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The role of the line manager as performance coach

A research study conducted in a large South African financial institution.

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February 2014

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management Business Executive Coaching (MM BEC).

ABSTRACT

The effective practise of managers as coaches can have a positive impact on the performance and development of employees, and provide an organisation with a significant competitive edge. The implementation of manager-coaches in South African organisations is slowly gaining traction, and this study examines this approach in a large financial institution.

The primary objective of this research was to identify the roles and skills needed by line managers to become successful performance coaches, as well as the key benefits to the organisation as a whole. Descriptive, qualitative methodology was selected to conduct this study. The population sample was drawn from a large financial services organisation, with approximately 45 000 employees across Africa. The research participants are all line managers working in different business areas, with varying years of experience.

A research questionnaire was used to conduct face-to-face, semi structured interviews with respondents. Data collected was then transcribed and analysed by means of content and thematic analysis. The interviews confirmed that the line managers understood performance coaching as a process to address and close the performance gaps of their employees. Some managers equated performance coaching to performance management or mentoring.

The manager-coaches identified their primary roles as: to enable performance, motivate and inspire, and provide support. The key skills required were highlighted as communication; listening; interpersonal skills; emotional intelligence; empathy; questioning skills, and goal setting.

It emerged that good performers are coached less frequently than poor performers. Some managers have a set frequency such as monthly or weekly, whilst others use it as required, in line with their normal leadership style. This finding is considered to be very important to answer the research question: if managers were conducting performance coaching informally and in an *ad hoc* fashion, did they believe in the benefits and did they see this as a priority in developing their staff?

DECLARATION

I, Barbara Ann Govender (student number 591241), declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management Business Executive Coaching (MM BEC) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at this or any other university.

Barbara Ann Govender

Signed at ……

On the …….. Day of …… 2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am humbled by the phenomenal people who have accompanied me on this journey. I would like to express my gratitude and sincere appreciation to these special people for supporting me in completing this study:

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Sunny Stout Rostron, for her encouragement and constructive feedback throughout the period of this research study.

I would like to thank my husband for his love, support and encouragement during this time. I could not have done this without you.

Thank you to the research participants who entrusted their stories to me; I will always be grateful for your sincerity.

Thank you to my dearest friends and family, that believed in me and cheered me on to complete my studies.

Thank you

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CHAPTER 1: **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to understand how line managers within a financial institution should conduct effective performance coaching with subordinate colleagues. With this in mind, the research describes the role of managers in organisations as performance coaches, and identifies the skills required to become effective internal performance coaches. Lastly, it explores the perceived benefits of performance coaching as conducted by line managers. This study positions performance coaching as a mechanism for managers to engage with their staff to enhance productivity and employee satisfaction at the workplace.

1.2 Context of the study

A global study conducted by the American Management Association (2007) on successful coaching practices found that the field of coaching experienced rapid growth between 1980 and 1994, growing into many new areas such as life coaching, career coaching, etc. According to Hudson (1999), the speed of coaching was increased by complexities associated to the increased downsizing, mergers and acquisitions. The roles of managers changed to cope with escalated levels of uncertainty and increased demands to perform within this type of context.

Senior managers were expected to operate both strategically and tactically especially when required to be leaders that effectively managed people (Sherman & Freas, 2004). Businesses can only do so much with regards to downsizing and restructuring to increase productivity; after that, it is the additional efforts of employees that produce the results. With companies opting for flatter organisational structures, employees - especially newly promoted individuals - have to progress and develop quickly (Jarvis, 2004).

Performance coaching is considered an effective way to help employees gain new skills, as it has the flexibility to support a range of individuals with different learning styles.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) survey (2006, p.10) reports that 47% of organisations are developing internal line managers to act as coaches. To this end, a large number of organisations have purchased specialised programmes to train their managers on how to coach, hoping to create 'a coaching culture' within their organisation as stated in the Business Leadership Review (Matthew, 2010). According to Burdett (1998), coaching remains the undisclosed reason of many successful organisations.

What then is coaching? Whitmore (2002, p.18) describes coaching as *"Coaching is unlocking a person's potential to maximise their performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching."*

This then poses questions regarding the practicality of the idea of manager as coach. O'Connor and Lages (2004) and Ferrar (2006) highlight such concerns that relate to the manager's conflicts of interest and confidentiality as possible inhibitors to the effectiveness of such coaching practice. Matthews (2010, p.1) suggests that this notion has not fully been considered "*challenges that managers face in the corporate environment, in particular the vested interest in the outcome of the coaching and strong pressures to be directive in the coaching conversation.*"

Harris (2005) further argues that the personal characteristics of the manager, such as their interpersonal skills, relationships, personality and self-confidence, could be potential obstacles to their willingness to coach. However, regardless of the potential risks of lack of trust, transparency and confidentiality, it is clear that managers are seen to have a role to play by coaching, and the benefits are felt to outweigh the risks. The supervision of the coaching practice may be an effective way to mitigate the risks inherent in using line managers as coaches.

Brocato and Rick (2003) highlight a further challenge: the concept of 'doing more with less' carries a consequence of additional pressure on managers and employees. They stress the importance of managers being able to empower and delegate to their employees. If managers cannot foster a culture of responsibility and ownership, they will feel pressured and ineffective, as even greater responsibility is heaped on their over-burdened shoulders.

Research by Evered et al. (1989) indicates that the idea of manager as coach has been considered since the late 1980s. According to Buys (2010) and Ellinger, Hamlin and Beattie (2008), line managers believe that they have a direct responsibility to the employees reporting to them. Zeus and Skiffington (2005), Whitmore (2004) and Parsloe (1999) all site coaching as a fundamental part of a manager's role. The fact that coaching by managers is becoming increasingly popular is further supported by Clutterbuck (2009) who reported that a large number of organisations surveyed state that managers could be effective coaches.

Waddell (2005, p.20) reported on the extensive benefits of coaching to include self-awareness, enhanced communication skills, increased confidence, improved productivity and lower stress levels.

For the purposes of this research, the coaching conversations which take place between managers and their employees in the chosen organisation have been explored, with a view of how line managers should conduct effective performance coaching.

1.3 Problem statement

The evidence available for coaching has been strengthened significantly over the past years, with extensive research on coaching at the workplace. However, little is known about coaching by line managers in a South African financial services institution.

This study explores the role of managers as performance coaches in this specific environment; identifies the skills managers need to become effective internal performance coaches, and explores the perceived benefits of such coaching.

It is anticipated that this research will give line managers insight into how best to conduct effective internal coaching, which would ultimately enhance individual and organisational performance.

1.3.1 Main problem

Based on this context, the problem statement for this research is how line managers should conduct effective performance coaching within a financial institution. This will be addressed through researching the following three sub-problems:

1.3.2 Sub-problems

The first sub-problem is to explore the role of the line manager as a performance coach.

The second sub-problem is to identify the skills needed by managers to become effective internal performance coaches.

The third sub-problem is to explore the perceived benefits of managers conducting performance coaching at the workplace.

1.4 Significance of the study

Existing research has confirmed that coaching has a significant role to play in improving effectiveness in the workplace. However, within the financial services industry in South Africa, little has been researched or written on the role and skills of the managers in performance coaching, or the perceived benefits of such coaching.

This study aims to contribute to the talent management body of knowledge by enabling organisations to formulate management roles that include coaching as a competence. It will provide guidance to organisations in general and the selected organisation in particular. The findings will enable the leaders and managers of this selected organisation to understand their role as coach, as part of their management and leadership style, more fully. The findings will also assist human resource practitioners within the organisation with the design, implementation and evaluation of the existing manager-as-coach skills development programmes.

The findings of this research would contribute significantly to the academic research in the field and to organisations who consider implementing manager-as-coach development programmes.

A further significant benefit is that it will highlight the principles that underpin performance coaching, as well as the skills required to competently conduct coaching as part of the

management/leadership role, thereby assisting with the engagement and retention of employees at the workplace.

1.5 Delimitations of the study

The research study is focused on an identified, particular organisation where all managers (junior, middle and senior) interviewed had a range of coaching experience and/or training from within or outside the organisation. The study is based solely on the understanding and experience of these managers, focusing on their role, skills and the perceived benefits of performance coaching.

The focus of the research is on the line manager conducting performance coaching, and comparisons to other types of coaching that managers may conduct will not be made. Furthermore very little focus has been placed on the aspect of performance management within the organisation.

The managers selected are between 28 and 55 years old. Coaching within this selected organisation is not governed by internal policy; however, each manager is responsible for coaching his/her direct reports. It is apparent that these coaching sessions take place more informally than formally. Discussion topics include personal growth and career development, as well challenges that employees may be experiencing.

1.6 Definition of terms

The following terms are pertinent to this study:

Coaching

"Coaching is unlocking a person's potential to maximise their performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching."(Whitmore, 2002, p.18)

Performance

"Performance is what the organisation hires one to do, and do well." (Campbell et al. 1993, p.40). Thus, performance is not defined by the action itself but by judgemental and evaluative processes. Moreover, only actions which can be scaled, i.e. measured, are considered to constitute performance (Campbell et al. 1993).

Employee

Within the context of this research study, 'employee' refers to any individual who is in a coaching relationship with his / her line manager.

Manager-coach

This term refers to the line managers who have assumed a performance coaching role with their direct reports. Grant (2010, p.62 as adapted from Kilburg 1996) states that "*A manager-coach's job is to inspire and validate team members while providing consistent feedback. Manager-coaches should challenge their team members with new ways to excel – and expect success – while keeping their own egos under wraps.*"

Performance coaching

Hudson(1999, p.20-21) describes performance coaching as starting with establishing clear goals that both the manager coach and the team member believe to be reachable. A manager coach's job is to inspire and validate team members while providing consistent feedback. Coaching work should be considered more like a learning environment than a playing field. Manager Coaches should ask lots of questions. They should encourage team members to move out of their safety zones and dare to fail. Manager Coaches should challenge their team members with new ways to excel – and expect success – while keeping their own egos under wraps.

1.7 Assumptions

The following assumptions have been made regarding this research:

- The sample of managers selected to participate were open and honest in sharing their thoughts and experiences on the subject of coaching, related to their personal experience and knowledge.
- The sample of managers would have a reasonable understanding of the concept of performance coaching and their role as manager-coach.
- Performance coaching in its desired form is not being applied within the selected organisation. The researcher based this assumption on her interactions with line managers within the specified organisation.

1.8 Structure of the report

Chapter 1 introduces and contextualises the research and then details the purpose, context and significance of the study, whilst outlining the delimitations, assumptions and definitions relevant to this research.

Chapter 2 reviews the existing literature in the field to provide an objective overview of the topic and what has been researched in the past. The logic of this chapter follows the history and background of coaching and performance coaching, before outlining the differences between performance coaching and other types of coaching. It further reviews the literature relating to the role of managers as performance coaches and the skills managers need to become effective internal performance coaches. It also explores the perceived benefits of such coaching.

Chapter 3 gives an explanation of the research methodology followed to obtain the data required. It discusses the design, paradigm and methods used by the researcher and provide an overview of the demographic profile of the participants. Furthermore it explains the procedure for data collection, analysis and interpretation. Lastly, this chapter identifies the limitations of the research and researcher bias, as well as the validity and reliability of the data.

Chapter 4 captures the responses to the semi-structured interviews, allowing the researcher to code and theme the responses. This is done in the context of the themes identified during the analysis process of the data. It is supported by verbatim quotes from participants, illustrating the themes.

Chapter 5 discusses the results in the context of the five themes identified. Here the researcher critically evaluates these results within the context of existing literature. Results are compared to evidence found in Chapter 2, whether supporting or contradictory.

In the final chapter, Chapter 6, the report draws conclusions from the results and discussions. The researcher addresses the problem statements and discusses the implications this research may have on stakeholders, namely, top management teams, human resource practitioners and business executive coaches. The report suggests recommendations for future research.

A list of references is included as well as appendices detailing the research instruments used and ethics protocol followed.

