Determining Competencies of Effective Coaches

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February 14, 2018

Purpose and Research Objective

The purpose of the research is to determine a competency model of coaches that is linked to client outcomes. Coaching is growing at geometric proportions. It has become a preferred form of development throughout the world. In the early 1990's, associations and companies began to create certification processes of coaches. Clients wanted some form of assurance about a person's capability and theoretical comportment as a coach. The largest of these agencies worldwide is the International Coach Federation (ICF), followed by the Center for Credentialing & Education (CCE) and Worldwide Association of Business Coaches (WABC). Although they each have a "competency model" and assess applications against it, there is no published, scientific evidence that the items in their models are characteristic of effective coaches. To make matters worse, it appears that fewer than 40% of these organizations' stated competencies meet the definition of a competency (Boyatzis, 1982) and fewer than 10% of these competencies are backed by evidence to suggest they are patterns of behavior demonstrated by people who are effective at helping in any form, including coaching (Boyatzis, 2016). Despite a consistent call for research, and the fact that coaching has functioned as a practice in organizations since the 1960's, there are no existing studies validating these or any competencies.

The field of competency research has become the center of human resource management in most organizations with more than 100 employees. The early research was conducted in the 1970's provoked by David McClelland's 1973 paper, "testing for competence rather than intelligence" in the *American Psychologist*. Early studies of competencies of managers tested against performance data were published by Boyatzis (1982). Since then, the research stream on competencies has continued, but often focusing on managers or leaders (Spencer & Spencer, 19893; Goleman, 1998). Recent studies have shown that competencies can predict effectiveness of individual contributors in a study of engineer's effectiveness (Boyatzis, Rochford & Cavanaugh, 2017).

In 1982, Boyatzis claimed that to be classified as such, a competency should have: (1) a definition of a group of behavioral indicators organized around an underlying intent; (2) be empirically linked to effective performance; and (3) be characteristics of a person, not a job. The "competency models" of coaches in use today by many certification agencies and organizations fail on all three criteria. The proposed study would be the first longitudinal study of coach competencies of its kind and hopefully, stimulate replication and expansion of such longitudinal studies.

Sample

The researchers will collect data from coaches on their capabilities and then relate them to the degree of change on a variety of outcome variables among an assortment of their clients. Due to the time commitments involved and solicitation of clients', a high rate of subject mortality is expected. As a result, the initial sample of coaches sought will be considerably higher than is needed. The goal is to have about 75 coaches provide names of 5-8 clients and to have 3 of the clients from each coach complete a set of tests at the beginning of their coaching experience and then one year later. This would result in a sample size of 200+ coach-client pairs. We have obtained a Letter of Cooperation (attached) from the International Coach Federation from whom we can solicit interest from 4,500+ English speaking coaches, and the Institute for Life Coach Training (ILCT) with 300+ coaches who are expected to be willing to participate. The criteria for coaches to be included in the study is:

- Be fluent in English
- Have a minimum of 2 years coaching experience
- Be willing to provide up to 10 clients' names and contact information.

The coaches would complete the Informed Consent Document (see attached). The coaches will also solicit observations from 5-8 peers to describing their typical behavior using a 360 multi-source assessment test. The completion of these "informant" reports would be anonymous, but even so, the peers would be asked to agree to a Informed Consent Document on-line (see attached).

The clients recommended by the coaches will be invited to participate in the study. The clients will complete the Informed Consent Document (see attached). They will be asked to complete a set of tests at that moment and again in about a year. Again, one of the tests used both pre and post would be a 360 multisource assessment. Those asked to describe the client's behavior at both times would be identified for the one year of the follow-up period so we can ask the same person to complete the same test at the end to document degree of change, but even so, the person would be asked to agree to a Informed Consent Document on-line (attached).

The specific clients to be recruited for the study should be ones with whom the coach has recently begun a coaching relationship or is about to start one. In other words, the client has not had more than one prior meeting with the coach. If they have been talking for more than a month or met more than once, that client would be excluded from the study. Since the coaches would be recruited using a snowball technique beginning with ICF's and ILCT certified coaches, only coachees NOT enrolled in the Weatherhead School of Management degree programs, or ESADE (a management school in Barcelona within Ramon Llull University) degree programs or taking the LEAD course with coaching at either WSOM or ESADE would be eligible.

Data Collection

A recruitment email to eligible coaches will be sent by the Director of ICLT or Director of Research at ICF. It would direct coaches interested to a url. At the on0line site would be the Informed Consent Document describing the study in more detail and what is expected of them. At that point, they could begin completing tests or inquire further about the study directly to Professor Boyatzis directly. They will be asked to complete a set of surveys and identify 5-8 eligible clients and provide their emails to us. All data we collect for this study from the coachees will remain confidential and will not be shown to anyone, not even the coach with the following proviso: research records will be kept in a locked file and access will be limited to the researchers, the University review board responsible for protecting human participants and regulatory agencies. Data on the Emotional and Social Competence Inventory (ESCI) collected on the coaches would be offered as feedback in a developmental workshop held after Time 2 of the data collection so as to not contaminate results.

