

NON-DIRECTIVE COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES IN THE COACHING PROCESS*

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Abstract

Background. Coaching is a popular training method known especially for a specific, non-directive communication style. The non-directive character of communication techniques has a clear target – it unblocks, brings out and maximises a coachee's potential without giving ready solutions. Coaching constitutes a frequent subject of research, both theoretical and empirical. It proves its effectiveness in various branches and areas. The coaching process is analysed less frequently, and the analysis of implemented non-directive communication techniques is quite a novelty.

Research aims. The main research aim is to analyse the frequency of the non-directive communication techniques used by coaches in the coaching process.

Methodology. The research was conducted on the basis of the survey method with the use of the questionnaire technique on a group of 100 respondents who took part in the coaching process with at least three sessions and when the coaching process had already been finished.

Key findings. The most frequently used non-directive communication technique in the coaching process is coaching tasks, and the shadow procedure is the least frequent one. The choice of a coach (external coach, internal coach or direct supervisor as a coach) has an influence on the frequency of using particular non-directive communication techniques.

Keywords: coaching, coach, non-directive communication techniques, asking questions, development.

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INTRODUCTION

Coaching is a popular training method – it already has its own history and it is also an area of interest of scientists, as well as business practitioners. Probably because of its popularity and a lack of legal regulations and conditions defining how to become a professional coach (Brennan & Whybrow, 2012, p. 320), it seems that there are some misunderstandings in explaining what coaching is and what coaching is definitely not. There is also a need to highlight the elements that differentiate coaching from other training methods.

The most important coaching characteristics are:

- setting goals that are expected to be the result of the coaching process (Crane, 2001; Dahling et al., 2016; Dembkowski, Eldridge & Hunter, 2006; Ives, 2008; Smither, 2011; Whitmore, 2009; Żukowska 2012a). It should be highlighted that it is not the coach who sets goals – the coach is responsible for proper goal setting,
- asking a coachee questions by a coach (Bresser & Wilson, 2012; Barlow, 2005; Dembkowski, Eldridge & Hunter, 2006; Griffiths, 2005; Griffiths & Campbell, 2009; Mertel, 2010; Rogers, 2010; Wilson, 2011; Żukowska 2012),
- active listening to answers given by a coachee to a coach (Bresser & Wilson, 2012; Bluckert, 2005b; Burdett, 1991; Dembkowski, Eldridge & Hunter, 2006; Griffiths & Campbell, 2009; King & Eaton, 1999),
- giving feedback by a coach to a coachee (Grant, 2013; Dahling et al., 2016; Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999; Marsh, 1992; Wheeler, 2011), especially when a coachee is not able to find answers for the abovementioned questions,
- building a relationship between a coach and a coachee (Bluckert, 2005a; Day, 2010) based on trust, confidentiality, and respect (Boyce, Jackson & Neal, 2010; Whitworth, Kimsey-House, Sandahl & Kimsey-House, 1998).

Analysing the elements above, it turns out that in the coaching process the way a coach communicates with a coachee is definitely an element that differentiates coaching as a training method. Asking questions, active listening and giving feedback are those characteristics that are also communication techniques. These three are the most

popular ones. Meanwhile, there are other communications techniques that can help a coachee to achieve a coaching goal. All of them have a non-directive character – the aim of using them is to motivate a coachee to make plans, take actions and responsibility.

The aim of this article is to analyse non-directive communication techniques in the coaching process existing in the literature and business practice. The frequency of different non-directive coaching communication techniques is presented and analysed with the help of data coming from a sample of 100 coaching participants.

The article consists of the following parts: a brief definition of coaching (as this topic has already been described several times by the author of this paper) and a broad analysis of non-directive coaching communication techniques. Next, the research methods are introduced and the findings are presented. The article finishes with a discussion and conclusions, followed by limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The main coaching assumptions and the role of communication

Coaching is a form of personal development, where a coach helps to realise one's potential. A coach does this by supporting, encouraging, and, most importantly, transferring responsibility for their own development directly to the person who benefits from coaching (Dembkowski, Eldridge & Hunter, 2006). Coaching helps people find more and new professional opportunities, as well as create and learn new skills that will contribute not only to organisational objectives, but also to an employee's individual career goals (Nielsen & Norreklit, after: Čiutienė, Neverauskas & Meilienė, 2010). Coaching is one of the most important of contemporary HRD practices, especially at senior manager and executive level (Joo, 2005).