CHAPTER 2: **LITERATURE REVIEW**

2.1 Introduction

A review of management literature revealed that the concept of manager as coach is not a new phenomenon (Ellinger et al. 2010, p.157). During the 1980's, Evered and Selman (1989, p.16) established the paradigm that '*good coaching is an essential feature of really effective management'*. It is important to highlight at the onset that the emphasis is not on the potential for managers to coach employees as if they were professional coaches, but on managers to exhibit a coaching approach. The distinction here is to recognise that the need for the manager to main the role of manager, and at the same time to demonstrate coaching skills such as listening, skilful questioning and empowerment, into the routine of managing people. (Passmore, 2006, p.13)

There is extensive literature available on the topic of coaching in general, with references to managers-as-coaches made as part of studies on topics such as leadership, management development and talent management. However, specific studies that focus on these areas together, namely the role of the line manager, the skills the manager requires to become an effective performance coach, and the benefits of performance coaching within a financial institution, have not been found.

2.2 Conceptual framework

The main research problem in this study is how line managers should conduct effective performance coaching within a financial institution, which is supported by three sub-problems:

- To explore the role of the line manager as a performance coach.
- To identify the skills needed by managers to become effective internal performance coaches.
- To explore the perceived benefits of managers conducting performance coaching at the workplace.

An empirical, constructivist, interpretivist and descriptive conceptual framework were adopted to fully explore each of these sub-problems. In terms of empiricism, the study is based on the qualitative experiences of managers conducting performance coaching.

Denzin and Lincoln (1998, p.3) argue that, through this complex historical maze, a "generic" definition emerges that involves an interpretive, naturalist approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural surroundings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, experience it in terms of the meanings people bring to them." They suggest that this approach is multi-method in focus, making use of several kinds of empirical materials, such as case studies, personal experiences, life stories, interviews, observations, and a variety of different texts. Despite the various methodological streams that characterize qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln suggest that these methods are all interconnected through a common focus on "problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives".

Specific attention was paid to the managers' views of performance coaching; their particular role in conducting performance coaching; the skills they considered essential for this role, and the perceived benefits of such coaching. The relationships that these managers have with their employees as a potential optimiser of work performance - life balance levels were also thoroughly explored.

The study is constructivist and interpretivist in that it is based on the premise that everyone has their own reality and individuals bring their own ideas, perceptions and reality to a situation. In addition to this, ideas and perceptions are likely to differ from one individual to another.

2.3 Background information

To address the main research problem "How should line managers conduct effective performance coaching within a financial institution?" it is important to understand the current realities of managers within the working environment.

The complexity of modern-day business environments has pushed organisations to maximise all aspects of their performance in order to remain viable. Fillery-Travis and Lane (2006, p.23) state that to remain competitive, organisations must attract and retain talent, which has resulted in performance coaching becoming more prevalent as a discipline within organisations. Such coaching has become an attractive option as it offers one-on-one support for development, which could easily be linked to the organisation's goals and strategies. It also suits the complexity and fast pace of modern organisational life. Effective coaching enhances skills and raises an individual's performance, which contributes to organisational success (Baker et al. 2008, p.78).

Lary (1997), mentioned by Baker et al (2008, p.78), concurs that the need for competent managers, and the reported successes of coaching, has resulted in wider integration into executive routines.

2.4 Definition of coaching

To create a context for this research, it is important to define coaching in relation to performance coaching.

Zeus and Skiffington (2000) describe coaching as a conversation or a dialogue, where a coach and employee actively interact to achieve goals, enhance performance and enable the employee progress toward greater success.

Zeus and Skiffington (2002, p.23) view coaching as "*Coaching helps individuals access what they already know. They may never have asked themselves the questions but they have the answers. A coach assists supports and encourages individuals to find these answers."*

Whitmore (1997, p.46) states "*Coaching is a process of empowering others."*

This viewpoint is supported by Carter (2001), who describes coaching as an interactive process that is designed to help individuals to develop rapidly, and focuses on improving performance or behaviour.

2.5. Definition of Performance Coaching

Consistent with Purcell and Hutchinson's definition, a manager is considered to be someone who manages one or more individuals who reports directly to him (Purcell et al. 2007). Coaching in this context can be described as performance coaching delivered by the manager.

Parsloe and Wray (2000, p.183) describe performance coaching as *"to focus, motivate and support others in achieving their goal".*

Whitmore (2002, p.97) further defines performance coaching as "*optimising people's potential and performance*."

Hargrove (2011) adds that "Performance coaching purposefully facilitates learning and development to improve the performance of others concerned in a specific role or responsibility. It could be applied to many different disciplines (e.g. sports, acting, and music) but it is especially relevant to performance with a business context."

Feldman and Lankau (2005) view performance coaching as a means to equip individuals with the knowledge, skills as well as the opportunities they need to achieve desired personal and/or organisational goals.

Wilson (2007, p.7) describes performance coaching as "*A process which enables people to find and act on the solutions which are the most congruent and appropriate for them personally. This is achieved through a dialogue which assists coaches to see new perspectives and achieve greater clarity about their own thoughts, emotions and actions, about the people and situations around them.*"

Hudson (1999, p.20-21) describes performance coaching as starting with establishing clear goals that both the manager coach and the team member believe to be reachable. A manager coach's job is to inspire and validate team members while providing consistent feedback. Coaching work should be considered more like a learning environment than a playing field. Manager Coaches should ask lots of questions. They should encourage team members to move out of their safety zones and dare to fail. Manager Coaches should challenge their team members with new ways to excel – and expect success – while keeping their own egos under wraps.

Reflecting on these definitions, it is evident that 'performance coaching' is conducted specifically to enhance the performance of employees in order to achieve personal and organisational goals. This encompasses the facilitation of learning and self-discovery to guide employees in finding appropriate solutions that ultimately enable them to achieve success.

These elements of the definition on performance coaching all have direct relevance to this research, particularly when the roles and skills of the manager-coach are explored.

2.6 Purpose of coaching

Coaching as viewed by Persson (2007) is seen as a crucial way to improve individual performance within an organisation. Although often thought to be a solution for poor performance (Fournies, 1987), recent perceptions have moved beyond this to one of a developmental orientation, in which coaching is considered to be a day-to-day, hands-on process of helping employees improve their performance and capabilities (Orth, Wilkinson, & Benfari, 1987; Popper & Lipshitz, 1992). It is intended to be a process of learning that provides guidance, encouragement and support to employees (Redshaw, 2000).

The goals associated with managerial coaching are multi-faceted. In addition to improving an employee's performance through learning, coaching can support personal development by providing feedback and encouraging self-awareness. Improving personal relationships and work behaviours may be additional goals associated with this type of coaching (Cox, Bachkirova & Clutterbuck, 2010, p.258).

This researcher contends that performance coaching is required in the following scenarios:

- When a skills gap has been identified.
- When an employee is experiencing low morale or lack of motivation.
- When personal challenges affect work performance or contribution.
- When employees would benefit from being stretched in their thinking and performance.
- Where specific upward growth paths have been identified.

2.7 Role of the coach

In many organisations the responsibility for employee development is assigned to line managers (Hyman and Cunningham, 1998). More specifically, there has been a shift from a role of the manager seen as 'controller' to that of a manager as 'coach' (Tamkin et al, 2003).

Burdett (1998) describe the first step in a coaching relationship is for the coach to share his/her vision of what future success looks like. However, before the coach can build commitment and enthusiasm around the vision, four fundamental building blocks must be in place:

- The first building block is for the coach should have a clear understanding of what makes up successful performance. The picture must be simple and specific enough for the coach to make comparisons between expected and actual behaviour.

- The second is to develop astute and relevant interventions.

- Thirdly the coach must display an emotional commitment to the expressed goals vision.

- Lastly the coach must present the vision using language and examples the employees' can identify with.

The role of the coach is to create an environment where individuals can perform to the best of their ability. The coach is not meant to be a teacher but rather a partner or facilitator, who introduces the employee to new challenges, options and behaviours (Witherspoon & White, 1996). One important aspect that several authors agree on (Burdett, 1998; Hunt, 2004; Clutterbuck & Megginson, 2006; Ennis, 2000) is the need to create an environment of safety and trust. This therefore ensures confidentiality during the coaching session (Hunt, 2004, p.180). This can be easily established if a strong coaching culture exists, and it is important that the coach works with trust, integrity, mutual respect and a sense of common purpose (Burdett, 1998, p.144). Creating a safe environment could be a factor that enables a successful coaching process.

Phillips (1995) indicated that most managers claim to delegate work effectively. He further states that this involves work that managers are too busy to do or simply do not want to undertake, and which is delegated to people who they feel will do the work efficiently. Managers may then be seen to miss opportunities to develop and coach their staff. Whenever managers perform a task which someone else could do, they prevent themselves doing a task which only they can do.

Hay (2002) contended that *"The reason most people leave their jobs and move is not related to a lack of satisfaction with pay, but a lack of satisfaction with how their skills and talents are being developed."* (Gibb, citing Hay, 2003, p.282).

An effective manager-coach provides a supporting role to employees, as opposed to using authority to enforce (Wood & Marshall, 1993). McLean et al (2005, p.163) state the coaching process is characterised by *"Effective and open communication, team focus, valuing people and accepting the ambiguous nature of the working environment for the purpose of developing employees and improving performance*."

2.8 Desirable qualities and characteristics

Hunt and Weintraub (2011) state that managers who are effective coaches have the following characteristics in common: an *attitude of helpfulness; less need to control; empathy in dealing with others; openness to personal learning and receiving feedback; high standards; a desire to help others to develop.* Kilburg (1997) confirms that qualities for successful coaching should include being respectful, considerate, predictable, courteous, empathetic, friendly, tactful, non-defensive, knowledgeable and skilful.

Mackintosh (2002, p.12) in his e-book 'The Coaching Manager' lists the qualities of an effective coach as: self-awareness; responsibility; awareness; patience and detachment. He feels that an effective coach should be supportive, interested, perceptive, attentive, retentive, able to challenge assumptions and give - and receive - feedback.

Ellinger and Bostrom (2002, p.156) identified three major categories of beliefs held by commendable managerial coaches, namely:

- Beliefs about their managerial roles and capabilities;
- Beliefs about learning and the learning process, and
- Beliefs about the learners.

These managers considered coaching their employees and facilitating their development to be part of their role, and what they were expected to do. (Ellinger & Bostrom, 2002, p.156).

Whitmore (2007, p.41-42) reports that the typical list of qualities that a coach should possess, which he agrees with includes the following:

- Patient
- Detached
- Supportive
- Interested
- Good listener
- Perceptive
- Aware
- Self-aware

- Attentive
- Retentive

The most successful manager-coaches have developed the following capacities (Buys, 2007, p.44 - adapted from Zeus & Skiffington, 2000, p.24-31):

- ***Awareness***

  Manager-coaches are aware of their own and their team members' strength and development areas.

- ***Discipline***

  Managers exercise self-discipline and are credible role models for their team members.

- ***Communication***

  Successful manager-coaches realise the importance of collaborative communication, which assists them and their team members to feel that they are moving towards their targets together.

- ***Inspiring others***

  They are able to motivate and inspire their teams.

- ***Building relationships***

  Managers are responsible for the relationships between them and team members. If that relationship is lacking, they endeavour to find ways to improve it, so that the team can work effectively and optimally.

- ***Flexibility***

  Successful manager-coaches are flexible. They will try various ways to be effective, including evaluating themselves to see if they could be doing something differently.

- ***Solution-oriented***

  Managers spend time diagnosing the underlying issues and recognise the differences between causes and symptoms.

Whitmore (2007, p.34) agrees that first key element of coaching is awareness; which is the product of focused attention, concentration, and clarity. While awareness includes seeing

and hearing at the workplace, it encompasses much more than that. It is the gathering and clear understanding of facts and information, and the ability to determine what is relevant.

This ability includes an understanding the relationships between things and people. The coach must be self-aware before he can shift his awareness to his employee and the situation at hand.

