

What really happens with goals in coaching?

This is an invitation to participate in a research project, which will have significant value in developing good practice in coaching and mentoring relationships. Our research question relates to the efficacy of setting specific goals at the start of the developmental partnership.

In this study we want you to keep a simple diary of one or more coaching assignments, making short entries after each meeting or coaching session. The diary should describe any discussion you have had about goals. Particular issues we want to explore include:

The first meeting:

- To what extent was the client comfortable with setting goals at this point?
- Is there a sense of purpose to this relationship?
- To what extent was the client clear about the goal(s) they wanted to achieve?
- What pressures were they under to set goals?
- What made them select these goals to work on?
- To what extent were they clear about how they would achieve the goal(s)?
- Who “owns” the goal(s)?
- What level of commitment was there?
- How would you describe their presentation of the goal(s)?
- What thinking had they done previously?
- Did you intuitively feel the goals were the right ones for this person? If not, what did you do about it?
- In what ways, if at all, did the coaching conversation change the goal(s) and/or their perception?
- Are there any goal conflicts here? (For example, between those of the client and those of the organisation?)
- How much emphasis did you place on goal-setting compared with other issues the client wanted to discuss?
- How SMART were the goals set?
- What else struck you as significant in the context of goals and goal management?

Subsequent meetings

- How central to this coaching conversation were the goals initially set?
- Have the goals evolved between coaching sessions?
- Have new goals emerged?
- To what extent has the coaching conversation stimulated the learner to re-assess his or her goals?
- How would you describe the client’s attitude and approach towards the initial goals? Towards any new goals?

- How would you describe your feelings about the influence of goal-focus in this learning conversation?
- What was the balance in this conversation between opening up horizons and focusing down on specific actions?
- To what extent were you able to explore the client's issues in a systemic context (i.e. as part of a matrix of their own and other people's goals)?
- What else struck you as significant in the context of goals and goal management?

At the end of the assignment (or after six months)

- To what extent have the original goals been achieved?
- To what extent have modified goals been achieved?
- At what point in the relationship did you feel goal clarity emerged most fully?
- To what extent do you feel that attention to goals helped the relationship deliver value? How?
- What issues, if any, did you encounter between conflicting goals? How did you manage these?
- What else struck you as significant in the context of goals and goal management?

Ideally, we would like both you and your client to complete a diary entry after each meeting. However, a coach only response will be fine. You can make your entries as long or as short as you wish. We will analyse them for recurrent themes. A report on the study is intended for the EMCC annual conference in 2010.

All the data will be kept confidential. Client or coach names will not be used in any report or analysis without specific permission. We may, however, ask if you would like your name included in a list of participants in the final report.

Feeding back to the research team

We assume that most coaching relationships will have achieved some results within six months, so we would like to liaise with you as follows:

1. *Start of relationship.* Please inform us of date of start and expected completion of the assignment. E-mail to goals@emcc.org
2. *Initial goal record.* Please e-mail your notes on this as you complete them.
3. *Regular session notes.* Again, please e-mail as you complete them.
4. *Six month relationship review.* We would appreciate the data on goal achievement as soon as possible.

Data analysis

In addition to the standard academic thematic analysis, we will be asking a team of coaches to read a batch of records and offer their own impressions and comments. This is a useful way of grounding the conclusions, which emerge from the academic process.