The abovementioned coaching definitions and characteristics – setting goals, asking questions, active listening, giving feedback and building a relationship – are dedicated to looking for possible solutions that are based on knowledge, skills, experience and potential that a coachee already has. Out of these five, asking questions, active

listening and giving feedback are not only coaching characteristics but also elements of a communication process and they have a special purpose in coaching.

Asking questions is to increase motivation, develop one's way of comprehending things, positively influence a coachee, increase their confidence in their own potential, especially in a situation of change, and help the coachee approach their set goals (Grant & O'Connor, 2010). In practice, particular stages of the coaching process are realised with the help of asking questions, i.e. a coachee defines goals which they would like to achieve (Crane, 2001; Smither, 2011; Dembkowski, Eldridge & Hunter, 2006), as well as analyses the situation they find themselves currently in (Barner, 2006; Grant, 2013; Dembkowski, Eldridge & Hunter, 2006) and, as it is mentioned above, looks for solutions and best options.

Active listening is to promote learning and change (de Haan, Culpin & Curd, 2011) helps to understand a coachee and their situation (Ulrich, 2008). A coach listens to a coachee and develops hunches and hypotheses about unspoken mindsets, presumptions and orientations based on the explicit and implicit language used by a coachee (Marshak, 2004). A coach listens for:

- information a coachee is overtly conveying,
- explicit metaphors, analogies, word images, themes,
- implicit metaphors and images in addition to explicit expressions,
- explaining what is said or emphasised and also for what is not said or accentuated.

Although many specialists consider feedback to be an important characteristic of coaching (Grant, 2013; Dahling et al., 2016; Wheeler, 2011; Dembkowski, Eldridge & Hunter, 2006), it also seems to be a problematic aspect. Feedback explains why behaviours are effective or ineffective, quotes specific examples, allows the person receiving feedback to comment, provides alternative positive behaviours, maintains esteem of those involved (Latham & Marchbank, 1994), but, on the other hand, has the least non-directive character among all communication coaching techniques mentioned here. Feedback may have coach-generated or self-generated character (Griffiths, 2005) and this second option is more non-directive. But there is always a threat that instead of asking questions, a coach will start to give feedback and consequently will turn coaching into mentoring. That is why

feedback should be used when other, more non-directive techniques do not bring solutions. It should be also highlighted that in business practice there are coaches who do not use feedback at all.

It is also important that a coachee should be the author of all the ideas and solutions from the coaching process. A coach is just a kind of guide or “catalyst”. That is why the non-directive coaching communication techniques are so important. The aim of coaching is not so much to offer instant, ready-made solutions, but rather to foster learning and change (de Haan, Culpin & Curd, 2011). It is even highlighted that coaches should avoid using directive approaches (Ellinger, Hamlin & Beattie, 2008). Apart from asking questions, active listening and giving feedback, there are other non-directive coaching communication techniques that can be helpful.

Analysing non-directive coaching communication techniques existing in the literature and business practice, the following non-directive coaching communication techniques can be listed:

- mind-mapping,
- working with scales,
- metaphor,
- creative visualisation,
- empty chair technique,
- role-playing,
- shadow procedure,
- coaching tasks.

All of these techniques are described in the following part of the paper. Nevertheless, one feature should be highlighted: all of those techniques are based on asking questions anyway – there are only different aims and ways of doing that.

In the context of the research, the last element that should be here highlighted is the person of the coach. There are three main possibilities of who may play the role of a coach. It may be:

- external coach – a person who is not employed within the organisation where the coachee is employed, usually he/she is a kind of freelancer, consultant or is an employee of an HR agency,
- internal coach – a person who is employed within the organisation where the coachee is employed, but is not the coachee’s direct supervisor,
- direct supervisor of the coachee.

There is a discussion in the literature as well as in business practice concerning the advantages and disadvantages of those three possibilities (Rock & Donde, 2008; Vickers & Bavister 2007; Rzycka, 2011). It is also the subject of the author's other paper, so it will not be discussed in detail here. Nevertheless, taking into account the needs of further analyses, it was necessary to mention the possibilities in this area.