In his book 'Coaching for Performance', Whitmore (2007) states that numerous conventional management styles makes it complicated for a manager to be a good coach. The styles include dictation, persuasion, debating and abdication. When a manager imposes or commands he provides little choice or no choice for the employee. Persuasion leaves an employee wondering if he has a choice. When a manager engages in a debating style, both the manager and the employee feel that they are involved, but it may be a slow pace. Lastly, abdication makes the employee feel obliged or that he is being taken advantage of. Majority of the managers place themselves in one of these categories of management styles, however, coaching takes different approach. It provides the benefits from all styles and none of the risks.

Research conducted by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development in the United Kingdom (2006) identified some characteristics of managers who were working as effective people developers. Effective manager-coaches in the study were described as:

- Managers who dedicate time to selecting and developing team members.
- Willing to use various management styles and approaches according to the needs of the situation.
- Demonstrate learning behaviours - for example, asking questions, researching, reassessing successes and mistakes.
- Be good facilitators.
- Managers that delegate appropriately.
- Communicate and share learning from different perspectives.

Whitmore (2007) mentions that in order for coaching to work; managers' must be seen as a supportive, and not as a threat, to his employees. It should be a partnership of trust and

safety, without pressure. This is supported by Browning (2004, p.98) who emphasises that the coach needs to be approachable and with the best possible intentions towards the employee.

Not all managers start coaching right way; it takes practice and patience. Whitmore (2007, p.16) describes the demands of being a coach as *"having the highest qualities of empathy, integrity and detachment, as well as willingness to adopt fundamentally different approaches to the staff".*

A manager must raise awareness of responsibility among his employees. Whitmore (2002, p.31) says "*Responsibility demands choice. Choice implies freedom." Instead of feeling threatened, managers should realise that they can capitalise on this and give people responsibility and those people in turn will give of their best. This way everyone wins."*

The literature above makes reference to key qualities and characteristics that managers should display in order for them to be successful as performance coaches. Common to all the authors are 'awareness' and 'responsibility', which are seen as important qualities. Whitmore (2002) claim that a*wareness* and r*esponsibility* are the key factors towards yielding results. He believes that people are only able to change only what they are aware of. However, the responsibility must remain with the client or individual that is being coached to perform or change.

This research study will explore these characteristics further, to establish how they are perceived within the selected financial organisation.

2.9 Key skills required for coaching

A competent coach needs to be equipped with the skills to build and maintain rapport, ask effective questions, provide meaningful feedback, listen intently and read non-verbal behaviour to establish commitment and set goals (King & Eaton, 1999, p.146).

Browning (2004, p.98) supports this view and includes that to be a good coach requires discipline and involves taking responsibility for the employee's concerns. He further adds that the basic skill for a coach is the ability to listen actively and use their insight to ask well-chosen questions that guide employees toward their own solutions. Rogers (2004, p.42) suggest "*genuine listening is rare*" but is essential to building rapport and confidence in a coaching relationship.

Byrne (2007, p.1987) indicates that coaches must have *"Well-honed communication and interpersonal skills essential to motivating and inspiring others."*

Poglinco and Bach (2004) highlight that coaches must be able to:

- observe and appreciate employees strengths;
- identify approach for engaging the employee;
- provide valuable criticism and valuable feedback, and
- Offer a range of technical assistance/coaching techniques including modelling, combined lesson planning, co-teaching, formal observation and conversations.

Passmore summarised many of these characteristics in the following diagram, illustrating what is considered to be core elements of good coaching (Figure 2.1):



Figure 2.2 –Core Elements of Good Coaching (Passmore, 2006, p.15)

There is an increasing demand for managers with soft skills and yet many standard development programmes have failed to instil the kind of approaches necessary for the development of these soft skills. Having researched a range of management programmes, Tamkin and Barber (1998) concluded that programmes which have an emphasis on feedback and learning support, such as coaching and mentoring, are best placed to create managers with soft skills.

Carrington (2001) noted how organisations were introducing coaching skills and techniques into line management. Some brought in coaching specialists to help managers to become coaches.

The intention for doing so is not to give the manager the same expertise in coaching as the coach themselves, but enough to equip them with some effective coaching techniques. For example: how to give quality feedback that will motivate employees to change their behaviour. In addition, Bianco-Mathis et al. (2002) suggest useful exercises for leaders or managers wishing to develop their own coaching skills. They not only consider the coaching relationship with individuals, but also, more usually, how this links with coaching a team and wider support for coaching in the whole organisation.

However, there are also a number of difficulties with enlisting the line manager as a performance coach (Howe, 2008). First, individual factors, such as a lack of self-belief or an unwillingness (or lack of clarity) about performance weaknesses or learning needs may inhibit managers from fulfilling a coaching role (Hawkins and Smith, 2006). Second, there may be systemic problems with achieving a coaching style of management. Frequent changes to the composition of teams, for example, may make it impossible for managers to develop the 'deep rapport' (de Haan & Burger, 2005; Hawkins & Smith, 2006) needed for coaching. In addition, managers facing multiple deadlines and work priorities may find that the investment of time required for coaching is not possible.

A further constraint may be the type of the work or environment, particularly where work is particularly standardised and where discretion about what work to do and how to undertake it is limited (Clutterbuck & Megginson, 2006; Hutchinson & Purcell, 2007). In addition, the requirement for managers to deal with a range of issues, such as performance improvement; maintenance of operational processes; employee development and reward, may mean that the addition of coaching as yet another role expectation is an unwelcome burden (Howe, 2008; BlessingWhite, 2008).

A study by Phillips (1994) found that leaders and managers must have the desire to coach if they are going to become successful coaches. They must be willing to share their success and setbacks, and give - as well as receive – honest feedback. Success as a coach involves more than confident possession of the behaviours and skills that they want to pass on to the team. The coach's own values and beliefs will show through. If the coach is just following a checklist, cynicism and lack of interest will transmit to the employees.

Stone (2007, p.15) believes that managers need the following coaching skills:

- ***Coach should be able to gather information***

  A good coach knows how to get information from an individual without making that person feel as if he or she were being interrogated.

- ***Coach should be able to listen to others***

  A good coach is able to listen with a 'third ear', with special attention to the speaker's non-verbal signals and body posture as to his or her words in order to determine the feelings behind the responses as well as its truthfulness. Especially important to note that asking the questions would mean very little if the coach does not listen to the coachee's replies.

- ***Coach needs to be aware of what's happening in the work environment***

  A coach needs to be aware of the working environment and the dynamics of relationships between people. He must be able to gather information and analyse it for relevant application.

The researcher will summarise in chapter four the following key skills that emerged through the literature review as necessary for successful coaching:

- communication skills
- listening skills
- effective questioning skills
- ability to build rapport
- providing quality feedback
- ability to have open conversations
- interpersonal skills
- emotional intelligence
- goal setting

This research study will further validate these as critical skills that line managers should possess to successfully conduct performance coaching.

2.10 Coaching benefits

There is a consistent view in the literature that effective internal coaching programmes (staff being coached by managers) contribute significant benefits to the employee as well as the organisation.

Coaching can provide an effective stimulus for analysis, self-reflection and accomplishment, a process which is focused on achieving success and improved performance. Philips (1994, p.19) states that "*With the popularity and increasing practice of empowerment, as well as a deeper understanding of how people learn, the performance benefits of coaching are becoming more widely known and accepted."*

Further, Stone (2007, p.12) adds that managers who master the skill of coaching see the following benefits: it can improve the performance of employees by making apparent to them what they should do and how best they should do it (think *instruction)*; positively reinforces good work (think *praise*), and encourages the redesign of jobs to increase employee contribution (think *empowerment or shared leadership*).

Waddell (2005, p.20) provide a description of benefits from those who received coaching, which included: increased self-awareness; enhanced communication skills; increased confidence; improved productivity; lower stress levels; enhanced self-discovery; improved quality of life; increased project completion; improved health or fitness levels; better relationships with co-workers, and better family relationships.

McDermott (1996) provides an account of the following benefits: coaching sheds light on concerns, problems and expectations; builds an environment for solving problems as an alternative to avoiding them; offers personal fulfilment by playing a role in others' growth; creates a platform for mutual dialogue to enhance work relationships; improves productivity, quality, and creativity; develop others' self-esteem and confidence; draws out better contributions from employees; builds employees' commitment and loyalty; enhances the organisation's performance levels, and encourages employees' continuous personal development.

Mackintosh (2002) mentions that a manager, who coaches successfully, strengthens his employees willingness to improve their performance at work. This is beneficial to everyone: the organisation, the manager, the team, and the person being coached.

Jarvis (2004) has provided benefits of coaching in two categories: benefits for the individual and benefits for the organisation. These are presented in the table below:

Table 2.1: Organisational and individual benefits of coaching **Source:** Jarvis (2004, p.41)

Benefits for the individual	**Benefits for the organisation**
• Learn to solve own problems. • Improve managerial and interpersonal skills. • Have better relationships with colleagues. • Learn how to identify and act on development needs. • Have great confidence. • Become more assertive in dealing with people. • Have a positive impact on performance. • Have great self-awareness and gain new perspectives. • Acquire new skills and abilities. • Develop greater adaptability to change and improve work-life balance. • Reduce stress levels.	• Improve productivity quality, customer service, and shareholder value. • Increased employee commitment and satisfaction, which can lead to improved retention. • Demonstrate to employees that the organisation is committed to developing its staff and helping them improve their skills. • Support employees who have been promoted to cope with new responsibilities. • Help employees to manage personal issues that might negatively affect work performance. • Gain satisfactory processes for self-development. • Support other training and development initiatives e.g. reduce leakage from training courses.

Zeus and Skiffington (2005) highlight that managers can look forward to attaining the very best performance from their people by providing coaching on an 'in-time' basis during the course of their normal day-to-day management and leadership duties. A successful result is dependent on their ability to help their employees develop the personal and technical skills needed to improve performance levels. Whilst coaching may occur instinctively resulting in encouraging outcomes, the benefits are believed to be far too important to be left to probability.

Zeus and Skiffington (2000, p.4-5) highlight specific ways in which coaching is beneficial, including the following:

- Coaching for leadership increases productivity, improves communications, increases commitment and loyalty, and decreases the level of stress and tension within companies.
- Coaching assists individuals to remain loyal and committed to the company in the face of demanding global business hours, language barriers, differing work ethics and economic fluctuations.
- Coaching can help prevent executive derailment.
- Coaching helps managers to develop better interpersonal skills.
- Coaching helps leaders to think.

Byrne (2007) describes the type of learning commonly achieved through effective coaching programmes:

- Enhancing specific skills
- Resourcefulness
- Confidence
- Openness
- Commitment to change
- Clarity of thinking
- Commitment to action

- Enhanced communication skills
- Empowering organisational culture
- More constructive relationships

2.11 Coaching versus mentoring and managing

Even in the context of business, there is a lack of consensus around how coaching should be seen, defined, implemented and understood. The role of the coach is often confused with the mentor's role. Many authors have defined coach and mentor in different ways; some of them also claim that both are the same (Parsloe & Wray, 2000, p.100, cited by Ives).

Rosinski (2003) defines the differences between the processes of coaching and mentoring. He describes coaches' as facilitators who provide a framework to assist employees to support their own network, whereas mentors provide advice and expert recommendations, open doors and provide contacts to the mentee. Coaching requires additional empathy as well as other skills. According to Wilson (2007), the mentorship process deals with facts and the mentor's experience is crucial in teaching and advising to the mentee, who is less, experienced in particular fields. The coaching process deals with psychological issues to achieve pre-determined goals. Mentoring is targeted toward more senior individuals identified as talent and who play a critical role in delivering organisational strategies. Most organisations provide mentoring for individuals on specific growth paths identify successors to key individuals/roles.

