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ImaginativeHR

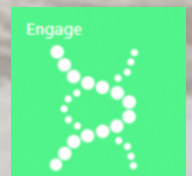
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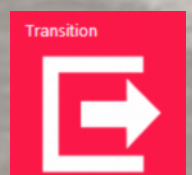
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To take advantage of this offer, please click through to our questionnaire [here](#).
Alternatively type <https://t.co/P9OrcoldMf> into your browser.

Thanks again for your interest in this offer and for taking the time to complete the above questionnaire. We will be in touch to discuss your responses further.

In the event that you would like to make contact with us immediately, please either email: info@imaginativehr.com or call **0845 5484321** – quoting '**Complimentary Career Review offer**'.

Thank you.

The ImaginativeHR team



ImaginativeHR assists organisations to develop leaders and teams via effective executive coaching and to develop enabling coaching cultures. Contact us at info@imaginativehr.com if you would like to learn more about how we can assist you.

Coaching qualifications and accreditations: what are they built on and what do they mean?

(Lindsay Wittenberg – Associate, ImaginativeHR)

Qualifications and accreditations for coaches are becoming bigger and bigger business. Training courses are proliferating, and more and more purchasers of coaching are requiring coach accreditation. However, until recently the benefits and underpinning principles of both qualifications and accreditation have been largely unquestioned, at least in the public domain.

It seems to me that fundamental questions need to be addressed concerning what qualifications and accreditations are actually measuring and assessing. What, therefore, do coaching qualifications and accreditations mean? What are they based on?

Current assessments for qualifications and accreditations

Corporate purchasers of coaching typically look for independently assessed evidence of coaching quality and competence. They seek that evidence from qualifications and from accreditations.

Training and qualifications are offered by independent organisations, coaching consultancies and universities.

Accrediting bodies include professional coaching organisations such as **ICF** (International Coach Federation), **EMCC** (European Mentoring and Coaching Council), **AC** (Association for Coaching), **ILM** (the Institute of Leadership and Management), **APECS** (The Association for Professional Executive Coaching and Supervision) and universities such as **Middlesex University** (London), and the **University of the West of England** (Bristol).

Qualifications and accreditations are recognised as badges of quality - but how do they help us recognise a good or excellent coach? What does quality mean?

The competencies approach

Knowledge and experience alone may have little or nothing to do with what makes for an excellent coach – and yet until now many of the principles underlying coach assessment have been about competencies, and many of the coaching bodies assess coach quality through competency frameworks. The EMCC, for example, offers a quality accreditation - the EIA (European Individual Accreditation) - based on the EMCC's competency framework. The EMCC refers to its competency framework (eight competence categories across four levels) as *'widely recognised, regarded and endorsed within the Coaching and Mentoring Communities ... the 'gold' standard for Coaching and Mentoring against which to benchmark for individuals and coaching and mentoring development programmes.'*

Accreditation with the AC covers nine coaching competencies for all coaches, and an additional three competencies for executive coaches, and the ICF uses eleven core competencies as the foundation for the ICF Credentialing process examination.

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Lawley and Linder-Pelz note that competency-based assessments rest on the principle (and indeed the assumption) that the evaluation of observed behaviour predicts future performance. As a result, many assessments based on competency frameworks could, say the authors, be more accurately called tests of compliance with a model or adherence to a method rather than being a sign of adaptability to the idiosyncracies of the individual client.

For me, as an executive coach with 13 years' post-qualification experience, it's that agility and adaptability to the client, to their individuality and to the specificity of their issues in their context that matters and that - beyond the hygiene factors - are a valuable indication of a coach's quality. Slavish devotion to a model or method is surely nothing more than that – and may say little or nothing about the coach's capacity to meet the client's needs and to deliver responsible, ethical, effective, insightful coaching that enables sustainable change.

A capabilities approach

Bachkirova and Lawton-Smith, of Oxford Brookes University, bring another perspective: they argue that the complexity and unpredictability of coaching may need a new model and that *'competency approaches potentially oversimplify coaching practice and therefore misrepresent it'* (Lawton-Smith, observes in a separate article: *'The effective coach is far more than "a set of skills and techniques"'*) ...

They remark that *'by seeing the coaching engagement as a complex adaptive system, a different conceptual approach to the assessment of coaches is needed; one that focuses on capabilities rather than competencies alone ... A capabilities approach implies an approach to coach training and education that allows the development of the coach in congruence with the individual's characteristics and values, who they are as a person and not only as an opportunity to assimilate a repertoire of competencies'*.

Their capabilities model emphasises critical and reflective capabilities that allow the coach to choose action and goals according to values and an evaluation of a wider external situation. The focus of capabilities is therefore on the freedom that the coach has and not merely on external expectations.

Bachkirova and Lawton-Smith's model for the assessment of coaching capabilities is presented as a quadrant, featuring:

- Knowledge and understanding
- Coaching skills and behaviours
- Developing coaching capability
- Psychological mindedness

Of course, the assessment of capabilities is much more difficult and complex than that of competencies, because the focus is not on the results that the coach achieves, but on his/her ability to opt for an action, choice or behaviour: capabilities do not necessarily have to be expressed.

I have been selected as coach by a potential client by means of a capabilities-based process, and my experience was of being recognised for who I am rather than needing to meet someone's else's demand. It was a satisfying and authentic experience – mirroring the kind of experience we aim to afford to our coaching clients.

As Lawton-Smith says, the more experienced the coach, the less reliant they are on established tools and techniques. Their confidence often results in greater risk taking and more innovation.

