

## 2 Prior Research

The chapter introduces four research fields that are important for understanding this work and for motivating certain design decisions as well as for picking up a reader thematically (Figure 3).

As the main focus of the work lays on *coaching* and respectively investigating a new form of coaching service, it is necessary to clear such question as (chapter 2.1):

- What is coaching?
- What are the elements of the coaching process?
- Which coaching methodologies and techniques exist?

As the work deals not with the coaching in general, but with a project coaching or coaching in the project management area, the main aspects of the project management should be clarified (chapter 2.2):

- What is project?
- What is project management?
- What are the project management issues?
- What are the elements of the project management life cycle?
- What are the project management good/best practices?
- Which tools, method can support project management?

As the intention of the work is to design and investigate the computer-mediated project coaching and specifically the web based project coaching, it is necessary to clarify (chapters 2.3 and 2.4):

- What is computer-mediated communication and computer-supported cooperative work?
- Which tools can support computer-mediated communication, coordination and cooperation?
- What computer-mediated theories can be helpful in designing the web based project coaching?

And last, but not least, it is necessary to an overview of literature dedicated to such topics as web based coaching, online coaching, computer-mediated coaching, in order to define, what prior research was done in the area of web based (online) coaching and web based (online) project coaching (chapter 2.5).

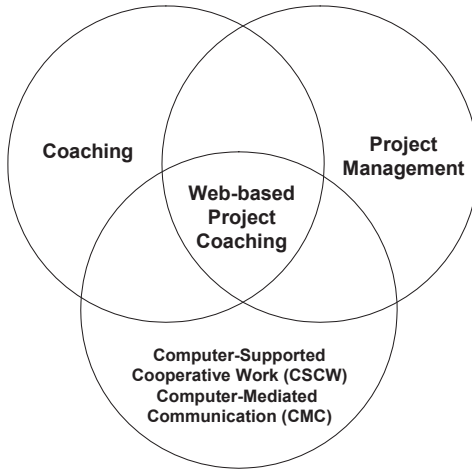


Figure 3: Prior research themes

Source: own illustration

## 2.1 Coaching

*"In Life, as in football, you won't go far unless you know where the goal posts are"*  
*Arnold H. Glasgow*

The chapter starts with introducing the term “coaching”, describing briefly its goal and application. It continues with the description of the coaching process and their activities within every process phase. Furthermore, the chapter presents various forms of project coaching and their application.

### 2.1.1 Definition

The term “coaching” can be applied to a number of different activities. This work focuses on the use of coaching in organizational settings. However, it can be used in many other situations. Its use in the business world often carried a remedial connotation – people were coached, because they were underperforming or their behavior was unsatisfactory. Nowadays, coaching is usually seen as a mean of developing people within an organization, in order they perform more effectively and reach their potential. Table 3 presents a number of coaching definitions.

<b>Definition of coaching</b>	<b>Source</b>
“A person who trains and directs athletes or athletic teams; a person who gives instructions, as in signing or acting; a private tutor employed to prepare a student for an examination”	(American Heritage Dictionary 2000)
Defines the verb “coach” – “tutor, train, give hints to, prime with facts”	(Dictionary 2004)
“Helping successful leaders achieve positive, lasting change in behavior: for themselves, their people and their teams”	(Marschall Goldsmith & Lyons 2005)
“An informed dialog whose purpose is the facilitation of new skills, possibilities and insights in the interest of individual leading and organizational advancement”	(Bacon & Spear 2003)
“A comprehensive communication process in which the coach provides performance feedback to the coachee. Topics include broad, work relations dimensions of performance (personal, interpersonal or technical) that affect the coach’s ability and willingness to contribute to meaningful personal or organizational goals”	(Crane & Patrick 2007)
“A collaborative solutions-focused, result-oriented and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement or work performance, life experience and personal growth of the coachee”	(Grant 2001)
“Unlocking person’s potentials to maximize his/her own performance “	(Whitmore 1996)
“The art of facilitating the unleashing of people’s potentials to reach meaningful, important objectives”	(Rosinski 2003)
“A process that enables learning and development to occur and thus performance to improve“	(Parlsoe 1999)
“Primarily a short-term intervention aimed at performance improvement or developing a particular competence”	(Clutterbuck 2003)
“A conversation or series of conversations, one person has with another”	(Starr 2003)
“The art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another“	(Downey 1999)
“A coach is a collaborative partner who works with the learner to help them achieve goals, solve problems, learn and develop”	(Caplan 2003)

“Meant to be a practical, goal-focused form of personal, one-on-one learning for busy executives and may be used to improve performance or executive behavior, enhance a career or prevent derailment and work through organizational issues or change initiatives. Essentially, coaches provide executives with feedback they would normally never get about personal, performance, career and organizational issues”	(Hall, Otazo, & Hollenbeck 1999)
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Table 3: Various definitions of coaching