2.12 Coaching process

In an organisation that is results oriented, the coach delve into the individual's results, searching for the skills and knowledge that serve the employee well and that can be leveraged in additional ways to achieve the established goals (Berard, 2005, p.34). Successful coaching is a partnership between the coach and employee: it helps individuals to break free of self-imposed limits, become clearer about their goals, willing to experiment with new approaches and thus more likely to make things happen (King & Eaton, 1999, p.145).

Organisations that received outstanding performances with this result-oriented coaching process, adapted the following systematic coaching model (Berard, 2005, p.34):

- ***Be clear on the business results and the plan to achieve them***

  Before commencing with any coaching sessions, the coach must make clear agreements about goals, expectations and the process by which the goals will be obtained. To ensure clarity, the goals must be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time bounded (SMART).

- ***Set a coaching agenda***

  Any concerns and issues that need focus must be agreed on in a coaching agenda. The coach identifies key issues and communicates them to the employee; this alignment will be further explained in the next paragraph.

- ***Guide the coaching session in a controlled, disciplined manner***

  The coach can structure each coaching session into three parts: review what the employee is doing well and how to continue doing it, analyse the performance gaps or opportunities to address them, and compile a realistic action plan for the employee to implement.

- ***Encourage self-discovery***

  The coach should encourage the employee to explore ways to successful, which is crucial to a coaching session.

- ***Develop realistic action plans***

  Align the tasks an employee can do, to the results the coach and employee want to achieve.

- ***Continue coaching on a regular basis***

  Coaching must be conducted on a regular basis, to support the ongoing development of the employee.

This systematic process helps to clarify the goals to be reached and the expectations that coach and employee may have. It also helps to make the coaching process more 'tangible'

since a specific plan is formulated. Coaching on a continuous basis is heavily reliant on feedback. A study by Hunt (2004, p.183) shows that feedback should not only be limited to the sessions between coach and employee. A number found the use of self-assessment tools to be very helpful, while others benefited most from colleagues' feedback. Colleagues provide a performance assessment from the peer group within their own system, which can challenge the employee more than feedback from external stakeholders or a coach.

2.13 Summary of the literature review

Having reviewed a range of literature, the benefits of manager-coaching are clearly linked to improved employee and organisational performance. Organisations have become increasingly competitive and the need for managers to become effective performance coaches in the 21st century is unquestioned. When effectively applied, the benefits to the individual and the organisation are extensive.

Research in the literature reviewed has shown that organisations are making huge investments in their leaders to enable them to coach their staff to achieve better performance and ultimately better business results. Key to this success is the relationship between the manager and employee which has the potential to facilitate learning, support effective engagement and improve performance through empowerment and motivation. The role of the manager and the fact that coaching is a key management practice, have been emphasised in the literature. It is seen as an essential way to enhance the employees' performance within the organisation.

It is also evident that coaching is not an inherent skill and many managers may not know how to apply a coaching style of management, possess a disposition towards it or be aware of its potential. Although it is not conceptually complex, it requires a new mind set. Additional training and support will be required to encourage a 'coaching approach'. Therefore the findings of this research need to be analysed to find ways to support managers to take up their role in becoming skilful and effective performance coaches with their respective organisations. The following three research questions were formulated:

Research question 1:

"What role should line managers' play in conducting effective performance coaching?"

Research question 2:

"What skills do managers' need to conduct performance coaching successfully?"

Research question 3:

"What are the perceived benefits of performance coaching as conducted by line managers?"

CHAPTER 3: **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 provides an outline of the methodology that underpinned this research. The research design, sampling technique, research instrument, methods of data collection and type of data analysis that were used, are discussed in detail.

In order to answer the research questions posed in chapter one, a suitable research design had to be identified. The study seeks to understand how line managers should carry out effective performance coaching within a financial institution. To that end, the research participants were selected on the following basis: they are all managers; they work in different business areas within the organisation, and they have varying years of experience.

It was important to note that throughout the research, ethical considerations were at the forefront of my mind. Consent was received from all the interviewees before recording and interviewing commenced. The interviews were kept confidential; the information from the transcripts was not shared with any persons without their permission and each respondent will be given a copy of the research report before it is submitted into the academic office. During the interviews the interviewees were assured of the above so as to allow them to be as open and honest in their responses.

3.2 Research Methodology

According to Parahoo (2006) the methodology selected should be the one most suited to answering the proposed research question. Qualitative research is a systematic, subjective approach to describe life experiences and give them meaning (Burns & Grove 2009). According to Remenyi and Money (2004), empirical research is reliant on that which is experienced and observed as a major source of evidence.

Denzin and Lincoln's (2005, p.3) definition of qualitative research is *"a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive,*

naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them."

The researcher selected a descriptive and interpretive qualitative research methodology to answer the three research questions, with a questionnaire guide to conduct semi-structured interviews with the specific target sample.

This type of qualitative study allowed the researcher to explore the behaviours, perspectives, feelings, and experiences of the participants (Holloway and Wheeler 2002). Descriptive studies help to discover new meaning, describe what currently exists, verify the rate at which something occurs, and categorise the information.

3.3 Research design

The research design consisted of two phases. In phase one, data was collected by means of in-depth, semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with each of the research respondents. These interviews were carried out in a conversational style and were recorded with permission from the respondents. Each interview took approximately one and half hours. The researcher was directed by the series of open-ended questions designed to investigate the research questions.

In phase two, the data captured after the interviews was analysed and categorised for interpretation purposes. The researcher categorised the information into core themes, as Braun and Clarke (2006, p.82) state *"A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set."*

The interview questions were pre-tested with four of the researcher's HR colleagues prior to the commencement of the research. This ensured that the questions were relevant and understandable. The challenge of this methodology for the researcher was that throughout the interview process, significant amounts of data needed to be transcribed and analysed. This method of research was time consuming and labour intensive due to the need to analyse data three to four times to extract the data that were relevant to the research.

3.4 Research population

3.4.1 Population

The research was conducted within a large financial services organisation where coaching by line management is intended to be a strategic focus. The organisation employs approximately 45 000 employees across Africa with a significant number of managers across all levels having received some sort of coaching training either through internal or external coaching programmes. These managers are responsible for developing individuals who report directly to them, and performance coaching is seen as a suitable mechanism for this process. These coaching sessions occur on an informal basis as conversations, as well as formally planned and scheduled meetings, depending on the situation and the manager-coach.

3.4.2 Sample and sampling method

The researcher used purposive sampling (Marshall, 1996) by selecting managers who have had some form of coaching training either from within the organisation or external to the organisation. The number of managers selected was limited to fourteen. This aligned with Cormack's (2000) research that supported the view that qualitative researchers should use a small carefully selected sample, due to the in-depth nature of the study and the detailed analysis of data required.

Managers were selected based on the following criteria:

- They were managers either at junior, middle or senior level.
- They managed teams from two to twenty people.
- They had some coaching training.
- There were a similar number of males and females.
- They were from different ethnic groups.

Their academic background was not considered as one of the selection criteria.

3.5 Demographic profile of participants

The researcher took care to identify, screen and finally select an ideal representative sample. Frequency distribution tables and graphs have been utilised to depict the profile of respondents by gender, ethnicity, age, management level and number of years in a management position in the organisation (tenure).

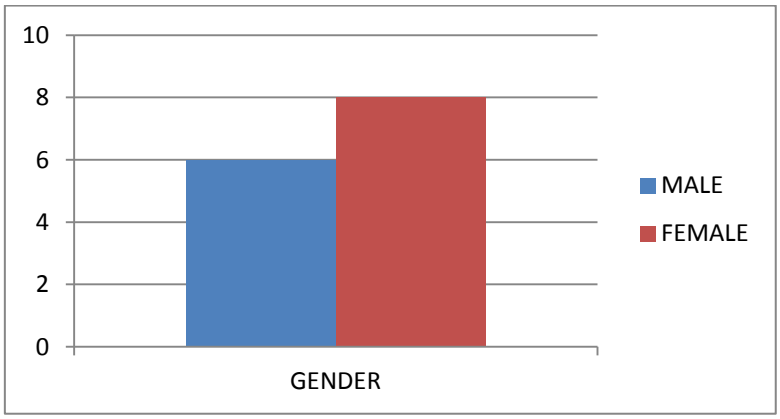
Table 3.1: Summary of participant demographic information

Respondent number	Gender	Ethnicity	Age	Management level	Tenure (years)
1	Female	White	50	Junior	5
2	Male	Coloured	34	Middle	2
3	Male	Indian	42	Middle	10
4	Male	Coloured	40	Middle	4
5	Female	Coloured	37	Junior	2
6	Male	White	55	Middle	15
7	Female	White	38	Senior	9
8	Female	Coloured	40	Junior	6
9	Male	Indian	50	Senior	8
10	Female	White	28	Junior	3
11	Female	White	35	Junior	4
12	Female	White	52	Junior	7
13	Female	Black	38	Senior	4
14	Male	Black	33	Middle	2

3.5.1 Gender

The graph below represents the gender sample population, eight females and six males. The researcher chose to interview a cross-section of both male and female managers, to ensure diversity in responses.

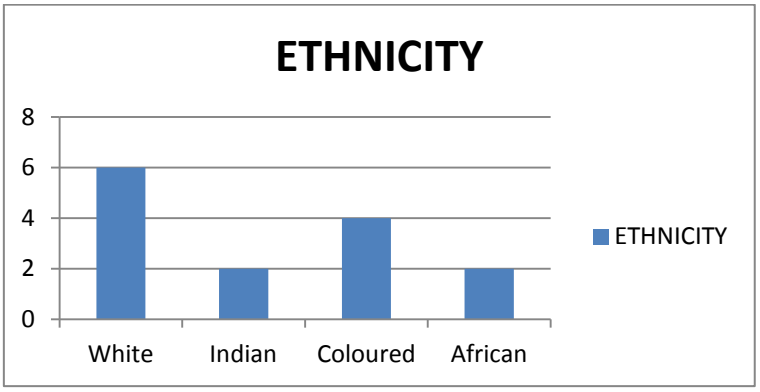
Graph 3.5.1 Gender composition



3.5.2 Ethnicity

The research included a representation across all ethnic groups in South Africa, namely White, Coloured, Indian and African. The ethnic makeup of the respondent sample is represented in the graph below. Six (42%) of the respondents were White, four (28%) Coloured, two (14%) Indian and two (14%) African. The sample was not intended to be representative of South Africa's demographic profile.

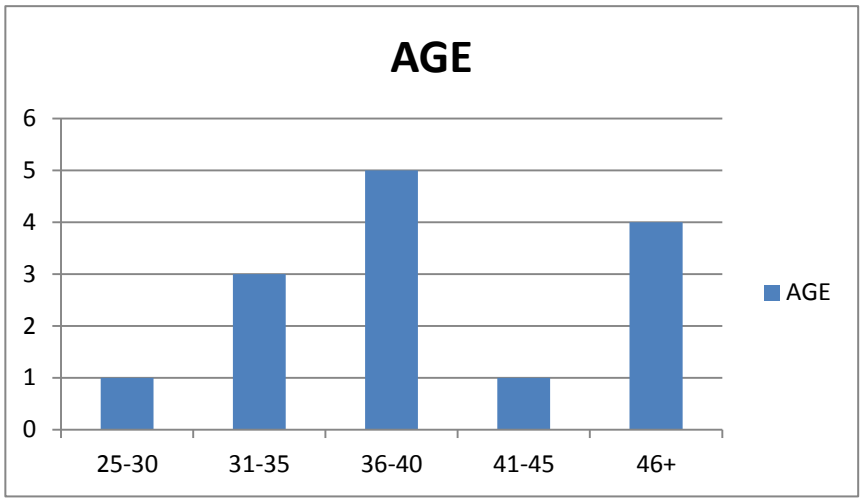
Graph 3.5.2 Ethnic composition



3.5.3 Age group

The average age group of the research sample was 28 to 55, as represented by graph 3.5.3 below.

