



Behavioural contracting

Gladeana McMahon

A written contract takes the guesswork out of the coaching relationship.

In coaching, there are a variety of professional issues that have to be taken into account, and the most important of these is often seen as that of **contracting**.

For those coaches who work in a life/personal coaching context, a coaching contract simply means setting out clearly the terms and conditions relevant to the coaching offered, the client's personal agenda for coaching, and types of review and evaluation or outcome measures to be used.

Working in an organisational coaching context means that contracting has to take into account the needs of the organisation as well as those of the individual being coached. The sponsoring organisation is paying and, understandably, wants to know that the coaching work will add to the productivity and profitability of both the individual and the organisation.¹

When working for organisations, a coach will usually be approached by one or more of:

- the line manager;
- an HR representative;

- the individual, if they have sufficient authority to authorise such an activity.

Prior to using any form of contracting process, it is in the interests of all parties to set out clearly the terms and conditions relating to the coaching and the kind of outcomes desired by all parties.² This can be best achieved by compiling a simple terms and conditions information sheet covering details such as your cancellation policy, pricing, professional issues such as confidentiality, supervision, membership of professional bodies and relevant codes of ethics and practice – as well as any other information the coach believes it is essential for the client to know.

The behavioural contract

Those who use a behavioural contract do so because of their conviction that it is in the best interests of all parties to ensure the desired coaching outcomes are agreed at the beginning of the coaching process.

Once the contract has been agreed, the coach and client design

the journey to be taken to reach the agreed outcomes.

Transparency is the key to this part of the process; the more explicit matters are made, the less likely are the chances of disappointment for the client. When working in an organisational context, a behavioural contract is a protective mechanism for the coach as it protects the coach and the client from being made scapegoats for political reasons.

The purpose of a behavioural contract is to ensure that the overall objectives of the coaching work are stated clearly in behavioural terms and measurable outcomes.³

Key learning points

- ◆ Behavioural contracting helps ensure that the coach, client and any third parties are clear about the outcomes required from the coaching process.
- ◆ All aspects of human emotion can be turned into a clear behavioural outcome.
- ◆ A written contract can be a useful tool when undertaking a behavioural contract.

Organisational sign-off

Corporate sponsor name: _____

Date: _____

Coaching client name: _____

Date: _____

Coach name: _____

Date: _____

Individual sign-off

Client name: _____

Date: _____

Coach name: _____

Date: _____

Summary

A behavioural contract aims to ensure that everyone involved in the coaching process is clear about expectations, outcomes and delivery. Many coaches find behavioural contracting a challenge, and this may be due more to a lack of practice than to any fault of the process itself.

Association for Coaching

The AC is an independent professional body formed in 2002 to promote best practice, and to raise awareness and standards across the UK and Ireland.

It has a growing membership, and it has produced a code of ethics and a range of information sheets on everything from choosing a coach to continued professional development – as well as offering some highly successful continued professional development events. As one of the leading professional bodies in the UK, the AC has a diverse membership of executive, business, personal/life, speciality and group coaching.

Website:

www.associationforcoaching.com

Fully completed behavioural contract for an individual

Client name: Sue Joseph

Coach name: Jane Helper

Date of initial meeting: 10.01.05

Coaching objectives

- 1 To feel more confident in myself.
- 2 To be more assertive with others.

Outcome measurements

- 1 To identify my negative thinking style and the ways in which this holds me back, and to be able to demonstrate specific identifiable counter-measures that I am able to apply to a variety of situations at work and in my personal life.
- 2 By the end of the coaching I will be able to identify and use a range of assertiveness techniques and demonstrate situations in which I have used these techniques.

Number of sessions agreed: 6

Contract value: £300.00

Additional information: None

Feedback procedures

- 1 A formal review will take place during session three.

Confidentiality

Whilst recognising the need for discretion and confidentiality, all parties agree to take into account all aspects relating to the law and duty of care.

Additional agreements/details (if any): _____

Not applicable

The signatures below indicate:

Agreement to abide by the terms and conditions supplied by Gladeana McMahon Associates.

Client name: Sue Joseph

Date: 10.1.05

Coach name: Jane Helper

Date: 10.1.05

References

- 1 Janice Caplan, *Coaching for the Future*, CIPD, 2003.
- 2 Suzanne Skiffington and Perry Zeus, *Behavioral Coaching: How to build Sustainable Personal and Organisational Strength*, McGraw Hill, 2003.
- 3 Michael Neenan and Windy Dryden, *Life Coaching, a Cognitive-behavioural Approach*, Brunner-Routledge, 2002.
- 4 Tony Chapman, Bill Best and Paul Van Casteren, *Executive Coaching: Exploding the Myths*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Gladeana McMahon has been listed as one of the UK's top ten coaches by the Independent on Sunday. She is a certified coach, BACP-accredited counsellor and BABCP-accredited cognitive-behavioural psychotherapist who is UKCP and UKRC registered. Gladeana is also a certified Neuro Linguistic Programming master practitioner who is a fellow and vice-president of the Association for Coaching, British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, Institute of Management Specialists and Royal Society of Arts. She is an internationally published author, broadcaster and trainer of coaches who works as an executive and personal development coach.