Selected non-directive coaching communication techniques

There are many techniques that are used in different areas of management, problem solving or adult people development processes. The techniques described below can be successfully used in the coaching process.

Mind-mapping is a technique created by T. and B. Buzan. It is intended to develop thinking with both hemispheres of the brain and encourage learners to create a map of what they are focused on by using words, images, pictures, and colours (Thorne, 2001). Filling an initially clean sheet of paper with images, colourful drawings, and symbols in a free and non-linear manner is intended to activate one's imagination, creative thinking, to transcend well-known patterns and worn off ideas. In case of using mind-mapping during coaching, both the coach and the coachee can draw a map. They can also draw one map together. Another possible solution is that the coach is the one who draws a map but actually he or she draws only things that are communicated by the coachee or are the answers to questions posed by the coach. It is important that firstly ideas can by no means be limited, while later on, mapped ideas should be evaluated and verified. Such a mind map can also be an action plan (especially when next to ideas there are dates which are a kind of deadlines) or a summary of each session (with a possibility to draw on the same map on the next session). Using mind-mapping in a wide context of a human resources development process is mentioned in literature (Robinson, 1984), as well as in the coaching process (de Haan, Culpin & Curd, 2011).

Working with scales serves, on the one hand, to determine the place where a coachee currently is (e.g. by asking to assess the level of competence), and on the other hand, to visualise changes in a coachee's behaviour as the process goes by. It can also visualise the level a

coachee is aiming to achieve. This technique can be introduced in the coaching process by the application of the following steps (see Kreyenberg, 2010, pp. 106–107):

- introducing scales – by asking a coachee to imagine a scale describing their progress at the moment. A 1 to 10 scale is often used, although a percentage scale (1–100%) also happens to be used. It is useful to give the scales titles (e.g. the name of the competence or skill to be developed),
- desired and current situation evaluation – a coachee’s description (definition) of extreme points (i.e. behaviours corresponding to point 1 and to point 10), as well as the level of evaluation of their skills at the moment,
- analysing various points of the scale – it consists in asking a coachee about behaviours, skills, actions at different points of the scale (other than the extreme ones and the ones identified by a coachee),
- changes – the stage where a coach asks about the first signs of progress, changes, and small steps forward (e.g. what a coachee can do to move a step forward, what they need more time for, and what additional conditions should be met).

Creation of scales, defining their points, evaluating the present point, and moving along the scale facilitates the analysis of a coachee’s behaviours, and optimal behaviours (at level 10), directions of activities, visualising the target point (which does not have to be 10), rooting conclusions in the mind, as well as (which seems to be essential) becomes motivational with some progress made, which means physical movement up the scale.

Metaphor, although usually applied in the field of literature, may constitute one more technique used in coaching (de Haan, Bertie, Day & Sills, 2009; de Haan, Culpin & Curd, 2011; Robinson, 2010; du Toit, 2007). When the linguist, G. Lakoff and the philosopher, M. Johnson, published the book *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980, they initiated a revolution in the area of cognitive linguistics, up to then dominated by the generativist theories of Noam Chomsky (Pieśkiewicz & Kołodkiewicz, 2011, p. 208). They wrote:

The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another. In all aspects of life (...) we define our reality in terms of metaphors and then proceed to act on the basis of the metaphors. We draw inferences, set goals, make commitments,

and execute plans, all on the basis of how we in part structure our experience, consciously and unconsciously, by means of metaphor.

Metaphors are significantly more common in everyday life than it used to be thought. It is almost impossible to describe internal states, abstract ideas, or complex concepts without applying metaphor (Tompkins & Lawley, online). Whatever a person is saying, seeing, hearing, feeling, or doing, as well as what he or she is imagining, can be expressed and understood by means of metaphor. Application of metaphor provides a possibility of understanding oneself better (providing an answer to the following question: what this problem really is for me), and also of understanding their learner better by a coach: how is a given situation or problem perceived by a coachee (Vickers & Bavister, 2007). Z. Kovecses conducted a study in order to establish six most frequently applied sources of metaphor in everyday life (Pieśkiewicz & Kołodkiewicz, 2011):

- the human body (including health and sickness),
- living beings (e.g. animals, plants),
- anthropogenic objects (e.g. buildings, machines, tools),
- human actions (e.g. games, sport, war, money, cuisine, food),
- environment (e.g. heat, cold, light),
- physics (e.g. space, movement).