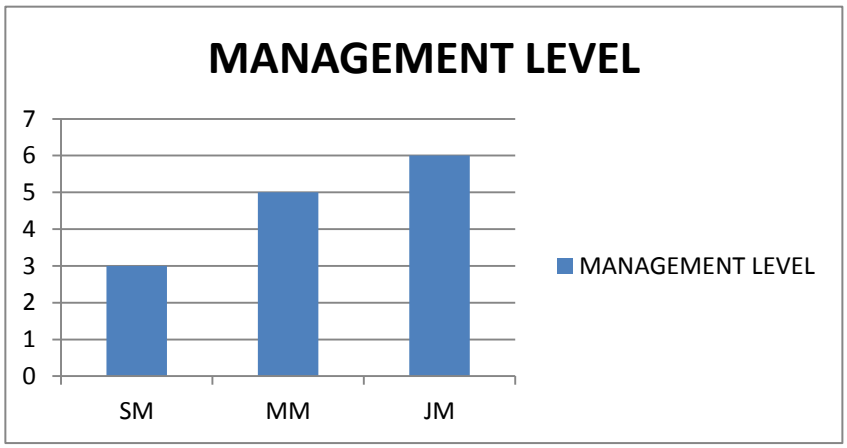
Graph 3.5.3 Age composition



3.5.4 Management position in the organisation

All fourteen respondents interviewed are in management positions, with most possessing an academic qualification. Three are at senior management level, five at middle management level and six at junior management level.

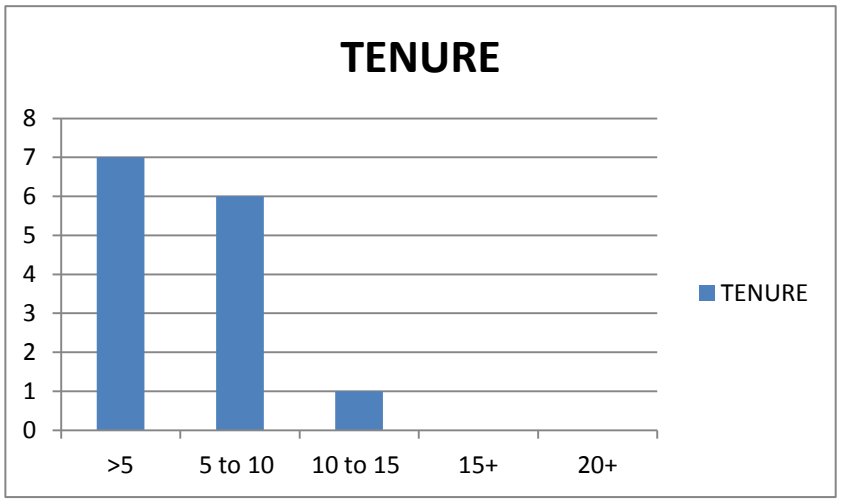
Graph 3.5.4 Management level composition



3.5.5 Tenure in the organisation

The tenure of participants at management level in the organisation was considered relevant, in terms of their experience.

Graph 3.5.5 Tenure composition



3.6 Research instruments

To inform the identified managers of the research project and request their participation, a letter was prepared and sent via e-mail (enclosed as Appendix A).

On confirmation of their willingness to participate, interviews were requested by telephone and e-mail. If the individuals were unavailable to participate in the interview, I sought a suitably experienced alternate respondent was approached. It was predicted that the required number of respondents would be adequate for the intended study.

The researcher designed a questionnaire with 16 questions (see Appendix B), which were pre-tested with four HR colleagues within the organisation and adjusted as needed. These questions provided a guide and structure for the interview process. As the researcher used semi-structured interviews, the individual answers allowed the researcher to explore meaning and experiences further, which provided significant additional information.

3.7 Procedure for data collection

The fourteen research participants were initially contacted either telephonically or via e-mail. A letter of introduction and consent forms were e-mailed before the interviews being scheduled. The interviews were conducted over two months at the selected organisation's location, in line with Kirk and Miller's (1986, p.9) view on interview location: *"A particular tradition in social science that fundamentally depends on watching people in their own territory and interacting with them in their own language, on their own terms."*

All interviews were conducted on one-on-one basis with each of the managers during working hours. The researcher chose to collect data in semi-structured interviews through the use of both open-ended and closed questions.

The approach of using semi-structured interviews included asking questions, listening, expressing interest, taking notes and recording (with permission) the participant's response. Each interview was then transcribed into a verbatim transcript. Once the interview was transcribed, the information was interpreted and analysed.

3.8 Data analysis and interpretation

The researcher selected descriptive analysis, qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis to organise and give meaning to the data for the intended audiences. Thematic analysis can be described as searching across a range of data to find meaningful patterns that have been repeated (Braun & Clark 2006). The approach used in this research study was that of latent thematic analysis, described by Braun and Clark (2006, p.13) as the *"Development of the themes themselves involves interpretative work, and the analysis that is produced is not just described but is already theorised."* It is stated by these authors that research using this approach aligns to the constructivist approach, which aligns with the stated paradigm for this research study.

For this study, the researcher combined the steps suggested for a content analysis (Hseish & Shannon 2005) and the guidelines outlined for thematic analysis Braun and Clark (2006) as follows:

- All transcripts were read carefully to ensure understanding.
- The transcripts were checked against the audiotapes.
- All transcripts were read again, with each passage or statement reflected upon to determine the general code that applied to it.
- The relevant passages or statements from each transcript were extracted from the transcripts and placed in a spreadsheet per research question.
- Each research question in each transcript was dissected in this way, resulting in series of spreadsheets containing data extracts/verbatim passages.
- Each passage was then reviewed and coded, based on what emerged from that extract.
- Codes were then clustered together into themes.
- Statements were coded into as many themes as they applied to.
- Each passage was then colour-coded according to theme, with decisions made regarding which codes to include in each theme.
- Each colour-coded passage was then grouped together in a separate document, thus combining the various research questions but separating the responses on each theme.
- These spreadsheets were used to inform the process of writing up the findings.
- Once decisions on which themes to cluster together had been reviewed again, each statement pertaining to each theme was manually counted, re-reading each statement to ensure context was maintained.
- Where a number of codes and themes were clustered together, the statements per code and theme were separately counted to provide a depth of detail that was reflected in the findings.

- The data pertaining to each theme was reflected upon in the findings and described per research question.

This process resulted in a total of five themes, which were analysed and reflected upon in the findings.

3.9 Limitations of the study

The limitations of this research study are that:

- Sampling was limited to one, selected organisation.
- Interviewer bias was limited through semi-structured interviews.
- The availability of managers proved to be challenging; this resulted in selecting individuals that were available and who closely matched the selection criteria.
- There is limited existing literature available on the role of line managers as coaches.

Although the above proved difficult to manage, the researcher was mindful to remain true to the research question and the sub questions in order to complete the research in time.

3.10 Validity and reliability

To ensure validity and reliability of the findings in any research study, data must be appropriate, meaningful and useful (Kvale, 1996, p.191). Internal validity refers to the extent to which the findings accurately describe reality. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.294-295) stated that *"the determination of such isomorphism is in principle impossible",* as one would have to know the *"precise nature of the reality"*, and if one knew this already, there would be no need to test it. The conventional researcher must postulate relationships and then test them; the postulate cannot be proved, but only falsified. The naturalistic researcher, on the other hand, assumes the presence of multiple realities and attempts to represent these multiple realities. Credibility becomes the test for this.

In positivist research, there are impartial criteria that allow researchers and reviewers of journals to judge the quality and rigor of a study. Reliability and validity is core concerns in quantitative research however they seem to have an uncertain place in the selection for the qualitative researcher.

Healy and Perry (2000) argue that the quality of a study in each theory should be evaluated in terms of its underlying theory. Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 250) suggest that the "usual canons of 'good science' requires redefinition in order to fit the realities of qualitative research." The terms reliability and validity are essential criteria for quality in quantitative research the criteria in qualitative research are the terms *credibility* (paralleling internal validity) or the extent to which the results are credible or believable from the standpoint of the participant, *transferability* (paralleling external validity) or the extent to which the results can be transferred to other settings or contexts, *dependability* (paralleling reliability) or the extent to which the same results can be obtained by independent researchers, *conformability* (paralleling objectivity) or the extent to which the results can be corroborated or confirmed by other (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

The table below compares the Lincoln and Guba (1985) criteria of reliability and validity with quantitative counterparts.

Table 3.2 Traditional and alternative criteria for judging qualitative research quality and rigor

Traditional criteria for judging quantitative research	**Alternative criteria for judging qualitative research**
Internal validity	Credibility external
External validity	Transferability
Reliability	Dependability
Objectivity	Conformability

To ensure validity in this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews as the data collection method, replicating the interviews with each respondent. By using triangulation - combining data sources, observation and document analysis - the researcher strove to overcome the intrinsic bias that comes from single method, single observer, and single theory studies.

In this study, the researcher maintained internal validity by:

- practising active listening;
- recording interviews accurately;
- initiating write-ups in the early stages;
- including all data in the final report;
- being open, honest and forthright;
- seeking feedback, and
- Writing accurately.

The most important test of any qualitative study is reliability, therefore, trustworthiness is crucial. The reliability and validity of the study were key concerns for the researcher. Due to her own experiences and viewpoints as a Human Resource employee of the organisation, she had to exercise caution to avoid applying personal biases to the study. Together credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability comprise the concept of trustworthiness or authenticity of qualitative research which Guba (1981) explicitly linked to quantitative criteria for reliability and validity. To uphold the requirements of reliability and validity, she paid close attention to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for trustworthiness:

- **Dependability:** conveying a process of the research that is logical, documented and recorded.

- **Transferability:** the extent to which the study's design will allow generalisation to other possible populations.

- **Confirmability:** the extent to which other researchers and the literature could confirm the study's findings.

- **Credibility:** a function of accuracy in which the participants' views are reported.

With reference to the above criteria, the researcher expanded on the dependability of the study by conveying the research process in a logical and coherent manner. Its prominence is evident through the key decisions taken during the study, as well as the significant factors that were considered when making these decisions. This aspect was also covered expansively through the natural history of the research process.

As discussed, the study represents a case study in a financial institution. When transferability is considered, the representative sample size limits the degree to which the study can be applied to other contexts or generalised to other possible populations. However, taking into account the depth of exploration of the study, the researcher believes that the findings can be applied to other contexts and populations.

As mentioned previously, confirmability refers to the extent to which other researchers and the literature could confirm the study's findings. The theoretical knowledge provided an understanding of performance coaching, which was of critical importance to managers who will be implementing this within organisations. Even though the context of the study was limited to the financial services industry, the authenticity of this process can be applied across similar organisations.

Credibility was attained as the research participants were granted anonymity and privacy throughout the process. Systematic and continuous comparisons were made on the patterns and themes that emerged from the data, thereby also presenting an opportunity for the reader to assess the interpretation of these themes.

CHAPTER 4: **PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS**

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher gives an account of the results obtained during the interviews. The researcher used the research questions as a starting point, then studied the data gathered in the interviewing process intensively and organised the material into manageable codes. This allowed the researcher to search for patterns or themes. Although many respondents provided responses which resulted in rich data, the researcher focussed on those areas she believed to be most relevant to the research questions. In this chapter the researcher will present these answers according to the selected themes verbatim.

4.2 Theme 1: Managers understanding of performance coaching

All the line managers interviewed had received some form of coaching training either externally or internally within the organisation. The researcher felt that it was important to establish if all the managers had the same, or a similar, understanding of performance coaching. If they did, they should have a standard approach within the organisation. The findings indicated that there was general consensus among the respondents that they understood performance coaching was used to address, and close, employee performance gaps. The following verbatim accounts illustrate this:

> RP 1: "*I feel it is there to address the gaps to ensure a standard level of performance."*
>
> RP 2: "*This is where you coach a person when they are not performing."*
>
> RP 4: *"It is really trying to understand what are those gaps, what are those variables and bringing the two closer to each other."*
>
> RP 8: *"So performance coaching for me is exactly what it says: focus on the performance itself, so if there are performance gaps you need to identify those and address them by coaching the individual".*

A few research participants stated that they did not believe that performance coaching was limited to addressing an employee's poor performance. It could also be to raise an individual's current (good) performance and elevate them to the next level or role. This is reflected in the statements below:

> RP 6: *"I do not think that it is limited to poor performance. I think it is also for good performance, that they can also be coached. Poor performers need coaching to get them to a certain standard."*
>
> RP 7: *"It is when you want to enhance the performance."*
>
> RP 8: *"It could also mean coaching someone to exceed performance so it is not only about addressing the gaps."*
>
> RP 10: *"Starting to coach them for the next level role, but predominantly for their current role."*

Interestingly, there was one respondent who stated that performance coaching by line managers is considered to be mentoring. This was important as it could indicate what the rationale was behind the decision for their current approach to performance coaching.