Source: own illustration

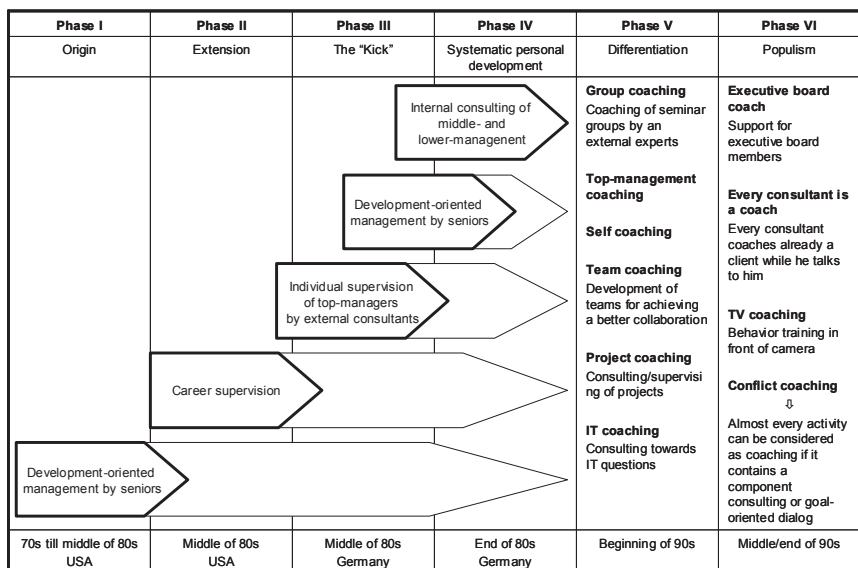


Figure 4: Development of the term “coaching”

Source: according to Böning (2002)

As it could be noticed, the coaching definitions reflect many different aspects. However, some characteristics of the term “coaching” are common for every definition:

Coaching ...

... is generally a one-to-one relationship.

... provides people with feedback on both their strengths and weaknesses.

... usually involves development (of skills, awareness) and/or improved performance.

... depends primarily on supporting rather than directive communication from the coach.

- ... is a relatively short-term activity, except in executive coaching, which tends to have a longer timeframe.
- ... is essentially a non-directive form of development.
- ... is a skilled activity.
- ... assumes that the individual is psychologically healthy and does not require a clinical intervention.

Broadly speaking, coaching develops person's skills and knowledge so that their job performance improves, hopefully leading to the achievement of organizational goals. It targets high performance and improvement at work, although it may also have an impact on an individual's private life. It usually lasts for a short period and focuses on specific skills and goals (Jarvis 2004, 19). Figure 4 shows the development of coaching over years.

### 2.1.2 Coaching Stakeholders

The primary relationship in any coaching activity involves a coach and an individual (coachee). However, it is not the only important relationship. Other key stakeholders include persons representing the organization's interests – in most case they are representatives of the human resource department (HR) and the individual's manager (line manager). Both of these parties are interested in improving the individual's performance and their better contribution to the organization. Figure 5 illustrates the possible coaching stakeholders as well as their different relationships (Hay 1995):

- *The coachee and the coach.* The most visible relationship, which requires good matching to work effectively.
- *The coach and the organization (e.g. HR).* These parties agree the contractual relationship (HR represents the organization's interests). HR should thoroughly brief the coach so they understand the organizational context, in which the coaching will take place.
- *The coachee and the organization (e.g. HR).* HR must explain why the individual (coachee) is being coached.
- *The coachee and line manager.* The line manager must understand and support the individual (coachee) during the coaching intervention. He can also be involved to help the coachee in elaborating the development objectives for the coaching.
- *The organization (e.g. HR) and the line manager.* HR must manage the line manager's expectations and explain his/her role in supporting the coaching relationship.

The presented relationships must be carefully managed for maximum benefit to be gained from a coaching initiative. HR plays a critical role in making sure that all the other stakeholders to the coaching intervention are bought into the process and understand their roles in its success.

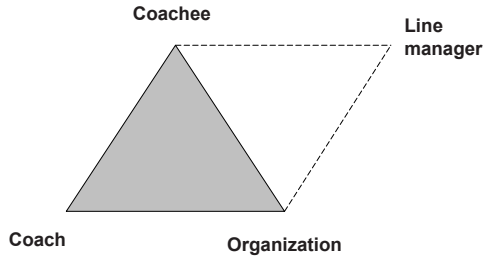


Figure 5: Coaching stakeholders and their relationships  
Source: according to Hay (1995)

### 2.1.3 Motivation for Coaching

The survey, conducted by Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD 2008) investigated the aspects which were the main motivation for using coaching in organizations. The results of the investigation are presented in Table 4.