However, as many specialists note, one should apply this technique very carefully in the coaching process. This stems from the fact that whereas for one person (coachee) a given metaphor means one thing, a coach can see something completely opposite. A communicational mismatch arises. That is why very often additional questions need to be asked by a coach to make sure about the same understanding of metaphors.

Visualisation has been used to help leaders see themselves working through difficult situations. Other areas also use visualisation to help overcome challenges (Sherman, 2008). Creative visualisation is the art of using mental images and affirmations to bring about positive changes in one's life (Gawain, after: Vickers & Bavister, 2007, p. 187). In coaching, it is a technique where a coach asks a coachee to imagine a specific situation (e.g. effects of the process, or goal attainment). It is important that a coachee's description be as detailed as possible (describing both visual aspects, sounds and smells, and so be based on the senses and feelings while describing emotions). A coach may

ask a coachee to envision a well-performed difficult conversation with a client (if the goal of coaching is to develop competences related to sales skills). This technique is based on the belief that thoughts have a tremendous power. The brain cannot distinguish between something that is remembered and something that is imagined because in both cases it uses the same neural pathways. Therefore, in the future, when a coachee finds themselves in a given situation and recreates the memory described in the course of the meeting, there is a chance that they will follow the marked out path, instead of following the earlier, unsuccessful schemes (and thus they will change their behaviour). Visualisation is also designed to further motivate coachees to deal with challenging situations.

The empty chair technique owes its genesis to areas related psychotherapy (Paivio & Greenberg, 1995; Conoley et al., 1983; Greenberg & Foerster, 1996) and in particular to the person of F. Persl of the Gestalt school of therapy (Rogers, 2010). It is based on the assumption that through the physical change of a perspective, and looking at things from – literally – a different point of view one can make useful and meaningful reflections, leading in consequence to a change in behaviour. It consists in asking a coachee to occupy an additional, empty chair, identical to the one this coachee is sitting on. Then, this coachee is asked to imagine they are looking at themselves, but from a different point of view. Questions may arise as to the person the coachee can see – appearance, mood, body language of that person (i.e. theirs). A certain variant of this technique is also possible, namely a situation in which the “empty chair” is taken by a person whose opinion, mind, emotions, and feelings may be important to a coachee (supervisor, employees, friends, wife/husband). For example, if a coachee is a manager who is coached in the area of leadership skills, their coach may place in the “empty chair” one of that coachee’s subordinates. By asking a series of questions (e.g. “Imagine your subordinate is sitting in that chair – how do you think they felt the last time you gave them feedback?”, “What would they like to tell you?”) the coach wants to show the perspective of another person. This technique is especially recommended in situations where a coachee is significantly attached to their way of thinking. A coachee gains a new perspective, getting to know another person’s point of view, or a different mindset than theirs.

Role-playing is one of the most effective techniques that allows one to acquire new, or develop and consolidate existing skills in practice.

This method is less concerned with memorisation or teacher-centred approaches, but more concerned with active participation and learners' sensitisation to new roles and behaviours, it opens up more possibilities of associating enacted roles and behaviours to real-life situations thereby making sense of learning (Sogunro, 2004). This technique should be based on previously prepared scenarios (i.e. roles). One role is planned for the so-called actor who pretends to be e.g. a problematic customer or a non-motivated employee. An actor is usually a coach. Another role describes a situation to a coachee. This person's task is to present a way of acting that they think is best in the situation described. Each person is given some time to prepare and then they are asked to act out their roles. With direct experience through role-playing, much is learned by doing, introspecting, observing and understanding of the learning activity (Sogunro, 2004; Eitington, 1989). A staged conversation can be a valuable material for self-reflection and learning to ask questions (e.g.: How would you rate this interview and what did you like about it? What reaction do you think your words [quote] will trigger?) during a discussion, and therefore, it can provide the elements that facilitate a change in the current way of thinking and behaving. Though it is a more strongly directive technique than those proposed so far, in some cases (such as working on specific behaviours) it is advantageous to use. A key element is feedback for a coachee. Each difficult situation can be played out twice – once before feedback, and secondly, after feedback and comments, or parts of a lecture. In addition, preparation of scenarios is a very important aspect. They should reflect the real, difficult situations that have already taken place, or those that are likely to happen. Apart from coaching (Wilson, 2004; de Haan, Culpin & Curd, 2011), role-playing can be also used as a self-standing training method or during workshops (Sogunro, 2004).

