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The manager-coach's roles and skills as needed to optimise the work-life balance of working women.

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Interview 6

Date: 9/9/2011

Respondent: manager

Level: Middle management

Interviewer welcomes the respondent and explains the process.

The meaning of work-life balance

Question 1

Explain what you think the similarities and differences are between work-life balance and work-life integration. Do you think they are the same or different?

I actually think that work-life balance and integration are almost hand in hand with each other and you have to integrate your work-life with your personal life and it depends on how well you do that as to what the balance is.

OK. Anything else related to that question? That's a great answer. It's actually a really nice definition.

Question 2

What do you think or what does work-life balance for women mean to you as a manager-coach?

It's a work hard, play hard kind of game but especially considering if there is a family involved. There is no point for me as a manager to see someone like (woman/direct report's name) sitting at work until 6pm knowing she has family responsibilities. Then you have to

take a look and say - either she is not coping with the work load or she has too much on her plate. You have to be conscious of that because if you are not aware of those sorts of things, the balance can be really skewed one way or the other.

OK anything else?

I'm just thinking, for a women, especially with families, you have to be cognisant of the fact that her balance would more than likely be skewed in favour of the family and that there are going to be family responsibilities that you are going to have to look past, and provided you can see that there is an output of work, me as a manager especially, I would look at that and say 'well every day you go out at 1 o' clock to go and fetch your son' so I think the balance must be there; but taking into consideration, there is going to be a pull from the personal side of the employee's family life.

Question 3

In what way do you think work life balance is important to women?

It has to be important. On the one side, you have to make a living for the family but at the same time, you have got to enjoy the living with the family and especially on the women's side, I think it is really, really important to have that balance between work and the family; and I think, as I said, I do think the balance is slightly more shifted to the side of the family; the work is there to sustain the family life, and you have to be aware of the fact that they are there to support families and a first priority will always be the family.

Question 4

What are the challenges you think women experience in achieving work life balance?

I think the first challenge is just by the fact that they are pulled on in two different ways, from the family side and especially when there are children or maybe demanding spouses – you have to try and appease them the whole time, and on the work side you might have a

deadline driven job or a manager that expects a lot out of you, so you are pulled to that side as well. I think it could be very difficult for a woman to get that balance between appeasing both a manager and work and her family. Another challenge is especially if that woman has aspirations to advance her career, to what cost is she going to try and advance her career, and to what detriment of the family life? That's quite difficult because then what's more important? Is a glossy career more important or is spending time with the family more important? I think that is quite difficult to balance out. My fiancée's sister, she's pregnant now, and she has a massive drive for a career and you can see it takes a toll on her family by her being pregnant and at the same time trying to impress your boss and feel you can't let your work slip because of the fact that you have problems in life, considerations that you have to take into account. It is quite interesting to watch.

It's not easy.

<u>The working woman's realities in attempting to achieve work-life balance</u>

<u>Question 5</u>

So based on that then, what do you think the realities are facing woman in the workplace today?

There is always going to be the discrimination factor against them. There's always the first thing, going back to pregnancy, if they are going to get pregnant and have children then what is the commitment to the job going to be. And I think a lot of the times people do discriminate against that; and to try and advance your career, what's important, advancing your career or looking after your family life, and one or the other will always take a knock because obviously more time will be spent on either one of those things that you are trying to achieve. I think also, in many ways, the women are not taken as seriously as men in the workplace and you tend to find that a man's opinion will be taken over a woman's opinion and I think that can be a challenge, especially if they are trying to blossom in a career and this can impact the path they take. Another challenge is obviously men are a lot more detached of feelings and emotions in the course of the job. In many ways, women may look

more into emotions and if someone is giving them negative feedback, depending on that feedback, it can definitely knock them down and I think it might take them a lot longer to try and get back up. Not to say men won't either, and it is, of course stereotypical, but men may not get as knocked down. It depends on how the feedback is handed down to them. The other thing that I have noticed is that, especially women who come from a slightly disadvantaged background, and it's a generalising here, and it's not that they are not entitled to it, and they work quite hard, but sometimes you can see that - for a white guy, it's not expected that you going to move up the ladder later, there is a lot of reassurance that this is what you need to be doing; a lot of time, especially males are almost expected to grow up the ladder and a lot of women maybe are conscious of the fact that men's paths are paved a lot sooner than their path is, especially for the disadvantaged side. They also feel that they are from a disadvantaged background and they feel that something is missing, maybe education or a cultural fit, that might prevent them climbing that ladder a lot sooner.