> RP 9: *"So I am equating mentorship to performance coaching. Performance coaching is that, and I will use your terminology, performance coaching is that coaching that a line manager does for his or her staff member that raises the level of competence, in a particular job for a particular period of time."*

In summary, performance coaching is understood to address and close performance gaps of their employees as well as to enhance good performance.

4.2.1 Performance coaching vs performance management

The researcher wanted to establish if line managers were able to clearly distinguish between performance coaching and performance management as some managers made mention of using performance coaching to manage individuals out of the organisation. Some managers viewed performance coaching as a non-directive medium that was used to enable the development of an individual, whereas performance management was seen as directive, with managers providing guidance on a specific situation or task.

RP 7: "*I think the difference there is a way in which it is done. Coaching is non-directive, where you are asking a person how do you think that we can get to the solution, where do you require assistance, what actions can you put in place and why have you put those actions in place? However performance management is more directive, where I could possibly give more guidance to a non-performer."*

Other managers understood performance management as the cycle from contracting with employees on their annual development objectives, then reviewing, assessing and rating the individuals on their performance. Managers then used performance coaching to ensure that they were developed to meet their objective. This is reflected in the statements below:

RP 8: "*Performance management to me is the whole cycle; from contracting to the development part of it back to now we are contracting again. Performance management really includes performance coaching. It is a component of performance management. We also ensure that people have Performance Development Plans (PDP). So performance coaching could be coaching someone on specific aspects, or it can also be coaching someone to help them to put together their PDP."*

RP 9: "*Performance coaching is a subset of performance management. Performance coaching helps the manager to manage the performance of the individual, so the manager will sit with his staff member, find out why is that person performing poorly in that area of work and determine that performance coaching is required and if that does not work, the manager sits down again with the person and says okay, we tried*

performance coaching, lets understand in a real, honest discussion why things are not working even after the performance coaching and maybe there are other reasons as to why the person is not performing. One of the reasons could be poor job fit. The manager will have to make the decision to change that person's job."

In summary, 12 of the 14 (85%) research participants understood performance coaching to mean addressing the individuals' gaps in fulfilling their current role. Importantly, it's interesting to note that a large percentage of this group equated addressing gaps to managing poor performance.

4.3 Theme 2: The role of the line manager

The interviewer wanted to understand from the respondents what they thought their roles (as line managers) were in performance coaching. It was deemed important to establish the perceptions of the line managers as this would have influenced the way they approached and applied performance coaching at the workplace. Most of the respondents felt that they, as line managers, played a critical role in developing their people to ensure that they perform to the best of their abilities. They further added that managers should play an active, engaging, influencing, energising and leading role in developing their people. It is expected of them to provide their people with vision and guidance to ensure that they meet their performance objectives. They were also expected to come up with ways to motivate and assist employees to perform at their best. There was also mention that line managers should identify talent from within their workforce and be able to grow their skills, to ensure that they leave the team with an additional skill set.

4.3.1 Goal setting

The relevance of a line manager engaging in goal setting is reflected in the statements below:

RP 3: *"People need to deliver on agreed objectives."*

RP 4: *"Managers have the responsibility of ensuring that everyone reporting to them has a clear understanding of their expectations."*

RP 14: *"Identifying and clarifying the required expectations for optimum performance. Finding out why their direct reports are not performing according to the expectations."*

4.3.2 Influencing and energising role

The relevance of a manager playing an influencing and energising role is reflected in the statements below:

RP 3: *"It is about influencing a group of people to deliver on agreed objectives; it is about influence, energising, and bringing vision and obtaining buy-in."*

RP 4: *"I think line managers have very critical role to play in coaching individuals in life. So when you start working in a business, the manager becomes that surrogate coach by definition. Just as much as the manager has performance requirements and expectations that that he or she needs to meet, he also has the responsibility to ensure that everyone reporting to him has a clear understanding of those expectations and helping these individuals to meet those expectations".*

4.3.3 Motivating role

The relevance of a manager playing a motivating role is reflected in the statement below:

RP 14: *"Come up with ways to assist/motivate the employees perform at their best."*

4.3.4 Engaging role

Support for a manager playing an engaging role is shown in the statements below:

RP 11: *"Yes, it is the role of the line manager, if you have people reporting into you. If you get work done through people I think you should engage with people. I engage with my people every day, I expect you to deliver by giving you guidance that you understand and know what to do. I also think that managers should give the tools to the people to drive themselves."*

RP 4: *"The leader needs to have foresight and current sight of what needs to happen in developing those individuals through engagements."*

RP 10: *"If you have people reporting in to you. If you get work done through people I think you should engage with people.*

4.3.5 Improving performance

The role of the manager is linked to performance. This is reflected in the statements below:

RP 5: ***"****I think a very critical role because line managers have to make sure that their people are trained, that their people have got the right exposure ... that they improve their performance."*

RP 6: *"They should be playing a very active role. If you have people reporting into you, you will have to help them to perform to the best of their abilities. That is the duty of a line manager."*

RP 7: *"A line manager will have to play a crucial role in that individual or in that team to understand where the performance issues are, how do I get to a better solution, to improve individual performance or the team's performance."*

RP 10: *"I think they should play the lead role in performance coaching. Maybe at times they can use other individuals to also help performance coach certain members of their team, overall they should take the main responsibility."*

RP 13: *"I think it goes back to what I said at the beginning when we started. You can use it as a talent management tool, the way you have particularly noticed that somebody is talent. For me, I am very big on developing people, that when they leave my team they should leave it with an additional skill set, having grown a lot more than when they joined the team. So you know as a manager it would be helping someone get to a point where they move on, progress, they will be promoted. As a line manager that is what I understand performance coaching to be."*

4.3.6 Building relationships

Support for managers building relationships with their staff is reflected by one manager in the statement below:

RP 8: *"It would be somebody that you can build a relationship with, in terms of people being open about their gaps, you go deeper than just performance coaching."*

4.3.7 Providing support

RP 9: *"For me the line manager is the most important person in performance coaching, because if the line manager is asked to support his team member, the best way of doing it is by looking at the way the person is performing, identify where the person is going wrong and help the person to do better in that particular role. Now if a line manager cannot do these, then what is the role of the line manager but to develop and support his staff?"*

RP 10: *I engage with my people every day and give them guidance. I also think that managers should give the tools to their people to drive themselves."*

RP 14: *"Come up with ways to assist/motivate the employees to perform at their best."*

Two respondents felt very strongly that line managers should not coach as they believed that managers are more likely to misuse the concept of coaching if they do not know how to coach. They also felt that if managers did not have the technical knowledge to conduct performance coaching, they should refer the person to someone who has the technical knowledge to do so. This finding is important as it provided information to answer the research questions.

The statement below supports the view that managers can misuse coaching:

RP 2: *"I do not think that the line manager should be involved with it. Most line managers misuse the concept of coaching - by that I mean they attend a certain level coaching course and they follow a specific model, which is not necessarily the right way of doing things and it becomes stale, non-effective, difficult to prove and normally only focuses on negative aspects. I haven't heard other managers saying what if I have a great performer. How do I lift that B performer to an A performer. Line managers to me should not fulfil that role and not everybody is a natural coach. Line managers might be technically efficient but might not focus on the human factor."*

The research findings in this theme attest to the fact that research participants know the positives of their role as line managers in performance coaching and can talk to the outcomes of it. They expressed that managers have a crucial role to play in developing their people. They need to communicate, engage, motivate, inspire and provide guidance, empathy and vision for employees to perform well at the workplace.

4.4. Theme 3: Skills required to conduct performance coaching

The manager-coach skills were explored to establish whether the participants had the skills required to conduct performance coaching successfully. This was critical to answer the research questions posed. The responses are outlined in the following section.

4.4.1 Listening skills

The relevance of the skill of listening is reflected in the following statement:

RP 2: *"The first major one is listening. It is about giving feedback to others, it should be a person that is able to build ladders for others to be able to have an open conversation, be open enough to see other viewpoints and not just weigh in with their own views. Also they should have very specific coaching skills - trained on how to coach, how to ask certain questions, map another person's mind map to share that skill and technical ability to see where they are wrong and stepping in and guiding. So those are the critical skills apparent for a coach."*

RP 6: *"I think you probably need very good questioning skills; You will need good observation skills. Those are the ones that I can think of right now."*

RP 8: *"Obviously coaching skills, listening skills, definitely should have listening skills."*

RP 9: *"The third one is the skill of listening, I think it is absolutely important that a Performance Coach is a good listener, and listens to exactly what the issue is."*

RP 10: *"...ability to listen, I think that is quite important as well. So sometimes you might show someone how to do something but their own interpretation is different, so listening is something that we often overlook."*

RP 12: *"They need to have good listening skills."*

4.4.2 Interpersonal skills

The following statements demonstrate understanding not necessarily competence.

RP 8: *"I think you should have interpersonal skills."*

RP 3: *"It is essential that the coach has interpersonal skills"*

RP 12: *"They really need to have interpersonal skills in the sense that they should understand themselves, in order to understand the people, or the people they just manage, the people they need to be leader to."*

4.4.3 Communication skills

Support for the skill of communication is shown in the statement below.

RP 3: *"Communication skills are very important."*

RP 4: *"Another skill that I think is critical is communication, because communication is what is observed and seen and heard. It affects the senses."*

RP 9: *"The fourth skill is of communicating and interacting with the individuals because the answers might not be in the technical competency, the root cause might be in an array of things, which the line manager must be able to pick up."*

RP 11: *"I will not say I got them necessarily, obviously you need, you have to have communication skills, you need to be able to engage, listen, guide, empathise and you also need to have business acumen".*

RP 12: *"Firstly for me they need good communication skills."*

4.4.4 Emotional intelligence

This is reflected in the statements below:

RP 3: *"It is essential that the coach has interpersonal skills ... and high emotional intelligence."*

RP 7: *"Coaching in itself is a skill, emotional intelligence to understand where that person comes from. So it comes down to the emotional intelligence part otherwise you will not be able to pick up whether this coaching process of yours is working or not."*

4.4.5 Showing empathy

This is reflected in the statements below:

RP 7: *"You need to have empathy and you need to understand your own emotions of your role as the coach. You need to understand the coachee's emotions."*

RP 4: *"Empathy is always having a certain element of your leadership left to understand the person that you are dealing with, and that each person comes from a different background. A different set of influences forms part of their Structure of Interpretation, so you may say something to an individual in the team but it does necessarily mean that that individual will react the way you want them to react.* "

RP 12: *"... and they need to have empathy, they really need to have the people side or the feeling for people."*

RP 14: *"Empathy, creativity and planning."*

4.4.6 Questioning skills

RP 2: *"Questioning skills are very important."*

RP 5: "*And knowing how to ask the right questions, position the right things is very important … it is not performance coaching if it is purely instructing*."