The shadow procedure is a method where a coach takes part as an observer in a real, implemented in real-time, event or task, where a coachee performs their activities. It gives a coach an opportunity to observe a coachee's actual work, to respond to the situation and actually observed behaviour, not, as in the case of role-playing, in artificial conditions. It is important that a coachee is aware of being observed. It is important, though, that this technique should not be applied without a coachee's awareness and consent. It is also worth considering how a coach is presented in a situation such as while taking part in a direct commercial business situation (e.g. sales meeting).

As the expert opinions indicate (Rogers, 2010), total honesty is the only solution. A coach should clearly define their role in relation to a coachee and to others – as an observer, or a person assisting in development, or just as a coach. There is no doubt that there must be a specific intended use of a given technique (e.g. the development of a given area it is to help with). Observation is so vitally important. It is a source of information on conditions, persons who a coachee works with (which is extremely valuable in situations where the process is guided by an external coach). After the process of observation, a coach may ask about insights, feelings, and/or self-evaluation. They can use one of the previously described techniques (such as a scale) and then the next step will be to provide feedback to a coachee. It is important, however, to determine the observed strengths and clarify areas for development that require further work. It should be also highlighted that there is a coaching variant known as shadow coaching, where a coach observes a coachee's activities all the time and later on gives feedback on what they have observed and talks to a coachee (Żukowska, 2012b; Bennewicz, 2010; Dolot, 2014). In this case, there is rather no other communication technique (except for questions and active listening) and being a shadow is a coaching dominant activity.

The last technique is coaching tasks. This technique is based on the basic coaching assumption that a coachee's development takes place not only during coaching sessions but also between them. The aim of coaching tasks is to implement in day-to-day business situations behaviours and activities discussed during sessions (so in business practice) and facilitate achieving the coaching goal. At least two aspects are vital here:

1. motivation that is generated during the coaching process should be used also between sessions,
2. a coachee can gain new experience between sessions, which may be the area of interest and dialogue during the next session.

Both – a coachee as well as a coach – could be the initiator and author of coaching tasks. A coachee is a performer. A coach must take responsibility for an adequate level of difficulties of a coaching task. The way of dealing with it may also be discussed during a preceding session. The deadline of coaching tasks is well known – it is the next coaching session.

In summary to the above considerations, it is worth noting that these non-directive communication techniques can be used in different

combinations, but as far as coaching is concerned they are implemented when a coachee already has some knowledge and experience, but cannot or does not want to fully exploit them. They can also be used where a coachee acts routinely, instead of seeking to develop their competences in relation to a constantly changing environment.

The above analysis of the non-directive communication techniques that may be used in the coaching process leads to posing the following research question: what is the frequency of different non-directive communication techniques in the coaching process?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of the research was the analysis of the non-directive communication techniques in the coaching process found in the literature and business practice. It should be highlighted that although the non-directive communication techniques are described in the literature, as well in the context of development, particularly in coaching, there is no scientific research in the area of the frequency of their use in the coaching process. Thereupon the results of the present research fill some of the gap.

To achieve the abovementioned goal, at the very beginning, there was an inquiry into Polish as well as international literature which served as a theoretical basis for an empirical analysis. Later on, secondary sources of information were used. Finally, to obtain information from primary sources, a new empirical research was conducted. The research was conducted on the basis of the survey method with the use of the questionnaire technique. A web-based questionnaire that could be completed in about 20 minutes was prepared. It contained mainly close-ended questions, but there were also open-ended ones. The choice of a research sample was made with a clear purpose. Only those who took part in the coaching process with at least three sessions, provided that the coaching process was already finished could participate in the research. The purpose of this kind of assumptions was to be sure that the coaching most important characteristics (proper goal setting, asking questions, active listening, feedback, building a relationship) as well as the abovementioned non-directive communication techniques were possible to experience by a coachee. The literature does not precise the appropriate amount of coaching sessions as coaching is defined

as a process, but at least three meetings seem to give an opportunity to experience the coaching process by a coachee.

