attend beyond the compulsory sessions, if supervision was seen as beneficial and effective and what areas we could improve on. Supervisees, in agreeing that it was effective, also provided feedback to make it more effective. The following themes emerged, and are supported by direct quotes from the interviews and group observations.

1. Reflective Space

For most of the supervisees interviewed, supervision was the only place where they reflect on and discuss their coaching experiences. One supervisee commented:

“Supervision puts you in that space where you’re reflecting on the process itself and so you are ...learning in that way.”

Another talked about the importance of the group in the reflective space:

“Supervision is invaluable because you get an opportunity to talk about some of your coaching clients and some of the situations that you find yourself in and you get to hear other people’s perspectives on what it is you’re doing... so it’s great self reflection.”

According to supervisees, coaching supervision is not only a place to reflect, it teaches them *how* to reflect, therefore honing their reflective practice. In the group observations it was clear that supervisees were being invited to engage through reflexive questioning. For example, when a supervisee talked about stepping out of his coaching role in a session to give advice, the supervisor asked, “Whose need was being met there?” When he could not answer, she asked, “What happens for you when I say that?” These kinds of reflexive questions are, according to supervisees, the ones that help them gain insight and therefore to learn and grow. For example, after an interaction when the supervisor asked a supervisee, “What’s happening for you right now as you tell that story?” the supervisee said that by simply telling the story aloud to her peers she had found the answers to her dilemma.

“I hadn’t focussed my thought on it that much until I spoke it tonight...as I told [the story] I could see some of the other things that were happening and what I could have done. I’ll try them next session”

It seems that simply the modelling of asking questions (instead of giving advice) is a learning process itself. In another group session, supervisees talked about becoming more aware after supervision of their “mental presence” when coaching. As a result of the supervision conversations they now, in coaching, observe their habitually unhelpful patterns of behaviour (e.g. giving advice) and notice the effect of these “not so great” interventions on their clients. This is an example of how reflecting in this way improves self awareness. Another supervisee commented generally on this:

“Whatever I put forward on the night, I always end up reflecting on my own blocks and my own values. It’s about the coach understanding themselves”.

This comment reflects the growing awareness voiced by the supervisees that supervision is primarily about becoming more aware of themselves in the coaching encounter so they can intervene in more useful ways. One supervisee reflected this succinctly when she said:

“I’ve become more conscious over time. We [tend to] spend all our time making the coaching space about them [coachees], when all that troubles us is about us [as coaches]. Supervision has helped me get a handle on the need to manage me [coach] in order to let them [coachee] lead in a session. I need to understand what it is about me – what do I need to do to me to get a situation to change?”

2. Accountability and Challenge

Many supervisees described supervision as a place where they are challenged, confronted, stretched and even, “kept honest” by peers as well as the supervisor.

As one supervisee commented:

“How do you know you’re actually doing it [coaching] effectively?...and the best that you can...additionally, the best that you can be for your coachee? Supervision’s about keeping me honest. You can’t hide in that space”

Another talked about the intellectual stimulation of being challenged to face some of the difficulties people have in the role of coach:

“[Supervision] is really powerful because it challenges you to actually confront those sorts of issues that you don’t get a chance to think about. It’s not something that you can do alone, thinking about those issues, so the intellectual stimulation is really strong. It stretches you and it does develop you professionally. You just can’t do that by yourself.”

The supervision group, because it is a place where it is difficult to hide, is also a fertile ground for learning from mistakes. As one supervisee commented:

*“The group is a space where you can see others make mistakes and learn from them.”
“...it’s a place where you can allow in insecurity to build your confidence.”*

But it also provides space for validation of effective practice:

“I think it supports you at a confidence level...when you come up against something that’s challenging that’s when it’s good because you’re questioning, ‘Am I doing this right?’ So it’s a good place to come to get validation. You can actually discuss it and work with that. It’s just a validating space, a place where you can question. So I think that helps confidence”.

“The first sessions I came to and had good feedback was a big endorsement - that I wasn’t completely off on the wrong track which is good and helped me enormously.”

“Supervision gives me a confidence around the things that I know I’m doing OK. Because I hear other people saying, ‘I tried this and it worked’ and I know I’ve tried that to. I get validation of what I am doing well. It’s a great sounding board.”

Interestingly, this concept of coach supervision as a “sounding board” parallels a benefit that was identified by respondents in the IEC Coaching Effectiveness research in which recipients of coaching were asked how they thought coaching worked. Over 85% of them said the organisational coaching provided a sounding board where they could test and try new ideas (Armstrong 2007).

Supervision also provides a place to experience different views and gain other perspectives on coaching that challenge dearly held personal views.

“You get the flavour of lots of different world views that you just don’t have an opportunity to get if you’re not doing supervision. So from my point of view it’s really, really, valuable...”

Most supervisors handle this diversity well. In one group observation there was a moment of challenge and creative tension when the supervisor, who was dealing with several paradoxical views in a supervision session, challenged the participants to question, consider and reflect on the differing views presented by their peers, without choosing a “correct” view.

3. Community of Practice

It is not surprising, considering that many coaches work in isolation, that supervisees find supervision important:

“Supervision contributes to the profession of executive coaching...it provides peer support to a group of people who commonly work on their own. It is crucial because I do a lot of coaching...that’s my profession, and because when you work for yourself it can be really isolating.”