RP 6: *"I think you probably need very good questioning skills."*

4.4.7 Leadership skills

Support for this skill is shown in the statement below:

RP 4: *"One of the critical skills is leadership and not just understanding leadership from a point of that I am the manager and what I say goes but rather having a transformational leadership style. Also to a large extent being a servant type leader. Understanding that in order to lead you must be able to serve. Coaching, I think is a critical element in terms of that. Because at the end of the day a coach as a manager / or a manager as coach ... whichever way you want to put it, the ideal in coaching is that you want to create a sense of congruence."*

4.4.8 Attitude and intention

Having the correct attitude and good intentions was considered important. This is reflected in the statement below:

RP 9: *"The second very important is the attitude, what is the intention of the line manager engaging the staff member in performance coaching? If it is an attitude that says that I am interested in your development, I want you to do better, if you raise your performance the whole team does better, the intention is easily seen through by the employee. If the employee sees the intention of the line manager is to get rid of me, therefore he is doing this as a duty, and then performance coaching is not going to work. The second important skill is attitude and intention.*

4.4.9 Goal setting

The ability to set clear, achievable goals is reflected below:

RP 5: "*The manager must be able to set goals for his team."*

RP 6: "*And possibly being able to establish goals for the individual and the team."*

RP 10: *"Further, managers must be able to provide the team and individuals with well- defined and achievable goals."*

In light of the above findings, the research participants have stated the skills that they believe are critical for line managers to possess in order to conduct performance coaching successfully. These included listening skills, communication skills, questioning skills, ability to motivate and inspire. Other skills mentioned are coaching skills, interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence and ability to set goals. Another skill highlighted for a manager was his or her leadership style, where there is a belief that managers should adopt a transformational leadership style or a servant leadership style when coaching. It was further mentioned that managers should also be empathetic, meaning that they should understand the individual as a person, and have a positive attitude with good intentions.

4.5 Theme 4: Benefits of performance coaching

The intention of this question was to elicit what line managers thought the benefit of performance coaching was to their employees.

> RP 4: *"I think it is very critical to the teams. Unlike performance development reviews, coaching allows a certain amount of humanism, because you are actually allowing a more humane conversation to take place. In coaching I am taking off my manager's hat and I am putting on my guide / coach hat. It is those conversations that actually assist in the individual being more present towards achieving the goals."*

> RP 8: *"I think it is very beneficial, if you look at it, there are different ways to develop a person. Research has also shown that people learn more by empowerment things like stretch assignments, coaching, mentoring and on-the job, than formal training."*

RP 9: *"I think it is very important. Who is a manager? A manager is somebody who sets the goals for his team, gets his team to deliver on those goals because he or she cannot do it himself, so it is very important to build a team so that they can achieve the goals that you want to achieve for your Business Unit or whatever, and having performance coaching as a number one thing as a line manager is critical because you want your team to develop, it is absolutely important. Every line manager should be assessed on how he is performance coaching his team."*

RP 12: *"I think it is absolutely essential, firstly I think it is the message that what is performance coaching, it is not a stick that we hit the people with. Not only to focus maybe on the poorer performer, also to sustain the good performers."*

RP 13: *"It is highly effective; I think it empowers your team, particularly the coaching aspect. It removes you from the situation as the fountain of all knowledge and it empowers people to give input, critically analysing and thinking. And to let the person know that your opinion counts, bring yourselves into the situation. You can open up and you can share your views, you can express yourselves. Being comfortable at being yourselves, that helps people start being a lot more creative, in two things, enjoying their work and being a lot more productive. They know that they count; people want to feel acknowledged in different ways. That 'sense of self' - I believe in that. People will be a lot more effective because people are going to be productive. You are not going to have that 9 to 5 mentality - even if someone is sitting somewhere way off, they can start thinking around how do we improve our work; how do we improve our environment?"*

The responses demonstrate that line managers believe that the perceived benefit for their employee is that it allows for human contact and conversation time; the focus is on them achieving their goals and the manager acts as a guide to the employee in the process. One of the key benefits highlighted is that performance coaching empowers the team or individuals within a team. It allows managers to be removed from being seen as the person with all the knowledge but rather provides the person with the space to think things through and come up with his or own opinions during the conversation.

4.6 Theme 5: Frequency and approach of coaching sessions

This finding was important to answer the research question of 'what are the benefits of performance coaching?' When interviewed, all the line managers stated that they conducted coaching sessions, however these were situational depending the employee's skills gaps, tenure etc. When asked how often the coaching was conducted and what approach was used, the following responses were given:

> RP 1: *"Yes, we have a regular, bi-weekly one on one meeting and in those meetings we then address issues and discuss the coaching that is needed and required and during those sessions we will do coaching."*
>
> RP 2: *"Yes, once a quarter."*
>
> RP 4: *"You get formal coaching and you get informal coaching. I think my approach has always been to be as present as possible with my team, separating them as individuals and spending time with them as individuals as well as creating a team space for coaching."*
>
> RP 6: *"I do not work on a formal coaching, no, no. I do not sit and say that this week we are going to focus on this or that and so on and whatever it might be. It is more spontaneous."*
>
> RP 8: *"Yes, I do, once a month, it also depends if it is a new person, I have a bi-weekly one on one with him. It is different, he is learning and he has a lot to learn. In my team I have specialists, coaching will more be around identifying the gaps. We also coach on the spot; we always de-brief on what went well, what you can do differently. It is not formalised, it is on-going".*
>
> RP 9: *"My style is not to say 'I'd like us to meet for a performance coaching session' it is on-the-job, just in time, it is using the latest learning principles, so if I see something happening is not right, I will address it. I will give you a typical example: somebody had sent off an e-mail to all the countries in Africa and it confused the hell out of them, so I was coaching my direct report and the secondment on how we*

should have one channel of communication into the countries, it took us 10 minutes. It was performance coaching, it was on the job, just in time, on the job, just what is required at that point in time."

RP 10: *"Some I do formally once a week, others depend on the task that comes up and they share with me that they need some assistance with it. I think it happens informally all the time, but with certain individuals it is a lot more formalised."*

All the participants indicated that they conducted performance coaching with their employees; however the frequency varied, depending on the purpose and structure of the coaching and who was being coached. Frequency also varied over time e. g. a new employee might receive coaching daily but later progressed to weekly or monthly.

4.7 Summary of the findings

The interviews confirmed that the line managers' understanding of performance coaching was that it is used to address and close the performance gaps of their employees. Some managers understood performance management and performance coaching to mean the same thing. However, one manager equated performance coaching to mentoring.

The role of the manager as performance coach emerged as three primary roles, namely: to enable performance, motivate and inspire, and provide support. The key skills required to carry out effective performance coaching were highlighted as communication; listening skills; interpersonal skills; emotional intelligence; empathy; questioning skills and goal setting.

It emerged that good performers are coached less frequently as opposed to poor performers. Some managers have a set frequency such as monthly or weekly, whilst others use it as required, in line with their normal leadership style. This finding is considered to be very important to answer the research question: if managers were conducting performance coaching informally and in an *ad hoc* fashion, did they believe in the benefits and did they see this as a priority in developing their staff?

CHAPTER 5: **DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS**

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on analysing the results of the findings presented in Chapter 4, placing these findings in context with the literature presented in Chapter 2 and drawing conclusions. The results will be presented in the sequence of the three research questions with an overall findings summary on the outcome of the research. This will be followed by a final chapter which will conclude the report and make recommendations for further research.

5.2 Overview of the results

The literature review in Chapter 2 provided the relevant theory and findings from which the three research questions were derived, which in turn informed the content of the interview schedule included in Appendix B. In Chapter 4, a detailed analysis of the data collected during the interviews was undertaken. In this chapter, the researcher links the three chapters mentioned above and distils the findings by discussing the research questions asked in Chapter 2.

Fourteen line managers were interviewed at the specified organisation. They varied in gender, ethnicity, age, experience and tenure, which added a broader view to the research.

5.3 The role of the line manager as performance coach

The first research question is “What role should line managers’ play in conducting effective performance coaching?” To answer this question, the managers’ understanding of performance coaching was first discussed and analysed, followed by the role of the manager as performance coach.

To begin with, 12 of the 14 (85%) research participants understood performance coaching to mean addressing the employees' skills gaps in fulfilling their current role. Importantly, it's interesting to note that there was a large percentage of this group that equated addressing gaps to managing poor performance. Further, one research participant equated performance coaching to mentoring and another to performance management. However, it was not seen as a vehicle for further enhancing competence or preparing employees for a new role. The research thus indicated that the line managers' understanding of performance coaching was confused with managing poor performance by twelve of the fourteen research participants.

It aligns to the literature, although the literature does not strongly emphasise the addressing of gaps to manage poor performance. Hargrove's (2011) definition of performance coaching is summarised as *"Specifically deals with facilitating learning and development to improve the performance of others involved in a specific role or responsibility. It can be applied to many different disciplines (e.g. sports, acting, and music) but it is especially applicable to performance in a business setting."*

However, Whitmore (2002, p.97) defines performance coaching as *"Optimising people's potential and performance"* and *"Unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them."* (Whitmore, 1990). He also adds that *"coaching is a way of managing, a way of treating people, a way of thinking, a way of being."* Whitmore (2008, p.18). This links in with the role of the manager as coach.

In light of Whitmore's views of what coaching is, this study shows that even though line managers understand the basics of performance coaching and what it is meant to achieve in theory, they still think and approach it in a very transactional way. It is apparent that the research participants don't see coaching as a *"way of being"* but rather as an activity within their role. This activity is simply engaging in a process/performance rather than completely embracing the individual.

Overall, they understood the goal of performance coaching being focused on closing an identified gap, and understood it as a subset of the broader process of performance management. This creates a good foundation for realising the benefits of performance coaching, however they did not extend the objective of performance coaching to further enhancing performance that was already good, competent or even excellent. They also limited their focus to on-the-job performance coaching only, and did not include growing and developing the individual holistically.

Ideally, if line managers understand performance coaching correctly, they should see it as their responsibility and take this up in their role. The research findings revealed that line managers do believe that they should play an active, engaging, influencing, energising and leading role in developing their people. All the respondents believed it is their role to take up and that they should be conducting performance coaching as part of their management function. Respondents used words to describe their role as *"Line managers have a critical role to play"; "They should play a lead role",* and *"The line manager is the most important person in performance coaching".*

Supporting research literature states that *"Coaching managers believe that their purpose is to add value to the organisation by helping their team learn, grow and develop."* (Phillips 1994). Some see the central role of the modern manager as supporting the management of performance or the management of learning. More specifically, there has been a shift from a role of the 'manager as controller' to that of a coach or mentor, of which developing employees is a major part (Tamkin et al., 2003).

The respondents in this study tend to use performance coaching to manage poor performance; this could possibly lead to a falsely-perceived alignment of coaching with poor performance. Performance coaching should be positioned as an enabler to performance, irrespective of performance levels. It should be associated with the manager's development plan, to enable career progression. Hence the frequency as to how often the managers carry out performance coaching seems to be a challenge. The organisation does not have a policy to guide how – or how often – coaching should be conducted. Therefore the effectiveness of performance coaching by line managers within a financial institution is still in question.

Looking at the research findings, the respondents overwhelmingly believed it was a key part of their role. However, this alone does not imply that the full benefits of performance coaching would be achieved, as 'how' performance coaching is conducted becomes very important. The findings showed that it was very inconsistently applied in terms of frequency, structure and approach. This begs the question, why? If they all understand it, can see the benefits, and agree that it is a requirement in their role, why would it not be frequently and consistently applied? Perhaps it is because some do not have the skills and therefore the confidence to take this up as they know it should be. The following section examines the respondents' views regarding key skills needed for performance coaching.

5.4 The skills required by line managers to conduct performance coaching

Research question two: "What skills do managers need to conduct performance coaching successfully?"

Understanding what performance coaching is, is only one part of the solution. Having the necessary skills and being able to implement the approach is the second part. The research findings suggest that the line managers' view of performance coaching (even though transactional in nature) can be seen as the basic understanding of the concept. The next step is to determine if they recognise which skills are important.