As previously mentioned, 100 respondents took part in the research, where higher percentage were women (60%) than men. The respondents held managerial (61%) as well as specialist (39%) job positions. As far as the educational background was concerned, a dominant group consisted of respondents with a Master's degree (79%). Respondents with a Bachelor's degree constituted 10% and with secondary education 11% of the sample. In terms of age, the sample presented the following values: 47% persons aged 26–35, 40% persons aged 36–45, 8% persons aged up to 25 and 4% persons aged 46–55. Respondents aged 56 and over constituted the smallest group (1%). Respondents' professional experience was also analysed. The dominant group were respondents with 6–10 years of experience (32%), than those with more than 15 years of experience (23%), later on those with up to 5 years of experience (21%). The least numerous group of respondents were those with 11–15 years of experience (20%).

RESEARCH RESULTS

All of the coaching characteristics describing coaching in the literature and presented in the theoretical part of this paper – proper goal setting, asking questions, active listening, feedback, building a relationship – were examined in the research. Analysing the results, it can be seen that all of them were present in most coaching processes, where building a relationship was the most frequent and feedback from a coach was the least frequent characteristic (Table 1).

Table 1. Frequency of the coaching characteristics in the area of communication

Coaching characteristics	Frequency (%)
Proper goal setting	77
Asking questions	81
Active listening	85
Feedback	67
Building a relationship	89

Source: own research.

The respondents were asked two more questions referring to the area of the coaching characteristics:

1. which of the abovementioned coaching characteristics was most helpful in achieving their coaching goals (analysing the coaching process the respondents have already experienced),
2. which of the abovementioned coaching characteristics they think is, in general, most helpful in achieving a coaching goal (it was a hypothetical question – the respondents were asked to imagine the best coaching process from their perspective).

During the research, the respondents were asked to allocate 100 points to the abovementioned elements, assessing at the same time their influence on their goal achievement (separately for the past and a hypothetical coaching process).

The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The importance of the coaching characteristics for a coachee’s goal achievement for the past and a hypothetical coaching process

Coaching characteristics	Coaching characteristic most helpful in achieving coaching goals – analysing the coaching process the respondents have already experienced (%)	Coaching characteristic most helpful in achieving coaching goals – analysing a hypothetical coaching process the respondents would like to experience (%)
Proper goal setting	22	20
Asking questions	27	28
Active listening	19	19
Feedback	16	17
Building a relationship	16	16

Source: own research.

After converting all points for percentage, it can be seen that in both cases (the past and a hypothetical coaching process) asking questions (it was formulated in the questionnaire as “thought-provoking questions”) was and would be the most expected and appreciated coaching characteristic. In both cases, building a relationship seems to be the least important factor.

An analysis of the frequency of the non-directive communication techniques was the crucial part of this research. As it is presented in Table 3, the frequency of other non-directive communication techniques

in the coaching process was lower than in case of those most popular coaching characteristics but still high in some examples. Among them, coaching tasks were the most popular technique and the shadow procedure was the least popular one.

Table 3. Frequency of using other non-directive communication techniques in coaching

Non-directive communication techniques	Frequency (%)
Mind-mapping	30
Working with scales	42
Metaphors	40
Creative visualisation	61
Empty chair technique	26
Role-playing	39
Shadow procedure	13
Coaching tasks	66

Source: own research.

The frequency of the non-directive communication techniques was also analysed taking into consideration the choice of a coach. As it was mentioned in the theoretical part of this paper, there are three main possibilities: a direct supervisor, an inner coach (employed within an organisation), an external coach (not employed within an organisation). Before analysing the frequency of using each non-directive communication technique in coaching by a different coach, the frequency of each coach in the coaching process should be presented. The most frequent situation was that a coach was not employed in the company where a coachee worked – external coach (60%). Coaching was conducted by an internal coach in 21% of cases, and by a supervisor as a coach in 19% of cases.

The results are presented in Table 4.

