



# **Exploring expert performance in business and executive coaching**

***A research report submitted by***

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*“Who you are speaks so loudly I can’t hear what you are saying”*

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 – 1882)

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of the study was to explore expert performance in business and executive coaching. Although it is an unregulated field, executive coaching continues to grow as an industry with recent estimates suggesting earnings of \$2-billion per year (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006). Despite the growth of the coaching industry in the last decade there is still a lack of clarity in coaching science as to how performance should be measured; what constitutes expert performance in executive coaching and how it is acquired (Côté, Young, Duffy, & North, 2007).

The primary research question is, 'what is expert performance in business and executive coaching?' The research also explores what expert performance is, how expert performance can be recognised and how people in the industry recognise expert performance in business and executive coaches in South Africa today. This study aims to fill the gap in research regarding what constitutes expert performance in executive coaching and how it is acquired.

This literature review explores the definition of coaching, methods and approaches to coaching, the coaching industry, expert performance per se and expert performance in executive coaching. Expert performance can be defined in many ways. It is the ability to perform at any time with limited preparation (Ericsson, 2008) and is demonstrated by consistent superior performance on a specific task in the person's field of expertise (Ericsson & Charness, 1994).

Chapter 3 documents the research methodology process that was used to conduct this research. The researcher used a qualitative research methodology and the research paradigm for this dissertation was interpretivism. The research design was phenomenology, used to explore the phenomenon of expert performance in business and executive coaching. The population included 6 registered executive coaches in South Africa, 6 executives from various organisations, and 6 heads of Human Resources (HR) or learning and development. 18 semi-structured interviews were used to conduct the research. Deliberate sampling was used until data saturation occurred.

This research aimed to deepen the understanding of expert performance in business and executive coaching, and as a secondary focus, to explore what is required to have expert performance as an executive coach, and how it is recognised.

Chapter 4 is a breakdown of the categories identified through the findings of the research and provides the reader access to some direct quotes from the respondents through the interviews. There was a consensus that, for coaching to be successful, the individual having coaching needs to a) want coaching, b) initiate it, and c) assume responsibility for choosing the coach.

The criteria for choosing a coach are to check testimonials and references, to get clarity on the coach's qualifications and experience, and to establish the coach's processes and niche. Moreover, the coach's motivation for coaching should be assessed. The coach needs to build trust and rapport immediately and exude confidence and passion. A key subject of enquiry of this study was to establish the criteria deemed to be essential for expert executive coaching. Sixteen criteria emerged, they were: 1) relationship skills; 2) willingness to challenge; 3) presence; 4) walks-the-talk; 5) continuous development; 6) self-awareness; 7) can say no to work; 8) can express what they do; 9) has experience; 10) is qualified; 11) can easily unlock potential and depth; 12) can go with the flow and not know; 13) creates powerful results; 14) client centric; 15) referrals and returning coaches and 16) shifts between theory and reality.

Chapter 5 compares the literature and the outcomes of the interviews conducted to assess if the findings from this research are consistent with, or contradictory to, the literature on the topic. The outcomes of this chapter reflected key aspects to expert performance in business and executive coaching. To demonstrate expert performance as an executive coach the executive coach needs to have a high degree of authenticity, which builds trust that forms the foundation for a successful coaching intervention. To achieve this they need to have superior levels of self-awareness and social intelligence which provides an array of positive consequences. Expert executive coaches have context specific expertise that is relevant to the area in which they work. Expert executive coaches have clearly defined roles and identities heightening their levels of professionalism and enabling them to articulate what they do, and also to decline work where they recognise it is not their area of expertise. Expert executive coaches have extensive coaching experience and hence high levels of self-efficacy which communicates presence and credibility. To fulfil the requirements for deliberate practice, expert executive coaches have real passion for what they do which enables them to continuously develop themselves professionally and personally so they reach these levels of exceptional coaching.

The conclusions chapter reverts back to the original research questions posed for this research and draws conclusions and recommendations for further research. This research showed expert performance in executive coaching was demonstrated by executive coaches who had been in the industry for ten years or more and had vast experience. They had been directly or indirectly applying deliberate practice in the form of continuous professional and personal development, involving supervision, mentoring, and additional coach-specific training. On a personal level they had continued to develop self-awareness by attending consciousness development seminars or retreats or by engaging in their own coaching process with a professional coach.

# DECLARATION

I, Savannah Steinberg, 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 and Executive Coaching) in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

----- Savannah Steinberg

Signed at .....