Do you think it's their perception that they not going to climb as readily or do you think it's a reality that they not going to climb as readily?

To be quite honest, I think it's a bit of both. I mean if you look at our board – it is middle aged men – you need to look for the senior women…

Tell me about it, I couldn't find many to interview.

Ja. And that is a definite concern, and looking at the stratco and all of those kind of things. So in one way it is perception but in a lot of ways it is reality and as hard as I think our companies and government try to change it there is definitely that reality that climbing up the corporate ladder is a lot harder for some women, especially coming from a disadvantaged background because of issues around education, commitment, etc.

Question 6

How do you think these realities impact on the achievement of work life balance?

It definitely does play a role, you have to try and appease all these realities, you have to try and fulfil all these criteria that you have to try and adhere to, and if you are looking for an accelerated career, what are you going to do? So do you need education, do you need to study further and you have to work from 9 to 5 and study from 5 to 8, then you don't have a chance to see your family, so I think it definitely does impact on their work-life balance.

Question 7

What do you think provides a working woman with a sense of meaning?

I think that good management gives them a sense of meaning. I think reassurance also gives them a sense of meaning, and recognition on what they are doing. I think also enquiring about their family and enquiring about what is happening in their personal life also gives them a sense of meaning and gives them that personal touch, and that they are not here just for the job, there is a sense of belonging and a sense that what I am doing is actually – it's almost a sense of reassurance that although there is work, you are interested in their family life, and I think that aids the cause as well.

Anything else around that?

I think maybe also having a good working environment and creating an environment that's inviting also creates meaning. It's not just 'am I here to do a job', or 'am I included in the team and department'. And if you feel you are an individual sitting in the corner just trying to do work, what kind of meaning do you have in the greater scheme of things? So being inclusive and giving a sense of belonging contributes to that.

Question 8

What do you think brings them fulfilment?

I think definitely recognition of their successes. They are sacrificing family time and you need to be able to show them they are being successful in something that they have taken on to sustain family life, so by recognising successes and not criticising failures, but constructively guiding them from their failures, gives a sense of fulfilment. Also your work life is a compliment to the personal life, but at the end of the day you can go home; it is almost like a second family. So you have your husband and kids or just your children, and I still have a work life that feels like the greater family or extension of my own family.

Question 9

What support do you think could be provided to optimise the level of work-life balance for working women?

There is definitely the 'what can you do to ease the burden of collecting and dropping off kids', knowing you have to rush through traffic and end up dropping the kid off at 6 o'clock to try and get into Jo'burg by 9.00. And that plays a big part and I think it is something we could look at, although logistically it could be an absolute nightmare. Flexibility in the work day also needs to be taken into consideration. I think the organisation does do it really well in fact, there are no rigid times, you work hard and people are not going to notice if you are gone. I think the flexibility of your work day, you know, your lunch hour is from 12 till 1 but you are more than welcome to go and fetch your child at 11 if there is something wrong or you need to leave at 3.30pm to fetch your child from soccer or whatever the case may be. So I think just having that kind of mind set, you have to be aware that there is no fixed routine because there is always something that can happen out of the blue.

So you said having the kind of mind set that they may need to leave and fetch kids and use the flexibility?

Yes. I think another thing - you need to make them aware that leaving and maybe not finishing your work for that day – you are not going to lose a life over not finishing your work

for one day: you are part of a broader team and there are 4 or 5 members in the team and where one person is struggling, someone else will always pick up the slack. And definitely I think by sharing your personal life with the team will enable people to be more cognisant of what is going on around you and be more aware of any personal problems or family issues you may be having to try and juggle around. So team work is imperative in these kinds of situations. In terms of work-life balance and especially if you trying to climb up the ladder, then there are certain criteria and having your management or employer considerate of the fact that there is a family at the end the day is important. They can't expect me to go on a course from 9 to 5 and then come back to the office for the next couple of hours to try and just finish off work; you know, training must be inclusive of a work day.

Not over and above. Ja.

Any other support, you have flexibility, working as a team, climbing the ladder but not sort of expecting a full day out of the office plus half a day in the office in the evening to make up?