Analysing the results presented, it seems that coaching tasks are the most popular non-directive communication technique in the coaching process among all types of coaches. In case of a situation where there is an external coach, creative visualisation is also the most popular technique (37%) and takes the first place ex aequo with coaching tasks. An external coach uses the scales technique more frequently,

whereas an internal coach and a direct supervisor as a coach use creative visualisation more frequently. In case of an internal and an external coach, the shadow procedure is the least popular technique. In case of a direct supervisor as a coach the shadow procedure takes the fifth place and the least popular technique is working with scales.

Table 4. Frequency of the non-directive communication techniques used in coaching by particular coaches

Who was the coach	Non-directive communication techniques used in coaching							
	Mind-mapping	Working with scales	Metaphors	Creative visualisation	Empty chair technique	Role-playing	Shadow procedure	Coaching tasks
Direct supervisor	3	2	11	13	5	10	7	14
Internal coach	7	9	7	11	8	5	1	15
External coach	20	31	22	37	13	24	5	37

Source: own research.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Although coaching methodology is definitely adjusted to adult people development process, although the literature about coaching is impressive, in business practice coaching has different also negative opinions. That is why coaches' environment should pay special attention to the quality of coaching process and its effectiveness. Meanwhile it should be highlighted that none of the coaching characteristics was present in all coaching processes. Analysing the coaching characteristics more profoundly, goal setting shall be analysed first. Coaching is a goal-oriented training method. Lack of goal setting (23% of coaching processes) may signify that some coachees did not know the reason of their coaching sessions and – what is worse – they had no idea which goals they were supposed to achieve. It is not a coach who sets goals, but a coach is still responsible for appropriate goal formulation. It is also crucial that goals should be properly set. According to different goal setting methods, also in the context of the coaching process, goals

should be among others: measurable, time-bound, realistic/achievable, specific. A coach is the one who takes responsibility for it. It should be also highlighted that coaching as every employees' development method should bring measurable results. It is impossible to measure the results without setting proper goals and analysing if they were achieved.

Among all coaching characteristics, building a relationship between a coach and a coachee was the most frequent one. This element ensures an honest, open and fruitful dialogue between a coach and a coachee. It is also great foundation for using other non-directive and not so popular, maybe even odd, communication techniques. It should be highlighted that using techniques, like e.g. empty chair or creative visualisation requires real openness and goodwill from a coachee.

Among all coaching characteristics in the area of communication, active listening occupied the first place (85%). Although asking questions differentiates coaching from other training methods, active listening seems to have the most non-directive character. It should be also taken into consideration that (as it was mentioned in the theoretical part of this paper) although feedback is a part of the coaching process, it is of the least non-directive character and there are coaches who deliberately do not use this element of communication, so its less frequent use is definitely acceptable.

The importance of a non-directive character of coaching can be seen through the analysis of the past and a hypothetical (preferred) coaching process, where asking questions was in both cases the most important element in the context of achieving goals. In a hypothetical coaching process, the best the respondents would like to have, asking questions was even slightly more important. The results show how significant is asking thought-provoking questions for coaches in the context of achieving goals.

It is interesting that the structure of answers in case of the past and a hypothetical (preferred) coaching process was very similar (there is a maximum 2% of difference). The conclusion may be that the respondents were satisfied with coaching they had experienced and with the structure of the coaching process.

The crucial part of this research was an analysis of the frequency of the non-directive communication techniques in coaching. Popularity of coaching tasks should be appraised positively – they sustain the coaching process between sessions. Thanks to coaching tasks

a coachee engages within a process even more. The results of coaching tasks from one session may be discussed during next coaching session. It means that different challenges and issues may be analysed and work out with a coach. If a coachee enjoys the autonomy of realising these tasks, this technique seems to have an even more non-directive character. Creative visualisation (the second place) is a technique where not only looking for solutions is important but also motivating a coachee is valid. It can be done by e.g. creating an image of a situation (emotions, surrounding) after achieving a coaching goal. Creative visualisation also helps to overcome hardships by preparing for them (visualising them and looking for solutions). It should be highlighted that both techniques were present in more than a half of coaching processes.

Quite astonishing is the fact that the shadowing procedure is so rarely used. For a coach it is a very useful technique where they can observe a coachee in real day-to-day business situations. The first reason may lie in the fact that in this research coaching was realised by external coaching in vast majority (60%). Being a shadow by an external coach may encounter some difficulties, e.g. answering customers', business partners' questions who the coach is. It may be a kind of unnatural situation for both: a coach and a coachee. There is also a threat in this kind of situation (specially in case of an external coach, where a coach observes for a specific time period) that a coachee's behaviours may not be natural (they know that they are observed).

