

choice

the magazine of professional coaching

**Breaking
the Rules!**

Is it time
for the
coaching
paradigm
to expand?

Shattering
the Myths

A Roadmap for
Rule Breaking

Is it Time to
Change Course?

VOLUME 15 • NUMBER 3
CHOICE-ONLINE.COM

Do Great Coaches Break the Rules?

How definitions and history get in the way

By David Goldsmith, BCC, MCC



Over the past 30 years our profession has produced a lot of good coaches and some great ones. Along the way we have worked to codify and define what we do. While there is value in that, I wonder if our desire for rules and structure is impeding the development of great coaches and the evolution of the profession.

Who really sets the rules, anyway? Lots of smart people have worked hard on how to define coaching and how to recognize when good coaching is happening.

Certifying coaches continues to be a work in progress. I know people who are brilliant coaches but aren't certified and wouldn't make it through the certification screen. There are others who hold high levels of certification who just aren't very effective. Most certification protocols focus on method, process and coaching skills versus delivering observable, measurable results for/with the client.

The facts are that the profession of coaching is still very young – only 30 years old with a huge amount of growth in the last 10. I think we are still figuring out exactly what coaching is and there is a wide range of viewpoints.

Much of the definition of coaching is often in relation to therapy, consulting or teaching. I would say that I know that what I do is different than those methodologies and there are times when my coaching could look like it's similar to all of them. Am I breaking the rules? Is this correct? Who can really say? Does it matter, if the client is receiving the outcomes they desire?

As the ICF defines it, the coach's responsibility is to:

- Discover, clarify, and align with what the client wants to achieve
- Encourage client self-discovery
- Elicit client-generated solutions and strategies
- Hold the client responsible and accountable

choice Magazine
proudly presents our

Premium Partners

Be sure to visit their
websites to learn
how they can support
your coaching.

DirectPay

(formerly Practice Pay Solutions)
phone: (800) 326-9897 USA/Canada
email: clientrelations@
directpayinc.com
www.directpayinc.com

MHS Inc. –

Emotional Intelligence

phone: (800) 456-3003 USA/Canada
email: jeremy.tudorprice@mhs.com
www.mhs.com/tap

Sherpa Coaching

University and online based
executive coaching certification
using the proven Sherpa Process
phone: (513) 232-0002 USA
email: info@sherpacoaching.com
www.sherpacoaching.com

Center for Credentialing & Education™ (CCE®)

phone: (336) 482-2856 USA/Canada
email: cce@cce-global.org
www.cce-global.org



perspective

Some pioneers in the profession have focused their skills on bringing out the brilliance that already exists in the client consistent with the definition above. Others have combined a career full of learning and experiences to richly inform their interactions. Sometimes this looks a bit like teaching, sometimes advising, and I wouldn't doubt that a skilled therapist might look at what we do and see many similarities.

Too frequently coaches focus on process, skills and models, which can be sufficient. Others bring a mix of less conventional methods. Are these coaches breaking the rules set up by some group somewhere over the last 30 years?

The fact is that one good question and a great amount of brilliant listening is often amazingly effective for one client while for others, it would fall flat.

Science plays a big part in great coaching. Many coaches really understand how human brains work. Others use a variety of validated assessments to profound effect. We have more research than ever on the efficacy of coaching.

There is also an artistry to great coaching. Just like a great potter will throw thousands of bowls to master the subtleties, the great coach needs a lot of practice using all the skills and processes available. The great coach uses this repetition to transcend skills and become masterful.

To further confuse things, there is the distinction between managers using coaching skills in their work and professional coaches working with a client. Both might look similar however the result can be very different. A manager using coaching skills has a company agenda and may do a better job of reaching that agenda using coaching skills. I'm for this. However, when I work with my clients I don't have the manager's agenda.

We shouldn't define coaching by the

skills that a manager uses in performing his duties. While coaching and therapy can look similar, you won't see managers using therapy skills very frequently in the workplace.

We have many very skilled consultants now adding coaching to their toolbox. Are they coaches? Or are they consultants who occasionally use coaching skills? Too frequently I hear about purchasing executives putting together an RFP for coaching and then wondering how to decide whom to pick. A well-regarded credential and an advanced degree is not a guarantee of effectiveness. How does the buyer know where to find great coaches?

It is essential that our coaches are well trained and then practice a lot of repetitions to master their skills. We learn from every interaction. At the same time, we need to be careful that our certification standards don't overly narrow the definition of coaching. If we set too many rules, we may risk keeping too many good coaches stuck in the skills, process and models box.

I'm concerned that in our quest to define the profession we are impeding great coaching. It's incumbent that we continue to distinguish all that a professional coach does. We have lots of coaches entering the profession and lots of schools training them. We have no shortage of good coaches.

Most long-standing coaches not only fluidly and fluently dance between the distinctions of coaching, consulting, counseling, and training, they also are constantly customizing solutions and approaches for their clients from an eclectic and deep repertoire of methods, processes and skills. The current "rules" don't include this behavior in the usual definitions of coaching.

I think we need more great coaches and less worry about the "rules." Let's not let definition and history get in our way. ●