On the 31 day of March 2015

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to explore expert performance in business and executive coaching. The current state of the coaching industry has no barriers to entry and many coaches refer to themselves as executive coaches, yet know little about either business or coaching (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006). Coaching as an industry is still not regulated. There is still no agreed upon definition of coaching. There is still no evidence to show whether one coaching approach is more effective than another.

Despite this, coaching seems to be making its mark as an industry that has the potential to make a significant impact in how individuals and organisations go through uncertain transitions, as reflected by the growth statistics of coaching earnings. The coaching market is continuing to expand and recent estimates put its earnings as \$2-billion per year (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006).

In a study done by Olivero, Bane, and Kopelman (1997) 31 managers underwent training followed by eight weeks of executive coaching. It was found that the training increased productivity by 22.4%, while the coaching improved productivity by 88%. The coaching included goal setting, collaborative problem solving, feedback, supervisory involvement, evaluation of results, and public presentation.

Peterson and Hicks (1999) report that 93% of United States of America (USA) based Global 1000 companies use executive coaches and 65% of Global 1000 companies outside of the USA use executive coaching (Bono, Purvanova, Towler, & Peterson, 2009). 88% of United Kingdom (Duckworth, Kirby, Tsukayama, Berstein, & Ericsson, 2011) organisations use coaching (Jarvis, Lane, & Fillery-Travis, 2005) and from a leadership survey done in Australia (Australia, 2006), 64% of business leaders and 72% of senior managers report that they use coaches. Of the Australian respondents, 71% reported that having a coach was an important factor in choosing to stay with their organisations (Grant, Passmore, Cavanagh, & Parker, 2010)

These increased trends are evidence that coaching has become more accepted in business worldwide and is more likely to be seen as a business expense rather than a personal one. Businesses are starting to see the return on investment from coaching. Despite the growth of

the coaching industry in the last decade there is still a lack of clarity in coaching science as to how performance should be measured; what constitutes expert performance in executive coaching and how it is acquired (Côté et al., 2007).

Expert performance is defined as the ability to perform at virtually any time with relatively limited preparation (Ericsson, 2008). Expert performance is recognised by consistent superior performance on a specified set of representative tasks for the domain that can be administered to any subject (Ericsson & Charness, 1994).

The purpose of this study is to explore expert performance in business and executive coaching, to look at what constitutes expert performance, how it is recognised and acquired and to explore what people in the industry deem to be the criteria for classifying expert performance in executive coaches.

## **1.2 Context of the study**

This research study will be focused on the executive coaching industry. According to Bluckert (2005) coaching facilitates learning and development with the intention to improve performance and enhance impactful action, goal achievement and personal satisfaction. It consistently entails growth and change, which could be in perspective, attitude, or behaviour.

## **1.3 Research questions**

The following research questions frame this study:

Research Question 1: What is expert performance?

Research Question 2: How is expert performance recognised?

Research Question 3: How are people in the industry recognising expert performance in business and executive coaches in South Africa today?

## **1.4 Significance of the study**

In terms of coaching competencies no one has yet established convincingly what makes an executive coach qualified or one style of executive coaching better than another (Sherman & Freas, 2004). As mentioned before, there are no barriers to entry in the coaching industry and many coaches refer to themselves as executive coaches despite knowing little about business and coaching (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006).

The literature on coaching is rapidly expanding and suggests coaching practices and factors that predict successful coaching results (Dagley, 2006; Greif, 2007). There appears to be little research on the practices or attributes of those coaches recognised as expert or exceptional. A full grasp and understanding of the characteristics of expert performance by executive coaches will help clarify outcomes that are possible and the related practices or attributes that lead to those results (Dagley, 2010).

This study aims to fill the gap in research regarding what constitutes expert performance in executive coaching and how it is acquired. The study might provide guidance to coaching professionals and accreditation bodies, as well as people buying coaching services (such as human resource professionals or potential coachees). It might also contribute to the training and accreditation of executive coaches.

## **1.5 Delimitations of the study**

The delimitations of this research study are:

- i. Only executive coaches were interviewed for purposes of this research study and not life coaches
- ii. The study was limited to a South African context
- iii. The range of the coachee respondents interviewed were at a senior or executive level. Junior and middle management were excluded from the scope of the study.
- iv. The study assessed current experiences of executive coaching within various organisations selected and does not include a longitudinal approach.
- v. The study incorporates data collected from one employee per organisation. The data was not collected from several staff members within an organisation.

## 1.6 Definition of terms

The definitions used in this research study are set out in Table 1.