The best is emotional support, to know that anyone can come to you and share their problems with you. That goes a long way, that you don't have to carry all your problems yourself, that there is someone willing to listen to those problems, and not only half-heartedly because they are too busy, but take the time to go and really understand a person – no problem can't be shared. And the last thing, the word 'no' shouldn't be in the conversations too quickly; it is so easy for someone to ask something and the easy answer is 'no'. I think you have to listen and try and see what it is they are asking and try and accommodate it somehow and support it any way that you can, especially if it is around work life balance. Just be willing to listen.

So listening, trying to understand. I'm just trying to think what you said, the word 'no' shouldn't appear too quickly in a conversation, listen and disseminate what they are asking and try to understand, especially if it's related to work-life balance.

Find a middle ground.

Okay. Great, anything else for support. Is that it?

Question 10

What do you think the organisation's role is in optimising work-life balance for working women?

Firstly, the organisation needs to have leadership structure that are aware that work life balance is important and the organisation needs to identify and appoint managers and mentors and coaches in roles that will be able to facilitate that, to assist where it is required to have a work life balance, and to be happy. I think that's everyone. I don't think anyone shouldn't have a good work-life balance. Everyone should have a good work-life balance but from an organisation's point of view, it is to be able to identify and appoint people to facilitate the process.

Based on that, is it every manager's responsibility or would it be selected managers?

I think especially managers who have people reporting into them, they need to be able to create that kind of mentorship, regardless of where you are. So even if they are not directly reporting to you, I think that manager should then be overviewing and overseeing the manager that has got people reporting into him. So it is no good finding that one manager might be doing a fantastic job while 5 others are doing a terrible job. So it is really important to have a top down approach and have a structure in place that sees to management styles.

OK, anything else regarding the organisation's role?

I think it's also important that the organisation creates awareness that work-life balance is important. I think if someone does really well, it is so important that it is actually instilling the values and is measured against the performance. I think a lot of organisations take advantage of the fact that the work comes first and the family life comes second. So that awareness from the organisation's point of view, to create an awareness in the employees that work-life balance is important and that there's a time to work hard and a time to play

hard.

OK anything else?

<u>The roles and skills of the manager-coach</u>

<u>Question 11</u>

OK, let's move onto the roles and skills of the manager-coach. So that would be you specifically and then generally for manager-coaches. OK, what do you do specifically that helps working women?

What I do is firstly I try and listen, and try and understand where they coming from and I try and get a sense of where they come from, where they are going to and of the family and try to understand the background, what is happening presently and where they want to go in the future. Also you need to understand what makes them tick, what is most important in their lives. Is work most important, is fun most important, is religion most important? You need to take all that into consideration. Ultimately, you also need to show them that there is opportunity for them no matter what; providing they are willing, there are always going to be opportunities to grow and the reassurance that the growth is not going to be to the detriment of their family time. Also from my side, I like to try and help others, the standoffish approach is not a good approach, even something as simple as trying to train them up, on the job kind of training: Sitting across them from a desk from one another doesn't help, you need to get them into your own personal space and be happy with that. Women are nurturing so the standoffish approach doesn't work. You need to be aware of feelings, aware of emotion and so you need to be inclusive in everything that you do there. So it is almost embracing that nurturing aspect that a woman has and trying to work with it rather than trying to fight against it.

Anything else that you do?

I will let you know if I think of something.

Question 12

OK, anything else that you think you could do?

Definitely, I could be even more understanding and listen more attentively to what's going on. As much as you try to listen and to probe on what's going on, we so often get bogged down by our own personal problems and our own things that are happening in our own job space. So it is very easy to neglect other people and neglect the people you are working with. And you have to make a conscious effort and just stop for 5 minutes and ask how they doing and how the day is going or how was the evening the night before. It is continual learning, especially for me, it is still pretty new to me, so every day is something different and something new. I have learnt a lot from managing people like this, that there are going to be new challenges and the way that you approach - you can't approach it in an aggressive way, you have to have a soft line approach. And as nurturing as they are, you need to take a nurturing approach back to them. I'm also pretty hard on myself because I am a lot harder in that kind of way and it's been very difficult to soften down mentally. And also just to know that my way is not the right way; there are other people with life experiences that might be able to help us in a situation. And being able to listen and take an inclusive mindset that it's not your way that you are filtering down, it is all of our ways. I had to work pretty hard on keeping that balance and I still have a way to go but being mindful of the fact that that needs to be done, I think that's a good step in the right direction. One thing I try to do is speak to all my guys about self-promotion and being able to voice your thoughts and promote your thinking and brand. And that there is no right or wrong answer but being able voice opinions and voice your thoughts – that is more important than anything else, and people listen to that. That's something I really try and instil in all of them, that you need to stand up for what you believe in and what you think, even if it is the wrong answer; it is too easy to sit back and be worried about what people will think. And in any working job, you have a brand you need to try and build on it, and the only way you are going to promote it is to present yourself out to a market place, and that marketplace is your colleagues or whatever, to have an opinion and have a voice. I try to encourage them to have a voice. Just say what you think, even if it is wrong and if it is wrong, do it in a way that you are not doing it in a crowd where you are making a fool of them, you are doing it in a constructive way that is one-on-