- Telephone: +44 (0) 20 8852 4854
- E-mail: gladeana@dircon.co.uk
- Website: www.gladeana.com



Agree desired outcome

at the start of the coaching process

Setting the scene

Whether the coach is meeting an individual client for the first session, or whether the first meeting is with both the client and the organisational representative sponsoring the coaching, it is important to make sure that there is an understanding of the process.

In a three-way organisational scoping meeting, the coach may take on more than one role by acting as a facilitator or mediator if appropriate. It is therefore important that the coach is clear and comfortable with the variation that can occur during the first meeting – which you could call an ‘assessment of needs’ meeting.⁴

If working with an individual client the coach may state:

- *By the end of this meeting we will have agreed the overall objectives of the coaching process, as well as the specific outcome measurements to be used to evaluate the success of the coaching programme.*

However, when meeting with the client and their manager, the coach may state:

- *The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that we will have agreed the overall objectives of the coaching process, as well as the specific outcome measurements to be used to evaluate the success of the coaching programme. These outcomes will be those that will be worked on in the one-to-one coaching sessions, and it is therefore important that all parties are clear about and comfortable with what we agree.*

Part 1 – administration

The first part of the contract outlines who is involved and the date of the initial meeting where the outcomes were agreed.

Examples of individual and organisational contracting follow.

Organisational information

Organisation name: Joe Bloggs and Company
Corporate sponsor name: John Anybody
Corporate sponsor position: Chairman

Individual client information

Client name: Jackie Smith
Coach: Julie wouldliketohelp
Date of initial meeting: 10.01.05

Part 2 – objective setting

This part of the process sees the coach asking those present what is wanted from the coaching process.

A coaching objective is an overall statement or goal, and is characterised by more general statements, such as ‘I would like to be more effective with my communication’ or ‘I would like to feel more assertive.’ This part of the discussion is aimed at gaining information about the overall perspective of the client and their situation.

Coaching objectives/required outcomes

- 1 Be a better communicator, who can influence others.
- 2 Feel more confident in myself.

Part 3 – specific outcome measurements

The next step is to help the client to identify those specific behavioural changes that would need to take place to achieve the overall objective.

The coach might use questions such as ‘You said you would like to be a better communicator – if you were, what would you be doing differently?’

In behavioural contracting, the key is to get clearly identifiable outcomes. The outcome ‘be a better communicator’ could mean anything from getting better at e-mail correspondence to

being more assertive with people. It is here that those coaches used to the SMART goal-setting model will see some similarities. A behavioural model sets out to turn all general objectives into measurable outcomes.

For those who work in a behavioural way, all objectives can be turned into specific outcomes. Even the most subjectively emotional terminology – such as ‘I want to feel happier’ – can be turned into a measurable outcome by posing questions like ‘If you were happier, what would you be doing, feeling or thinking that is different from now?’

In a behavioural model, it is crucial to get this part of the process clearly right. It is these outcomes that will be measured at the end of the coaching.

There will always be instances where additional information that has an impact on the overall outcome comes to the fore later in the coaching process. No method of working can provide a 100 per cent hit rate. In such cases, the contract can be modified at a later date.

If the contract has to be amended, then the amendments also need to be agreed by all parties. Having said that, it is more likely that any changes will be in addition to – rather than in place of – what has been agreed.

Example of specific outcome measurements

- ##### Outcome measurements
- 1 To be able to identify the skills associated with effective speaking, and to demonstrate the use of these with colleagues and senior people in the organisation.
 - 2 To identify and implement more formal communication systems in the department – such as e-mail correspondence and its use, and weekly staff meetings.

Part 4 – confidentiality, feedback and reviews

The challenge of coaching in organisations is the need for those sponsoring the coaching to have some feedback about the coaching process and about the need for client confidentiality. Agreeing what feedback is required and how it will be delivered is essential. When working with individual clients, the need is only for the client and coach to be clear about what confidentiality means, and to agree the kind of review process that will take place.

Example of how feedback structure might be agreed with an organisational sponsor

Feedback procedures

- 1 To provide a written report at the end of the coaching process.
(It is also useful to keep a record of the number of sessions agreed and the price of the coaching contract.)

Example of a review structure that might be agreed with an individual client

Review procedures

- 1 To undertake a formal review of work at session three, halfway through the agreed six sessions.

Confidentiality

It is essential that all parties take into account all aspects relating to the law and duty of care.

Additional agreements/details (if any)

If there are any aspects that affect or amend the normal confidentiality process, then these should be clearly stated. This section is more likely to be of use within an executive or business coaching scenario.

‘in an organisational context, a behavioural contract is a protective mechanism’

Example of such information

Whilst recognising the need for confidentiality and discretion, all parties take into account all aspects relating to law and duty of care.

Additional agreements/details (if any)

Part 5 – signing off

The final part of the behavioural contracting process is simply to sign off the agreement. In organisational settings, the coach will need to take the form away for word processing, sending copies to all relevant parties for signature once this has been done.

However, if the coach is using a behavioural contract with an individual client, this may not be necessary. The contract could be signed off at the end of the first session. The coach would need to ensure that they could photocopy the document so that both the client and the coach would have a copy.

Some coaches want the client to take the form, or a copy of the form, away after the first session to consider the points raised. They then ask the client to sign off at the next meeting, once they have had time to reflect on the contents.