The participants mentioned the following skills as critical when conducting performance coaching:

- listening
- providing feedback
- ability to have open conversations
- interpersonal skills
- communication skills
- emotional intelligence
- empathy
- goal setting
- leadership style

The literature that supports some of these skills include King and Eaton (1999, p.146): *"Listening skills; effective questioning; ability to have open and honest conversations; building and maintain a rapport; reframing; reading non-verbal behaviour; establishing commitment, and goal setting"*. Further support is found in Browning (2004, p.98) who says that the basic skill for a coach is the ability to listen. Stone (2007, p.15) also mentions that as a manager, one needs the following coaching skills: *"Ability to gather information; ability to listen to others; awareness of what's happening around you."* Rogers (2004, p.42) *suggests "genuine listening is rare*" but is essential to building rapport and confidence in a coaching relationship. It is not surprising that 'listening skills' were the most frequently. However the quality of the listening is still in question.

However, 'questioning' was mentioned by only two respondents, despite the critically fundamental role that the competent use of question frameworks plays in best-practice coaching. 'Technical skills' (three mentions), 'leadership skills' (two mentions) and 'business acumen' (two mentions) were rated at least as important as questioning. This appears to be further corroboration that the form of 'coaching' most line managers have in mind is closer to mentoring than performance coaching. Byrne (2007, p.1987) indicates that coaches must have "*well-honed communication and interpersonal skills essential to motivating and inspiring others".* The findings showed that respondents felt the most common skills required were communication, empathy, listening and interpersonal skills. These are in line with research literature.

Hudson (1999, p. 20-21) stated that *"Performance coaching starts with establishing clear goals that both the manager-coach and the team member believe to be reachable."* Three respondents mentioned goal setting; with one specifying that such goals must be 'well-defined' and 'achievable'.

Table 5.1: Summary of coaching skills highlighted by research participants

Skills	No of times mentioned
Listening skills	7
Communication	5
Interpersonal skills	3
Empathy	3
Questioning skills	3
Goal setting	3
Technical skills	3
Emotional intelligence	2
Leadership skills	2
Business acumen	2

However, additional key skills highlighted in the literature review are discipline and commitment. Browning (2004, p.98) states *"Being a good coach requires discipline and it involves taking real responsibility for the coachee's felt problem.*" King and Eaton (1999, p.146) also felt that a key skill is "*establishing commitment"*. 'Commitment' was absent from the skills that respondents felt were necessary, which may explain why performance coaching was so inconsistently applied in terms of structure, process and frequency. The

implication of this is that even if they had the skills and saw it as their responsibility, without true commitment to the process, and disciplined application, they may not realise all the benefits. The results of the research show that one factor may be that the organisation has not provided sufficient tools or systems to support the necessary commitment e.g. measuring coaching as part of their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

It is apparent that coaching is not seen as part of the organisational culture, nor as part of the leadership capabilities within the organisation's leadership framework.

5.6 Managers' views on benefits of performance coaching

Research question 3: "What are the benefits of performance coaching as conducted by line managers?"

Despite the difficulties which managers may face in deploying a coaching approach, the respondents to this research were very positive about the benefits, for themselves personally, for the people they coached and for their organisation.

Some of the benefits highlighted by the respondents were: it allows human contact and conversation time; it focuses on the employees' needs; it assists them to achieve their goals, and empowers the team (or individuals within a team).

CHAPTER 6: **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 Conclusion

The contribution of this research is to shine a light on the under-researched area of managerial coaching and provide a snapshot of current practices in the South African context. The research is of particular interest to the selected organisation, as it will provide senior and executive management with insight into the realities of the line managers' environment. The guidelines provided, in terms of the line manager's coaching role, will be of interest to all managers in the organisation and facilitate conversations on this topic.

This research set out to understand how line managers should carry out effective performance coaching within a financial institution. In so doing, it described the line managers' understanding of performance coaching at the workplace; their specific role, and the skills required to be effective performance coaches. Lastly the research explored the benefits of performance coaching as viewed by managers.

The research topic "The role of the line manager as performance coach" was further explored using the following research questions:

- "What role should line managers' play in conducting effective performance coaching?"
- "What skills do managers need to conduct performance coaching successfully?"
- "What are the benefits of performance coaching as conducted by line managers?"

This chapter concludes this study and provides recommendations for potential future research, as well as the applicability and use thereof.

It was found that all the participants strive to be successful, lead high performing teams and contribute to the bottom line of the company's turnover. Whilst performance coaching brings some challenges, due to the complexity of the role, it also holds tremendous benefits for this organisation, particularly because of the opportunities to develop supportive and communicative relationships with employees.

This puts the manager-coaches in a unique position to really understand the needs of their employees. By addressing these needs and enabling performance and further development, employee fulfilment and well-being is likely to increase, with a positive impact on their work performance. They are more likely to be retained in the organisation if their progression is supported and encouraged.

The research has indicated that the line managers understand the role they need to play in performance coaching; they know some of the key skills required and appreciate the potential benefits of performance coaching. However, the study also revealed that there is no structure or process to support them in the execution of performance coaching with employees. It can be therefore concluded that although they have been provided with some of the tools needed, this specific work environment may still be an inhibiting factor.

Within the organisation researched, performance coaching is not a strategic focus for line managers; hence the lack of a formal approach. It was clearly evident that coaching is not a factor in the line managers' own Key Performance Indicators. It is not featured in the organisation's leadership framework as a critical leadership capability; thus line managers may not be motivated or driven to take up this part of their role.

Whenever a need for skills development is identified, it is prudent to always look at the performance environment in which those skills must be applied. In other words it should be considered that effective implementation not only requires a skills set, but also an environment that supports the utilisation of those skills. It is important to see whether the organisation's working environment supports line management to focus on, and implement, performance coaching. Should line managers not be supported in following through with their commitment to performance coaching (e.g. they are bombarded by operational demands and suffer the greatest daily consequences for not delivering on these) their people development will suffer.

Due to performance coaching happening on an *ad hoc* basis with no formal process or structure in place, line managers are applying the principles of performance coaching inconsistently. This has a direct impact on the employees' experience of the coaching sessions. There is no evidence in this research that demonstrates that these sessions are successful from an employees' perspective, however, there are some considerations to note.

Due to the inconsistent application of coaching, employees may not understand the process, may not see the value of the coaching and may even replicate it (poorly) with others when they take on leadership roles. The implication of employees not understanding the process and not seeing the value of the coaching is that the level of employee engagement may start to dissipate.

6.2 Areas of future research

Several potential areas for future research became apparent during this study. They were touched on during the research, but the scope did not allow for a full exploration of these allied areas. They are detailed below:

- The factors that inhibit line managers from conducting successful performance coaching within an organisational context.
- The organisational practices and policies pertaining to the implementation of performance coaching. This research will provide valuable guidelines for various organisations that wish to introduce formal performance coaching.
- Specific forms and models of coaching that are particularly effective within the manager-employee relationship.

6.3 Recommendations

- **Organisational planning**

  It is recommended that this research be used by the organisation's Human Resource Department, which is responsible for planning, designing and implementing a manager-coaching programme. A standardised coaching framework and approach must be agreed upon, allowing for a formal structure and process to be in place. Clarity of activity provides understanding to all parties involved and leads to higher performance levels simply because all involved are aware of roles, responsibilities and goals. Performance coaching should be associated with management development plans, to enable career progression.

- **Environmental performance analysis**

  Whenever a need for skills development is identified, it is prudent to always look at the performance environment in which those skills must be applied. In other words it should be considered that effective implementation not only requires a skills set, but also an environment that supports the utilisation of those skills. It is therefore recommended that the organisation conducts a performance analysis of the environment in order to establish enablers and inhibitors. The analysis will allow the business to better understand the environment in which line managers must conduct performance coaching.

- **Skills training for manager-coaches**

  Once the environmental issues are resolved, the next part of the solution would be to empower the line managers with the right skills, while the business takes responsibility for supporting them in taking up their role. Managers should be trained on the performance coaching framework and approach as well as processes. They will need the relevant skills and necessary coaching toolkits on hand for varying levels of coaching (foundational, advanced and expert).

Short training programmes appear to be useful in equipping managers with basic coaching skills such as listening, questioning, goal-setting and feedback, but may be less appropriate for teasing out the complexities of the role of 'manager as coach' and for learning how to coach teams.

For coaching to be effective, it requires lengthy and in-depth training, where line managers would have the opportunity to be exposed to considerable practical coaching practices, to embed the learnings through professional supervision, and continuing professional development.

- **Implementation of formalised performance coaching**

It would be beneficial to drive a business initiative that focuses on creating the most conducive environment for performance coaching to become standard at the organisation. This may include: improving people support and development at the highest level of the organisation; implementing a values-driven culture and behaviours; aligning line managers' Performance Development Plans to support this; educating staff on performance coaching being standard practice in the workplace; putting in place stronger rewards for supporting and developing staff, and introducing consequences for non-compliance.

It is advised that coaching champions are created in each department to help foster and embed this culture. Communities of Practice are also encouraged as a means of supporting each other with daily performance coaching challenges and sharing of best practices / tools.

During implementation, it is critical that the benefits for the organisation are monitored and evaluated. This will allow for continuous improvements as the necessary adjustments are made.

In summary, the research findings in this report will add to the body of knowledge surrounding performance coaching in the workplace by highlighting the core coaching skills that are most likely to promote a successful coaching outcome. The challenge that lies ahead is for line managers to acquire these coaching skills so that they can make the transition to become a coaching manager. This must be done in conjunction with the relevant organisational frameworks being put into effect to support this coaching culture otherwise the attempt may be futile or ineffective.

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APPENDIX A: LETTER TO RESPONDENTS

I am completing a Masters in Management of Business Executive Coaching (MMBEC) at the University of Witwatersrand Business School, Johannesburg (WBS). My MMBEC dissertation is to understand the role of the line manager as a performance coach in improving the performance of his/her staff. In gathering data on this subject, I would be grateful if I could arrange a one hour interview with you to understand the role you play as a line manager in performance coaching your staff.

Your input into this research study will be greatly appreciated. All information disclosed with is treated with the utmost confidentially. The final report will be for academic purposes only.

I will be available to meet with you at a location and time of your convenience.

Thank you for your kind assistance.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Govender

Contact number: 0827971817

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Interview Questions	
Date	
1.	What do you understand by Performance Coaching?
2.	What do you understand by Performance Management?
3.	If you had to compare Performance Coaching to Performance Management, what in your opinion would be the difference?
4.	How do you view Performance Coaching to other types of coaching
5.	What role do you think Line Managers should play in Performance Coaching?
6.	What skills do you think Line Managers need to have Performance Coaching?
7.	How effective / beneficial do you think Performance Coaching is to your team's performance?
8.	Do you conduct Performance Coaching sessions with your direct reports?
9.	If yes, how often do you do Performance Coaching?
10.	Are these sessions formal or informal?
11.	What is your description of formal and informal?
12.	Do you have a structure that you follow for Performance Coaching (formal and informal)
13.	Explain the structure of the session.
14.	How do you decide who in your team needs performance coaching?
15.	Do you think Performance Coaching is valued by your team?
16.	Is the Performance Coaching output measured in a personal development plan?

APPENDIX C: LETTER OF THANKS

University Name

Address

Date

Respondent Name

Dear Mr/Mrs_____

Thank you participating in my research interview. Your contribution has been most beneficial and is appreciated.

I am happy to share with you the findings of my research report once it has been accepted.

Yours sincerely

Researcher

APPENDIX D: ETHICS PROTOCOL

The University of Witwatersrand has prescribed a formal protocol for this research project.

It was important to note that throughout the research, ethical considerations were at the forefront of my mind. Consent was received from all the interviewees before recording and interviewing commenced. The interviews were kept confidential; the information from the transcripts was not shared with any persons without their permission and each respondent will be given a copy of the research report before it is submitted into the academic office. During the interviews the interviewees were assured of the above so as to allow them to be as open and honest in their responses.

APPENDIX E: TRANSCRIPTS

Transcripts available on a compact disc

Respondent 1

Respondent 2

Respondent 3

Respondent 4

Respondent 5

Respondent 6

Respondent 7

Respondent 8

Respondent 9

Respondent 10

Respondent 11

Respondent 12

Respondent 13

Respondent 14