one and constructive criticism as opposed to making them feel they have done something wrong and they are embarrassed and ashamed.

Excellent.

Question 13

What relevance do you think your manager-coaching conversations have to the women that report to you?

I think it's very important. You can't be a manager or coach without having those conversations and the whole thing around those conversations - just simply doing the job isn't going to grow a person; so those conversations are of the utmost importance to be able to bring up any issues, to gain an understanding of what's going on and the coaching is done in many ways outside of the work responsibility; a lot of it is about life experience. From a manager-coach perspective, it doesn't mean you can't be coached as well by the people you are coaching. I have learnt that. You can be the most junior person and you can coach your manager on something. I have found, especially from my side, dealing with people like (woman's name) and (woman's name) is a two way street and those conversations are important to have for everyone's growth and for them to better themselves. Without those conversations you don't really know what the problems are - what issues they are facing, and to be able to have those honest conversations, you will be able to understand what is going on and how maybe you can try to change what is happening in their work life.

So without conversation, you won't know what the problems are and the issues that they are facing - so they help you understand more.

Yes, that is more or less what I was trying to get at, the conversation is very important in understanding what is going on, personally and professionally; and how you can try and facilitate and maybe not solve all the solutions, but maybe try, from a personal side, and facilitate that from a working side.

Question 14

Right, generally speaking, what role do you think manager-coaching or coffee conversations have in the working world of the 21st century? So generally speaking?

I think it plays a massive role and I think you are not even aware that companies do this, and the role that it plays - I think that you are able to disseminate what is going on in a person's life, and a lot of the time those conversations are around the working life, but in many ways a working problem might be as a result of a family problem and the role of those conversations are to be able to open the wound, open up the problems and try and not just put a band aid on it, but see what the remedy is. Also, what is fantastic from our side is that it is not a once a year or once every six months that these things occur. It is an on-going process and everything at the moment evolves so quickly and if you left it to twice a year, you won't know what is going on and you will be trying to deal with problems that have long past; and that's why the role that these conversations take is important to keeping up to date and talking regularly; and so you can monitor any progress or what progress has been made on the problem or has the problem gone backwards or how can you facilitate it. So the role is pretty important in the 21st century. Coaching can't be done remotely or over an email or telephone, it needs to be one-on-one, sitting down and just chatting to one another, seeing what's going wrong, what's going right, and what else can you do to help. In many ways, there are problems that I can't solve but you can think - what other resources you can pull in to solve the problem. So a coaching role also and the coffee conversations are facilitator roles and I might be able to facilitate a problem that you can't solve, but somebody else might be able to step into your shoes and solve it.

Question 15

Right, do you think that your manager-coffee conversations have an impact on the work life balance of the women that report to you and if it does, what?

I don't think so honestly. And my coffee conversations with my manager are not as frequent as I would like them to be, so from that perspective, I don't think it does make an impact.

OK. When you say that you don't think your conversations, so the conversations you have with the people that report to you, what makes you say that they don't have an impact?

From my manager?

No, so your conversations with your manager don't happen regularly so they don't enhance your work life balance? Is that what you are saying?

Yes. By not having those regular coffee conversations, there are skills you learn from those coffee conversations, mentoring and so on, so I am not learning those skills - so being able to feed them down again is also quite difficult. What experiences did I have in my coffee conversations? And to date every feedback and technique I try and use with our guys, I have learnt from coffee conversations and sitting down with other people. You pick up on certain things that make sense. Like 'you have a brand', that is something that suck in my mind and 'do something today that will better you tomorrow'. Those are all things that other manager-coaches have mentioned to me and have resonated in my being at the moment, that is - what is the purpose of me being at the job, my primary goal is to be successful and to grow and climb the corporate ladder as quickly as possible, and my aspirations are not going to be the same as the other three girls but how can we come to some sort of middle ground? And my aspirations are a little bit higher sometimes, and sometimes through coaching you realise 'don't aim too high and try and take one step at a time'. So maybe that is where I am falling short and with me not being coached correctly, it results in me not being able to coach my guys as effectively as I could be.