Analysing the frequency of the non-directive communication techniques in the context of a coach type (taking into consideration the frequency of each coach type in coaching), it should be highlighted that all coaches use all non-directive communication techniques. Nevertheless, an external coach uses them more frequently than other coaches (internal and direct supervisor ones). It may result from the fact that an external coach should have the awareness that coaching sessions are devoted only to a coachee and their issues and they concentrate only on this. An external coach may also be better prepared for this kind of training. Coaching realised by an internal coach or a supervisor as a coach may be conducted "next to" day-to-day business issues (in fact, a coaching goal was always set when a coach was external, but not always when there was an internal coach or a direct supervisor). Internal coach may have less time for coaching as they are engaged in the wide variety of different internal issues. Probably the shadow

procedure (the least frequently used in coaching by an external and an internal coach) is a more convenient and a more natural method (a kind of a part of day-today cooperation) for a direct supervisor as a coach.

The paper reveals the frequency of more and less popular non-directive communication techniques in coaching. It should be highlighted that although there is not even one coaching characteristic that is present in each coaching process, the range of communication techniques in coaching is wide and the frequency of their usage is high.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There are limitations to the present study which should be acknowledged. The first one is lack of analysis of coaches themselves. On the grounds of type of coach and coaching process as well as frequency of non-directive coaching techniques an interesting direction of further research may be also an analysis of methodical, educational and practical background of coaches and the quality of coaching process they deliver. The coaching process was analysed from a coachee's perspective, but it would be an additional advantage to know who a coach was in terms of age, education, experience in coaching and in a broad sense in business (e.g. analysing if a coach has only specialist or also managerial experience). Maybe there is some correlation between a coach's age, education or experience and communication techniques used in the coaching process. It may be a further research area.

Another limitation of the presented studies is a lack of the coachees' opinion on the usage of each non-directive coaching technique. Some of the abovementioned non-directive techniques may be assessed by a coachee as odd or strange, they may even cause communication conflicts or uncomfortable feelings (e.g. the empty chair technique, creative visualisation – especially if a coachee was asked for sensual perception – metaphors). Because the results presented here are part of broader research, a decision was made that there is no possibility of asking more questions in the area of communication, but it might constitute an interesting material for further research.

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TECHNIKI KOMUNIKACJI NIEDYREKTYWNEJ W COACHINGU

Abstrakt

Tło badań. Coaching jest popularną metodą szkolenia pracowników i wyróżnia się na tle innych ze względu na niedyrektywny charakter komunikacji. Niedyrektywny charakter komunikacji ma jasno określony cel – jest nim odblokowanie, wydobywanie i maksymalizowanie potencjału tkwiącego w coachowanym pracowniku, zamiast dawania gotowych rozwiązań. Coaching jest częstym tematem badań naukowych, zarówno tych o charakterze teoretycznym, jak i empirycznym. Udowadnia się jego skuteczność w różnych branżach i obszarach. Sam przebieg coachingu analizowany jest rzadziej, a przedstawienie wykorzystywanych niedyrektywnych technik komunikacji stanowi swego rodzaju *novum*.

Cel badań. Głównym celem artykułu jest analiza częstotliwości wykorzystywanych w coachingu niedyrektywnych technik komunikacji.

Metodologia. Badania zrealizowano na podstawie metody badań sondażowych, narzędzie badawcze stanowił kwestionariusz ankiety. W badaniu wzięło udział 100 respondentów, których proces coachingu obejmował przynajmniej trzy sesje i został już zakończony.

Kluczowe wnioski. Najczęściej wykorzystywaną techniką komunikacji niedyrektywnej były zadania coachingowe, a najrzadziej procedura cienia. To, kto jest coachem (coach zewnętrzny, coach wewnętrzny czy bezpośredni przełożony w roli coacha), ma wpływ na częstotliwość wykorzystywania poszczególnych technik komunikacji niedyrektywnej.

Słowa kluczowe: coaching, coach, techniki komunikacji niedyrektywnej, zadawanie pytań, rozwój.