**Table 1: Definition of terms**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Coaching	Coaching facilitates learning and development with the intention to improve performance and enhance impactful action, goal achievement and personal satisfaction. (Bluckert, 2005).
Coach	Someone who accelerates change and who motivates and challenges the coachee to incorporate new behaviours (Zeus & Skiffington, 2000)
Executive coach	Executive coaching is an association between an executive (known as the coachee) that holds a management position and has responsibility in an organisation, and an executive coach who employs a variation of behavioural techniques to support the coachee to achieve a mutually identified set of goals, to improve the coachees professional performance and personal satisfaction, and as a consequence to improve the effectiveness of the coachees organisation within a formally defined coaching agreement (Kilburg, 1996)
Coachee	Is the person who receives the professional coaching service; namely the executive (Joo, 2005)
Expert Performance	Consistent superior performance on a specific set of demonstrative activities for the domain that can be administered to any subject (Ericsson & Charness, 1994)
Deliberate Practice	Involvement in intense, prolonged, and highly focused efforts to improve current performance (Baron & Henry, 2010)



## 1.7 Assumptions

For a research study assumptions are made that the topic of research will continue to be relevant. Should these assumptions not be true the research would become irrelevant (Simon, 2011).

For this research study the following assumptions were made:

1. The population sample is illustrative of the population to which the researcher makes reference.
2. The number of respondents will be sufficient to gain acceptable data.
3. The respondents included in the study were able to share information on their experiences of executive coaching within their organisation.

Chapter 1 discusses the intention and implications of the study. It aims to clarify the gap in the research and how this topic is relevant and useful to furthering the developments in the executive coaching industry. It also confirms the delimitations of the study and the assumptions on which this research paper is based.

Chapter 2 sets out the literature review where the researcher sought to identify the current literature available in line with this topic 'exploring expert performance in business and executive coaching'. This chapter aims to create clarity on what constitutes executive coaching; the current associated quality requirements to perform as an executive coach; and then explores the requirements for expert performance in executive coaching.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will explore the definition of coaching, methods and approaches to coaching, the coaching industry, expert performance per se and expert performance in executive coaching.

### 2.1 What is coaching?

Coaching is still an emerging discipline and thus still does not have a clear definition and this might be because “*we are in the middle of an intellectual revolution*” Parsloe and Wray (2000, p. 2). Coaching can be seen as a form of mentoring, which we see in sports coaching and more recently education and the workplace, which all contributes to the lack of clarity of what constitutes coaching. A consensus arose that distinguished mentoring from coaching. Mentoring is seen as directive whereas coaching is classified as non-directive (Ives, 2008). Certain approaches to coaching strongly advise against giving advice or guiding in the coach-coachee relationship, while others still see a coach as a guide (Cavanagh, 2006). The boundaries between these two practices are not yet firmly set (Parsloe & Wray, 2000). The details of this are explored further below.

According to the International Coaching Federation (ICF) professional coaching is an ongoing professional relationship that helps people produce extraordinary results in their lives, careers, businesses, or organisations (Federation, 2003). Through the process of coaching, coachees deepen their learning, improve their performance, and enhance quality of life. Coaching as a field makes use of competences and qualities that are standard in the helping professional field. It is becoming increasingly common and necessary for executives to be able to deal competently with people in working and business environments.

The definitions of coaching seem to reflect the underlying intended outcome of coaching to the person receiving coaching, known as the *coachee*, and the coaching approach.

Coaching, as defined by Peterson (1996, p. 78) “*Coaching is the process of equipping people with the tools, knowledge and opportunities they need to develop themselves and become more efficient*”. This definition captures succinctly the current understanding of what coaching is. The value and impact of coaching is divided into two main categories: aiding increased performance and personal development and personal growth for dealing with change.

Coaching as defined by Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson (2001, p. 3) “*Coaching is a form of a systematic feedback intervention aimed at enhancing professional skills, interpersonal awareness, and personal effectiveness*”. This definition captures the partnership dynamic reflective of a coach-coachee relationship.

Coaching as defined by Orenstein (2002, p. 356) “*Executive coaching is referred to as a one-on-one intervention with a senior manager for the purposes of improving or enhancing management skills*”. This definition defines executive coaching as a one-on-one intervention, and usually with an executive who is responsible for managing various departments or teams in an organisation, and in this to enable them to be better managers.

Coaching as defined by McCauley and Hezlett (2001, p. 321) “*Executive coaching involves a series of one-on-one interactions between a manager or executive and an external coach in order to further the professional development of the manager*”. This definition reflects a succinct and high-level understanding of what executive coaching is, which is professional development.

Coaching as defined by Bacon and Spear (2003, p. xvi) “*Coaching in business contexts can generally be defined as an informed dialogue whose purpose is the facilitation of new skills, possibilities, and insights in the interests of individual learning and organizational advancement*”. This definition gives a more in-depth understanding of the variety of aspects executive coaching can incorporate.

