

OLSEN, CATHERINE M., Ph.D., August 2005

COUNSELING AND HUMAN  
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

POTENTIAL COACHING CLIENTS AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF HELPFUL  
COACHING BEHAVIORS: A Q-METHODOLOGICAL STUDY (141 pp.)

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The purpose of this research study was to investigate the perceptions of middle managers, in a multimedia corporation, regarding their perceptions of helpful coaching behaviors.

To date, much of the literature concerning executive coaching has focused on the coach as expert, with a structured format. Based in modernist thought, this approach stresses the use of objective data and the expertise of the coach to assess for and plan intervention. Another perspective, based in postmodern thought, embraces the concepts of subjective experience and multiple realities. This research explored the perceived deficit of knowledge regarding potential coachees' beliefs of helpful coaching behaviors. Q Methodology, chosen to provide the framework for studying subjective data, is a process that examines relationships among people.

Phase I of the study began with interviewing nine middle managers, in the multimedia corporation, regarding their perceptions of helpful coaching behaviors. From the interviews and related literature, 47 items were constructed and were used as the Q sort items in Phase II of data collection. To complete the Q sorts, 47 middle managers, in

the same multimedia corporation, volunteered to rate their perceptions of helpful coaching behaviors. The 47 items were sorted, on a continuum of least (-4) to most (+4) helpful, with 0 considered to be neutral.

The 47 Q sorts were correlated, factor analyzed, and their factor scores computed using the PQ Method 2.11 computer program (Schmolck & Atkinson, 2000). Five factors emerged, respectively presented, with the following themes for preferences in coaching: directive, collaborative, pragmatic, integrative, and facilitative.

Individuals on two factors preferred a Modernist approach of the more traditional, direct, and company-oriented coaching. Individuals on the other three factors indicated postmodern preferences based on collaborative- or facilitative-based coaching techniques. The results of the study suggest that preferences for a variety of coaching styles exist, and further research within different corporate cultures is recommended.

The data-evidenced facilitative and collaborative preferences for coaching may suggest a role for counseling in the executive coaching field. However, as postmodern thought upholds the value of multiple realities, this is but one possibility among many regarding coaching preferences.