Motivation for coaching	% of respondents reporting this aspect as main motivation
Improving individual performance	78
Dealing with underperformance	30
Improving productivity	28
Career planning/personal development	27
Growing future senior staff	26
Fostering a culture of learning and development	24
Motivating staff	21
Accelerating change in organization	16
Demonstrating the organization's commitment to staff	16
Improving staff retention	10
Reducing cost of sending staff to external courses	9
Helping staff to achieving better work-life balance	5
Satisfying demand for coaching from employees	2

Table 4: Aspects as main motivation for using coaching  
Source: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2008, 18)

The majority of organizations stated that they use coaching in order to improve individual performance. Furthermore, the coaching is a popular instrument to tackle underperformance and to improve productivity. Beyond these three motivations, coaching tends to be used for a variety of training and staffing reasons. It seems as if the main drivers of coaching activities are performance-related rather than being used to address “soft” issues like improving work-life balance or increasing motivation. Contrary to the “touchy-feeley” image of coaching that

is sometimes portrayed by the media, organizations actually seem to be using coaching to address significant business issues such as driving performance improvements and productivity (CIPD 2008, 18-22).

#### 2.1.4 Assessing The Need for Coaching

The identification that an individual could benefit from some coaching can happen in a variety of organizational settings (CIPD 2008, 34-39). The first step is the identification of the need for improvement. This is most frequently identified by the individual themselves, his/her line manager or by a member of the HR department (e.g. during a development centre). Once an improvement need has been identified, the next step is for the manager and the individual to decide how best the need can be met. Coaching is one of the possible development interventions that organizations can use to develop their employees, but not the only and not necessarily the best one. Therefore it is necessary to make sure that other possible avenues for development are fully explored. The merits of coaching should be considered alongside other types of development interventions, such as training courses, mentoring or on-the-job training. Employee preferences should also be considered. Coaching is only effective, if an improvement need for it is identified and if it is the best development tool for the specific purpose. Assessment as to whether coaching is an appropriate approach are illustrated in Figure 6.

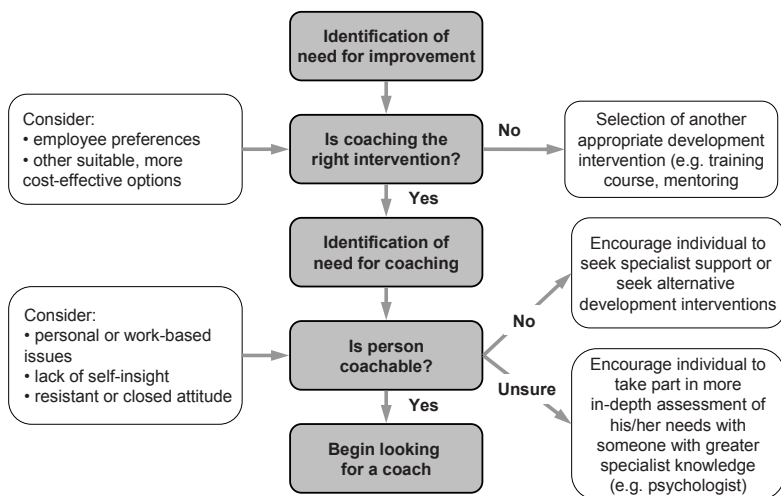


Figure 6: Assessing the need for coaching

Source: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2008, 35)

### 2.1.5 Coach Profile

The research of Arnott and Sparrow (2004) reveals that some large organizations that use coaching extensively are already using fairly stringent criteria. Apart from the right cultural fit and personal style, the research indicates that they are also keen to establish other coaching criteria such as evidence of a positive track record, having a structured approach, relevant qualifications, adherence to professional standards and evidence of supervision of coaches.

The following section presents some of the areas that should be considered when selecting coaches (CIPD 2004; Jarvis 2004, 46-49):

- *Appropriate level of coaching experience.* Different levels of coaching experience may be required, depending on the complexity of the issues being addressed as well as the seniority of the individual. The coach needs to be “fit for purpose”.
- *Relevant business/industry experience.* It is discussed if it is a necessary requirement to look for coaches with relevant business experience (e.g. of a particular job, organization or industry sector). Most people would agree that coaches do need strong understanding of the business. However, direct experience of a particular industry or organization is unlikely to be a necessary requirement for a person to be an effective coach. It is important to remember that, while the coach should have a sound knowledge of business, their real contribution is their ability to help individuals learn and develop.
- *References.* Talking to previous clients of the coach is a good way of finding out about their style and skills, as well as how effective they were in producing the desired results. A good coach should always be able to supply references and it's important to check them as early as possible.
- *Background of the coach.* Coaches come from a variety of different professional backgrounds. Examples include human resources, occupational psychology, training and development, management development, project coaching. These different backgrounds will mean that the coaches will bring some very different experience and skills to the coaching relationship.
- *Supervision.* Supervision is a formal, independent process of reflection and review to enable the practitioner to increase their self awareness, develop their competence and critique their work with their client (Lane 2002). Lane (2002) suggests a number of benefits that supervision can deliver:
  - It offers protection to clients – cases are discussed with trained professionals who are able to identify areas of potential concern and offer advice or referral to specialist support if appropriate.