For many, supervision provides a strong connection to the community of practice. In fact, most of the supervisees mentioned this as a benefit, even those who are not doing a lot of coaching. As one commented:

“It’s a means of me keeping connected to coaching, as well as to the community.”

Others found it important to network for work:

“When I come I often get into conversations that lead to joining up for work.”

Supervision is seen as adding value and credibility to the coach training program and its learning methodology:

“[Supervision] adds credibility to what the Institute offers. I’ve been doing courses for 18 years and how many times have I had someone come back and support me through the learning process after I’ve actually gone through the course? That rarely happens.”

The connections to the community that supervision provides can also be an energising experience. One supervisee who travels several hours each way to attend supervision said:

“It’s a source of energy...when you are working remote from others operating in the same space, you get energised by meeting with other coaches, and it’s reassuring... it’s good to sit with a group that’s grappling with the same things that you are.”

This connection to a community is highly valued by the supervisees, and they recognise that it provides benefits that are applicable to their work:

“For me supervision means staying in contact. You can read books but I think supervision makes it real...practical.”

4. Extension of the Learning Space

As supervision is initially required as part of the coach training program, it is not surprising that the supervisees see it as an extension of the learning space and therefore, as a place for further training:

“Supervision is the only space where someone is expert at watching ‘process’ and can say ‘do you realise what’s going on in your process?’ Both the process in the moment, in the group, and the process being described by the supervisee.

Interestingly, supervision is also regarded as a place to ask the advice from more experienced peers; for example, those who have already had experience in a particular area, or know about setting up business. One group member commented:

“It’s the only forum that I have to bounce things off other people with experience. It provides peer support to a group of people who commonly work as sole traders.”

There is also evidence that it is affecting their practice:

“I often bring things from those supervision sessions into my mind when I’m thinking about how I need to get to a certain point during the coaching session so that’s really how I use it.”

“I’ll still ask myself, ‘Am I using that? Am I thinking about those? Are they top of mind?’ From that point of view yes, [supervision has] made me a lot more aware of those things to focus on.”

“Supervision stimulates your thinking with current clients and what you’re doing. And you do go back to them and make changes or just sit with things in your awareness or you notice... So it’s really effective from that point of view.”

5. Role of the Group Supervisors

While the expertise in a coaching supervision session comes from the entire peer group, according to the supervisees the supervisor role is seen as important and having a significant impact. According to supervisees, a positive experience of supervision depends on the qualities of the supervisor.

When supervisees were asked what skilful supervisors did well, the most common theme was that of “challenging the status quo”:

“It’s interesting... when she asks a question. It’s often seems so unexpected and I often feel really uncomfortable. But if I reflect on it now I realise that it [being uncomfortable] is usually because it’s about something I have just taken for granted”.

Modelling effective coaching supervision was also commented on as important. One supervisee said:

“I always get a lot of value from listening carefully to the questions that you ask; you demonstrate great skill and clarity in your questions and so provide an encouraging and elevating model for me to aspire to.”

Perceived safety and openness were also important to create a “level playing field” as one supervisee put it, between all participants in the group. In most cases this meant shared airtime throughout a supervision session. There were examples of experiences of individuals in groups dominating the airtime and supervisors not taking action. Allowing for equal airtime of all participants was frequently mentioned as something that good supervisors do well.

However, the best supervisors don’t dominate the conversation but steer it carefully. Supervisees appreciate the supervisor balancing the needs of all the participants and still maintaining their own authority as the group’s leader. As one supervisee described it:

“I value [the supervisor’s] ability to combine an apparent comfort with the authority that he has plus a commitment to not using that authority to take over the conversation. The group was able to maintain a safe space for everyone and everyone was respected for their input and insights – some great sharing as a result.”

The fact that differing views are given voice and acknowledged within the supervision groups is seen as a positive and it is noted that supervision is at its most effective when there is enough safety to engage in these views without judgment:

“[Supervision] provides opportunities to explore with someone who may have views different to my own. It’s very supportive, no judgment, a safe space. This means it’s a learning environment, not an expert’s environment.”

Conclusion: changes in practice.

As a result of the feedback from supervisees we have taken several steps to improve practice:

A training program is now in place for supervisors and regular peer learning groups are scheduled to support them as a result of supervisees telling us there were inconsistent standards of supervision.

As a result of feedback about different levels of learning in groups, we now mostly divide the groups into levels of experience and training. People self-select and this has meant that each group can choose the level of professional development they require. We also realise however that people learn by watching and listening to more experienced people so we also occasionally include groups of random levels.

We are more careful to limit numbers in groups because of experiences that supervisees had of not getting space and airtime.

In conclusion, we are still in the formation stage of developing our supervision practice but continue to learn and grow, and be heartened by the enthusiasm of our participants. There are very few examples of research into coaching supervision. We realise this is one example, in one Institute, in one context at a point of time, in the growing field of coaching. We are practitioner researchers so will always be accused of promoting our own practice. However, it is through sharing reflections on practice that we can, as a community, grow it. We encourage others to look at what we have done and add to it, their own experiences. There is a long way to

go to embed a supervision culture into executive coaching, but we believe by continuing to offer our reflections on practice we are contributing and building a very important practice into executive coaching.

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