Those **Coaches** consenting to participate, will be asked to complete 3 questionnaires on-line at Time 1: Ravens APM Matrices (about 42 minutes); the NEO-FFI (about 10-15 minutes); the Utrecht Engagement Survey (about 5 minutes); and a brief demographics questionnaire asking age, gender, time in the role, etc. This would take under **1 hour** of their time and be collected on-line. They will also be asked to provide names of 8-10 peers who could be approached to complete the ESCI describing the coach's behavior. The coaches will also be asked to provide names and contact information for 5-8 clients. This might occur over a period of a few months as the new client relationships begin.

For those **Clients** consenting to participate, we would ask for them to complete 3 questionnaires directly from us again insuring confidentiality of all responses at ***Time 1 and again at Time 2*** which is about one year after Time 1. The questionnaires and the respective time of completion include:

- the Emotional and Social Competence Inventory (ESCI) (about 20 minutes)
- the Ideal Self Test (about 7 minutes);
- the Relational Climate Survey (about 5 minutes).

Each client would be asked to provide 8-10 names of peers or subordinates to complete the ESCI 360 describing the client's behavior. The same "others" would be asked to complete the ESCI 360 at both Time 1 and Time 2. A total of less than 35 minutes would be asked from the clients and less than 20 minutes from each person completing the ESCI each time. We could provide feedback to the coachee's on their ESCI assessment (not the other instruments) but only AFTER time 2 (see Benefits section).

To summarize, data collection would occur at Time 1 and about one year later at Time 2.

Time 1 Data Collection	Time 2 Data Collection
COACH completes:	
Ravens APM Matrices	
NEO-FFI	
Utrecht Engagement Survey	
brief demographics questionnaire	
Provide names of 8-10 peers for the ESCI-U Other	
Provide names and contact information for 5-8 new clients	
CLIENTs Complete Time 1:	**CLIENTs Complete Time 2**:
ESCI –U (self)	ESCI –U (self)
Provide names of peers, boss and subs for ESCI-U Other	Provide names of peers, boss and subs for ESCI-U Other
Ideal Self Test	Ideal Self Test
Relational Climate Survey	Relational Climate Survey

The proposed model is shown in Figure 1. Copies of the tests or samples of the items are attached.

Confidentiality of the Data

The data will be held as confidential for the duration of the study with the following proviso: research records will be kept in a locked file and access will be limited to the researchers, the University review board responsible for protecting human participants and regulatory agencies.. Once a coach's data has been entered into the database, it will be assigned a random ID number. The name will remain until a sufficient number of clients have completed the Time 1 testing. At that point, the name of the coach will be removed. The names of the clients and their contact information will be kept until data collection at Time 2 is completed. After data collection at Time 2 is completed, random IDs will be assigned to each client who is matched with a specific coach in the database. At that point, all names and identifiers will be removed. A separate file will be created of coaches and clients' emails who request specific benefits offered so they can be fulfilled after Time 2. This list will not be linked to the data files in any way. The coaches will not receive any of the test results about their clients.

Possible Benefits/Contributions to the Coach or Client

Besides helping to advance the field, coaches participating in the study will be offered the following non-monetary benefits. No money shall be offered. If they desire, a coach participating can receive any or all of the following: (1) a copy of the research study once completed; (2) their own ESCI results, not those of their clients, sent after Time 2; (3) participation in a free webinar specifically for participants in this study about the results; and (4) a copy of the new book on coaching by Professors Boyatzis, Smith and Van Oosten (which should be published by the completion of the study).

Besides helping advance the field, clients participating in the study will be offered the following non-monetary benefits. No money shall be offered. If they desire, a client participating can receive any or all of the following: (1) a copy of the research study once completed; (2) their own ESCI results, with both Time 1 and Time 2 data which are not available to the coaches; (3) participation in a free webinar specifically for participants in this study about the results; and (4) a copy of the new book on coaching by Professors Boyatzis, Smith and Van Oosten (which should be published by the completion of the study).

Recruiting Coaches and Clients

An email will be sent to prospective coaches. One wave of recruiting coaches will occur. If a coach agrees on-line to the Informed Letter of Consent, but does not complete the tests, an email will be sent reminding them to complete the tests. A second reminder email may be sent if needed. In a similar way, only two waves of reminder emails would be sent, if needed, to the clients whose names and contact information are provided by the coach. Once a client agrees to the on-line Informed Consent Letter, an email reminder will be sent if they do not complete the tests at Time 1. Just before Time 2, a reminder email will be sent asking them to complete the Time 2 tests. Given the nature of the time elapsed, two more waves of reminder emails may be sent if needed at Time 2.

The recruiting emails for coaches and clients are attached, as well as the emails soliciting participating of anonymous peers for the coaches and peers/subordinates for the clients to complete the 360's.

References

Boyatzis, R.E. (1982). *The competent manager: A model for effective performance.* New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

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Goleman, D. (1998). *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, NY: Bantam Books.

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Spencer, L.M. Jr., & Spencer, S.M. (1993). *Competence at Work: Models for Superior Performance.* NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Figure 1. **The Proposed Model to Be Tested**