- It offers coaches the opportunity to reflect on their work and gain insights to improve their interventions.
  - It offers coaches the opportunity to identify their own personal strengths and weaknesses as a coach in order to realistically judge what limitations to set with respect to the type of work they undertake.
  - It offers coaches the opportunity to learn from peers who have had similar cases and experiences to further develop their skills as a coach.
  - It offers coaches the opportunity to keep up to date with professional developments in the field and to continually work to increase their competency as a coach.
- *Coaching tools, techniques, models.* Coaches should have an extensive “kit” of tools and techniques that they use in different situations. Coaches should be able to clearly describe the approaches they use. Furthermore, coaches should not push particular models and should be able to flex their methods to suit a particular situation. Good coaches will use models, techniques and frameworks from a wide range of theoretical backgrounds. However, coaches should not be overawed by the high number of different models, frameworks or techniques. As with many things, the simplest tools/techniques are often the most effective. Coaches should use tools that are “fit for purpose”.
- *Understanding of boundaries and approach to referral.* Coaches should understand the boundaries of their expertise. This means that coaches should not accept an individual into a coaching program if they need specialist support beyond the competence of the coach. In this situation, the coach should encourage the individual to seek appropriate support from a qualified professional. It is essential that coaches understand their own limitations and can see when their methods/techniques are not able to address an individual’s needs.
- *Relevant qualifications and training.* Coaches should be able to demonstrate that they are competent in providing coaching services. One way of proving this is to demonstrate that they possess a relevant qualification. Often coaches also qualified as psychologists. Berglas (2002) argues: “I believe that in an alarming number of situations, executive coaches who lack rigorous psychological training do more harm than good. By dint of their backgrounds and biases, they downplay or simply ignore deep-seated psychological problems they don’t understand.” The training of coaches should be fit for purpose.
- *Membership of professional bodies.* Buyers of coaching services should certainly consider membership of professional bodies as part of their selection criteria. Good

coaches are likely to be a member of coaching-related professional bodies, have relevant qualifications and take part in ongoing continuing professional development.

- *Professional indemnity insurance.* Coaches can be asked whether they subscribe to professional indemnity insurance. Holders of professional indemnity insurance may be understood to take their professional services more seriously by preparing for any situations where they unintentionally have a negative impact on their clients. Indemnity insurance could provide the organization with some legal protection if problems arise as a result of a coaching intervention.
- *Other qualities/personal characteristics.* The best coaches are those who give honest, realistic, challenging, feedback, are good listeners and suggest good ideas for action. Beyond looking for specific qualifications, experience and knowledge, it is important to look for coaches who have certain qualities, skills or personal characteristics that are critical to successful coaching. Different qualities may be needed depending on the specific individual, the problems and the organizational context. There are some general skills that characterize effective coaches. These include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-awareness and self-knowledge</li> <li>• Clear and effective communication skills (verbal and non-verbal)</li> <li>• Relationship-building skills (including ability to establish rapport)</li> <li>• Flexibility of approach</li> <li>• Listening and questioning skills</li> <li>• Ability to design an effective coaching process</li> <li>• Ability to assist goal development and setting, including giving feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to motivate</li> <li>• Ability to encourage new perspectives</li> <li>• Ability to assist in making sense of a situation</li> <li>• Ability to identify significant patterns of thinking and behaving</li> <li>• Ability to challenge and give feedback</li> <li>• Ability to establish trust and respect</li> <li>• Ability to facilitate depth of understanding</li> <li>• Ability to promote action</li> <li>• Ability to build resilience</li> </ul>
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The complex coaching marketplace makes decisions about the choice of coach unclear and difficult. The coaching market grows and the choice of coaches increases, it is getting more challenging to pick the coach who is going to deliver results.

The following checklist helps to pick out the ethical, experienced and qualified coach (Chapman 2006; Tulpa 2006):

- *Is the coach a member of a professional body, does he/she have ongoing supervision?* Being a member of a professional coaching body assures the coach operates correctly. Coach supervision provides additional quality check of coaching activities.

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