And do you think, sorry I just want to make sure I understand, the conversations that you have with the ladies that report to you, do you think that those conversations help them to achieve work life balance?

Yes I like to think they do. I ask them, I like to try and get feedback, and that is the thing, you are creating that honesty in relationships and that is the only way you can see if you have helped; and find out if these are benefitting you.

OK, so it's a case of looking at what can be done to improve the conversations with you?

Yes.

That is critical. OK, I will run through the questions, just let me know if you can add anything.

<u>Question 16</u>

What could you do more or less of to support the working women in achieving work life balance?

I think just listening and developing my skills, and being accepting of new ideas - you don't know everything. Building my skills is actually benefitting other people as well. You need to be able to encourage them and allow them to let them see that they can succeed and the tools that you learn, you want to pass on; you are trying to impart knowledge; there is no point in having all these tools in manager-coaching and sitting with all the information, even if it is knowledge as well – you need to be able to be encouraging and let them see you want to impart as much knowledge as you can. I have said to all of them that my goal is for them to be in my job and ultimately that should be my role: My role is not for them to be an underwriter for the next 20 years. They need to have career paths. And if they are the best person for the job, if they are better than me then so be it, but let me give them that opportunity. And we need to see the opportunities and not selfishly hold them for yourself but to be able to facilitate them getting that advancement as well and get recognition. You need to be able to, if you get good responses from clients or compliments from clients, not be selfish with those compliments and be able to share them with higher management and let them know that I am not the only one sitting with that. What I do if I get a compliment coming in - I will cc all management in the division as well as the person that the compliment was directed to, so that they also know that their efforts are not going unnoticed. That's very important because there's nothing worse than you know you are working hard and getting the compliments but no one is noticing what is going on. The managers selfishly worry that someone is going to notice that there might be someone better for the job! And

you have to accept that. From my side, I know that I am very driven and you are very aware of your competition and you are almost looking over the shoulder the whole time to see the closest competitor, and it's something that I have had to work on because throughout school and varsity career - it is a competition, everything is a competition; if you are competitive at sports, it is a competition to see who is the best.. And I had to learn that there is always somebody better than you and it might be someone that you are managing and if they are the best person for the job, help them get into the position where you are, if it is for the benefit of the company, and I have realised that for them to get into that position there must be something right that you are doing!

So you are growing them up so that they can step into that role? OK let's see if there's anything here that you can add.

Question 17

What could you do that you generally do not do, which would optimise work life balance?

Maybe just don't get too stressed with what is going on. Look at the broader picture, don't be too focused on what your responsibilities are, what work responsibilities you have; you have got to be aware of what is going on from a management side as well, to be able to take a flexible approach. There are other things that might need to take priority over just work - and I think that's important.

Question 18

Alright, what support do you think you, as a manager-coach, could provide in the achievement and optimisation of work life balance?

I think we have covered that.

Question 19

OK, describe if there is any connection between manager-coaching conversations and the retention of women in the work place?

That goes without saying: I think if you feel like you are not being managed correctly and not being coached and mentored, and people aren't concerned about work-life balance and that, then what is the point of being in your job, of being in that company? If it is all about the job and not personal growth, what is the point of being in the company? I think a lot of the time the organisation will draw you in but the manager has a result on you leaving. You have to be so aware of that and when I first took over as a manager, I was so obsessed with the work and zero defect and it has to be 100%, that you actually forget that there is someone that you have to manage. So if they are not doing the right job, it almost creates a negative cycle and you do one thing wrong and you too scared to say anything and then you get the next thing wrong and it just creates a snowball effect and you have to be so aware of that because it becomes such an unhappy place to work that eventually you get someone who resents coming into work every day. Not everyone is going to be perfect and through those conversations you can find how to actually improve efficiencies and facilitate the problems and make it better. And by that, you can create an understanding and awareness through the conversations and you develop a personal relationship, develop an interest in that person and they can see that you have a personal interest in wanting them to succeed and you want to pass as much knowledge and effort as possible and then there's a good chance that they won't want to leave – unless it is for a lot more money; I think money will actually become negligible in that kind of scenario, if they know that they are being looked after and that their best interests are at heart and the people are wanting them to grow and

pushing them to grow and knowing there's an opportunity; and to create and show them the opportunity and giving them the tools to unlock the opportunity.