This is a theme pursued by Clutterbuck and Megginson in terms of a systemic eclectic approach to coaching: *'These coaches have a very wide array of ways of working and a toolkit amassed from many sources, both within coaching and from very different worlds. They have integrated this into a self-aware, personalized way of being with the client. They exhibit an intelligent, sensitive ability to select a broad approach, and within that approach, appropriate tools and techniques, which meet the particular needs of a particular client at a particular time.'*

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If we are to engage in a more sophisticated way with the purpose of coaching qualifications and accreditations we need to decide what foundations we want them to be built on: what do we want to measure?

The competencies or capabilities debate hasn't arrived a moment too soon. It may not be a simple, binary choice, but purchasers may need to make rather a more nuanced decision about their assessment which takes into account the multiplicity of coaching styles and degrees of maturity, and the multiplicity of coaching needs and contexts.

A collaborative approach by purchasers, training organisations and coaching bodies may be the way forward.

References:

- <http://www.emccouncil.org/eu/en/accreditation> and <https://emccuk.org/standards-ethics/competence-framework/>
- http://www.associationforcoaching.com/media/uploads/accreditation-documentation01/Coach_Compentency_Framework_AC_.pdf
- <http://coachfederation.org/credential/landing.cfm?ItemNumber=2206>
- James Lawley and Susie Linder Pelz (2016): '**Evidence of competency: exploring coach, coachee and expert evaluations of coaching**' in An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice, DOI 10.1080/17521882.2016.1186706
- Tatiana Bachkirova and Carmelina Lawton-Smith: '**From competencies to capabilities in the assessment and accreditation of coaches**' in the International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring Vol. 13, No. 2, August 2015
- Carmelina Lawton-Smith in Coaching at Work 30th Oct 2015 <http://www.coaching-at-work.com/2015/10/30/research-matters-are-competencies-enough/>
- Professor David Clutterbuck and Professor David Megginson: '**Coach maturity: An emerging concept**' <https://www.davidclutterbuckpartnership.com/wp-content/uploads/Coach-maturity.pdf> - Chap 31 '**The Handbook of Knowledge-Based Coaching: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE**' by Leni Wildflower, 2011 publ Jossey-Bass

See more about how organisations assess coaching capability in ImaginativeHR's 2015/16 Coaching Excellence Survey Report [here](#).

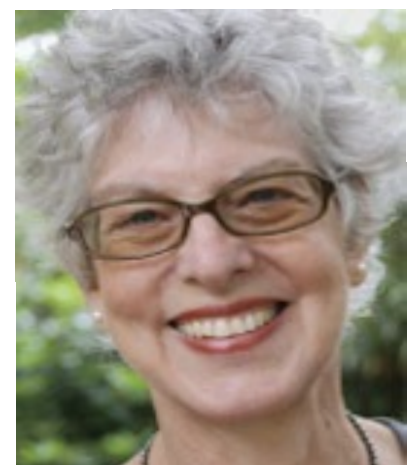
Lindsay Wittenberg is an experienced executive coach, facilitating senior people to become more aware, fulfilled and effective.

Through enabling actionable insights her coaching equips leaders to become who they really are and so to release more of their talent and potential.

Her coaching is underpinned by a psychological approach, by mindfulness, by a systemic perspective and by her belief that we all release our capabilities by being true to who we are and effectively managing what gets in the way of that.

Her professional focus is authentic leadership, career development and cross-cultural effectiveness in contexts of change, pressure and complexity.

She was Highly Commended for '*Coaching at Work's*' 2015 Award in the category '*Best Thought Leadership Article / Series*', for her regular reflection column, which shares her reflections as a coach and highlights issues and themes emerging from her coaching.



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At our discretion, we are currently offering organisations which are (for the first time) considering ImaginativeHR as their outplacement partner, with a complimentary one-to-one programme, delivered comprehensively over 1 month and notionally valued at >£1000, for any single staff member impacted by redundancy or contemplating voluntary redundancy.

Offer includes:

- Initial consultation to compile individual brief and support plan
- One-to-one career coaching, delivered face-to-face or remotely
- Candidate marketing strategy support and guidance
- CV and LinkedIn optimisation support and guidance
- Access to candidate market / employer research and sector / profile recruiter and head-hunter databases
- Proactive candidate marketing (via professional introductions and networking on the candidate's behalf)
- Interview technique support and guidance

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Any support / consultancy which is provided to the individual or sponsoring organisation beyond the above Outplacement support process, will qualify for a **10% discount** on our standard pricing. (Note: this offer implies no obligation). This offer is only open to HR teams who are currently assessing one-to-one outplacement provision for members of full-time staff and we look forward to discussing your broader needs with you.

To take advantage of this offer, for someone in your team / organisation, please click through to our contact page to tell us more about your needs on the contact form provided **here**. Alternatively type <https://t.co/0VwCBBpjHX> into your browser.

Thanks again for your interest in this offer and for taking the time to contact us. We look forward to hearing from you.

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Thank you.

The ImaginativeHR team

ImaginativeHR is a bar raising UK and international employment life-cycle / talent development consultancy which partners HR to creatively align organisational, team & individual interests; delivering services in the following areas:

- **Assessment** - for selection & development, (including a broad range of bespoke behavioural, psychometric and 360 assessment resources)
- **Coaching & mentoring** - executive, virtual & team, (across a broad range of leadership development situations, with strong ROI focus; also empowering HR teams to coach and to develop coaching cultures)
- **Staff engagement** - focus groups, staff surveys, post-survey change facilitation & career management, (with seamless engagement <> healthy / stress-aware workplace <> career self-ownership linkages)
- **Career transition** - career reviews, redeployment & outplacement, (always delivered comprehensively and flexibly – as part of our differentiated / bar-raising approach)

Our client testimonials can be found here.

Alternatively type <https://t.co/S0PllinN9R> into your browser.

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