OK great, anything else around retention that you want to add?

I just think it's so important to have that balance. That is the ultimate thing: If you don't have the balance between work and play - and it's through those conversations and mentorship that you understand that there has to be the balance and you gauge where that balance lies - is it more on the personal side or more skewed to the job side and you have to facilitate that and listen. And there's always going to be opportunity and consideration for whatever they need and that definitely goes towards retaining staff. There is nothing worse than a person being unhappy in a job. You need to have these conversations - that's why it is so important to have conversations regularly. By doing them ad hoc you almost create that barrier, it is very difficult to be personal and bring up those really difficult questions, or problems, you might be having with your own manager. I've actually found fairly recently that, what I am struggling with, is that by not having that conversation relationship with my manager it's very difficult for me to bring up the situation that I feel very frustrated.

Who do you report to?

(Manager's name)

And have you dealt with it with her?

You see, the problem is, you can't if you haven't really got that time, the coffee conversations, to do that and when you are in the coffee conversation, it becomes very difficult to bring up those kind of problems and have it honestly, because you don't know how she is going to take it if I start criticising the way she is managing me. And that's why it's so important to be able to have those conversations because you almost get the sense of feeling that you are asking me about my personal life because you have to - and it's not genuine interest, you need to show a personal interest in what they are doing. If they feel you have a personal interest in what they doing, then you can kind of break down those

barriers. Then, if they do have a problem with you it is like speaking to your brother and not your father (because speaking to your father is maybe a lot more difficult than your brother!). And to be able to have that kind of relationship, if (women/direct report's name) came to me and said you putting too much pressure on me and you are expecting too much from me and if we don't have a good relationship, then I will take offence to that. But if you have that soft line approach, then it doesn't matter what she comes and says to me. That is why I tell them all 'I need you to tell me where I am going wrong' because if I don't know I'm doing something wrong, then I'm going to think that I'm doing it right. It is as much their responsibility to tell me where I am going wrong. If I don't know, then the situation is not going to change. And I try to encourage them and I know it's difficult for them because it's difficult for me to do, it's extremely difficult for me to do.

We need to resolve that because you need to get the support that you think you should be getting and that you deserve and that will assist you in carrying out your role.

Yes it definitely does play a role. I am very frustrated at the moment – but maybe this is not the right forum to discuss it.

But I think we must pick up on it. Let's finish here and then we can chat because we must pick up on that - it's critical.

<u>Question 20</u>

OK. Last couple of questions. What skills do you utilise well?

My aspirations to grow – with me wanting to grow and wanting to be successful and I try to resonate that in my team. You need to be success driven, even if it is not in your work life, you need to be successful in what you do in your personal life. That whole self-branding, by me encouraging that, I hope that I have encouraged them to try to better themselves and bring themselves up to position where they feel they are marketable products and could go anywhere, not that 'people are reluctant to bring me on board'. That is one of the skills I think I do utilise well, in trying to promote hard work and promote being success-driven –

that is what it is.

Any other skills you use?

I definitely try to develop them, so your listening skills are an on-going development area and that softening skill. From where I started to where I am now, I have definitely improved on my soft skills and listening skills and have become more attentive to what is going on around me – rather than saying the job is the only thing that is important – but listen to what is going on around you, and I am not going to say that I do it perfectly, but I have definitely improved in the last 6 to 8 months. And the other thing I think I do well is being able to coach them in their actual job as well. I would like to think that they feel that they are comfortable to ask a couple of questions and they shouldn't be afraid to ask what is going on and think they will be bothering me by coming in and asking for advice or for something to be sorted out, or to be taught something new. I would like them to feel free to come to me for learning.

Lovely, any other skills? Or think in context of the next one which is - which skills do you need to display to optimise this role.

<u>Question 21</u>

Are there any skills that you could focus on more to optimise the role and what skills do you need to develop further?

To optimise the role of the manager-coach?

Ja.

I think definitely that inclusiveness, you actively have to display that and that there is always room for learning and that you can learn from everyone, and although there is a manager-coach relationship, that it is not to say the role can't be reversed in the conversation. So I think you need to display that you are always willing to listen and take advice, as opposed to

always giving out the advice.

Okay

What was the other one?

Question 22

The skills that you need to develop further?

I need to develop listening skills and soft skills further. I am pretty new in the job and there are a lot of other coaching techniques that I still need to learn; and be able to break down the situation and delve into the problem; to be able to understand how to approach a situation in more than one way - not just 2 ways but maybe 5 or 6 different ways and being able to probe and get to the deep-rooted problem, not just the surface issue, and by doing it in a way that is not intrusive or they feel like their personal space is being invaded. I think there are plenty of skills I still need to work on. You also need to have a lot of patience. Everyone needs to somehow work on their patience; it is so easy to get agitated, especially if there are 101 things coming from all sides – patience is really important.

Question 23

OK, then the last question which kind of also ties into what you were just saying about your own conversations - what would help you to become a better coach, and it might be specific coaching skills training, but it could be absolutely anything?

Definitely to make me a better coach is also having coaches around me that guide me more than what I am at the moment. It started off really well in the beginning and somewhere along the line, I don't know where it will fit in but having a proper coach, I think that definitely builds up on your skills. I have spoken to (manager 2) once and we have had conversations and I think he in turn spoke to (manager 1) who thought he would be better suited, but somehow I almost feel I have a better connection with someone like (manager 2),

just listening. I feel I learn a lot from him by listening to him and in many ways I related a lot better to him, to what he's talking about and the way he presents himself. He comes from such a knowledgeable background – not to say (manager 1) doesn't have that but I just feel a lot more comfortable listening to (manager 2) and being able to sit with him over a cup of coffee.

And is that still on the cards?

I have spoken to (manager 2) and he did actually say that he thought it would be better with (manager 1) but I think I would learn a lot more from him and I really do aspire to be like him, he is very driven, very motivated and he's a self-starter and that is something I would like to aspire to and a lot of what I have done already is based on advice he has given.

So it is kind of a mentorship role he could play; it doesn't have to be job related.

Yes, that's what I really am looking for, and I feel very comfortable around him and you don't have to push the conversation. I think the conversation comes very naturally.

I don't think he knows that he does it though! He might not think that he is actually giving me much advice. But what you take out of the conversation is actually crazy!

It's important to have that. Anything else that would help you become a better coach?

Obviously the mentorship and also going on all these training courses and I think that's very important - continual development and teaching and learning is very important and to be able to put those things into practise and to be able to develop those skills. At the end of the day, it's an ongoing learning process. The organisation does it really well and is really aware that there are development skills or development needs for every single manager; although it's generic but each person will take out something different from those training workshops.

Anything else?

Also maybe just building better relationships with your people - continually. Continuously asking how things are going, what's happening, what's going on, how is life? Problems can have a huge impact on work-life. If someone is going through a divorce, if you are sympathetic to what is going on in their personal life, and be able to have a say in what is going on and try to guide and support to see how you can help out. So developing my skills is also just developing those relationships further. Also with developing skills as a coach, I also need to continue developing my technical skills: to be a coach you have to come from a point of knowledge, and it is one thing having coaching skills but you also need to be technically sound on the job function. So if you don't continue to develop in those skills, they are going to soon question whether you are a coach who really knows what you are talking about, even if you are good at a personal level. But if not coaching from a work experience, then surely you need that. I mentioned before, being a very competitive person I need to continually develop those skills; and accepting there are always going to be those who are better than you and embrace that and work with it. And there may be personal skills that I need to develop. It's quite amazing, we have been going for pre-marital counselling and it's so valuable. You learn so much about yourself, you tend to ask questions about what you are doing right or not in your relationship and it highlights how much your spouse is doing for you. It was invaluable! It was an eye opener. You just gain so much insight as to where you need to work on and where possibilities or problems could occur if these things are not addressed.

And I think we so often look at the situations and say this is not me, I'm fine - it's the other and then you see the whole situation and you can rethink it.

Yes, you can actually relate it back to anything in life, just being able to adopt that same mantra. In the job, just being able to listen to people, it's been very valuable for me. Because people will say 'well you are taking 10 steps and I take 5 for the same answer'. So it has been really valuable.

That's true. Anything else?

No I think that's it, if I think of anything else I will let you know.

The interviewer thanks the respondent and closes the interview.