Coaching as defined by Hall, Otazo, and Hollenbeck (2000, p. 40)

*Coaching is meant to be a practical, goal-focused form of personal, one-on-one learning for busy executives and might be used to improve performance or executive behaviour, enhancing a career to prevent derailment, and work through organizational issues or change initiatives.*

This definition captures a more holistic view of executive coaching, in that coaching is not only about growth and expansion and professional development, but is also used for change initiatives or to work through organisational issues.

Coaching is defined by Kilburg (1996, p. 142) as

*Executive coaching is a helping relationship formed between a coachee who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organisation and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to assist the coachee to achieve a mutually identified set of goals, to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction, and consequently to improve the effectiveness of the coachees' organization within a formally defined coaching agreement.*

This definition is the most cited definition and captures powerfully the flow and process of an executive coaching relationship, its purpose and effects, such that for someone reading this not having been exposed to executive coaching before, they might really understand what it entails.

The ICF definition of coaching is a great example of coaching in general, relevant to life coaching and executive coaching

*Executive coaching is a facilitative one-to-one mutually designed relationship between a professional coach and a key contributor who has a powerful position in the organization. This relationship occurs in area of business, government, not-for-profit, and educational organisations where there are multiple stakeholders and organisational sponsorship for the coach or coaching group. The coaching is contracted for the benefit of the client who is accountable for highly complex decisions with a) wide scope of impact on the organisation and the industry as a whole. The focus of the coaching is usually focused on organisational performance or development, but may also have a personal component as well. The results produced from this relationship are observable and measurable (International Executive Coaching Summit: A collaborative effort to distinguish the profession, 2000)*

Joo (2005, p. 468) reviewed and summarised the definitions listed above and defined coaching as “A process of a one-on-one relationship between a professional coach and an executive (coachee) for the purpose of enhancing coachees' behavioural change through self- awareness and learning, and thus ultimately for the success of individual and organization” .

Coaches and Mentors of South Africa (COMENSA) defines coaching as “A professional collaborative and outcomes-driven method of learning that seeks to develop an individual

*and raise self-awareness so that he or she might achieve specific goals and perform at a more effective level.*"("COMENSA definition of coaching," 2015). This was compiled from a number of definitions from the experience and practice of South African coaches.

The essence of coaching is parallel to that of executive coaching, except the focus group in executive coaching is executives in the corporate world. In contrast, coaching is relevant and applicable to anyone in the organisation and not limited to an organisation, but to the broader community as well.

Definitions of coaching can be categorised into one of two areas of focus. One focus is learning and development related to improvement of performance and the the second focus is around coaching to enable personal growth and change (Bluckert, 2005). The emphasis is often reflective of the professional background of the coach. A substantial amount of academics, HR practitioners, consultants and organisational development (OD) specialists in general emphasise and focus on learning and development. People from highly results-focused environments, such as business, tend to emphasise the performance theme. They often see coaching as about skills development. Coaching psychologists, counsellors and therapists typically define coaching as change, mainly behavioural change (Bluckert, 2005).

Zeus and Skiffington (2000) emphasise that coaching is more about change, growing, shifting behaviour and transformation. In this way the coach is a catalyst for change and someone who encourages and challenges the coachee to take on new behaviours. Coaching also focuses on learning, development and performance (Downey & Downey, 1999; Parsloe & Wray, 2000).

Bluckert (2005, p. 172) states that *"the behavioural change focus to coaching is one of the key differentiators from those who come from the learning and development modality; and this is where the psychological agenda more strongly enters the frame."* Typically, organisational or clinical psychology, counselling and psychotherapy have added some element of psychological training, such as psychometric assessment to their previous professional background. Bluckert (2005) views coaching as a process that facilitates learning and development, with the intention of improving performance and enhancing effective action, goal achievement, and personal satisfaction. Mostly coaching involves growth and change, which could be in perspective, attitude, or behaviour.

For this study, the definition of coaching that will guide this report is the definition by Hall et al. (2000) as this definition captures a more holistic view of executive coaching. Coaching is not only about growth and expansion and professional development, but also about working through organisational issues or change initiatives. This definition includes the aspect of organisational issues and change initiatives, which reflect the trends South African's are dealing with and need to address.

## 2.2 Coaching methods and approaches

Coaching uses a number of theories, methods and approaches and these are determined by the context in which the coaching is being applied. Certain methods apply only in certain situations and are used when compatible with the coachee and the coachee's needs.

Depending on the scope of the work involved, coaching might also need to include psychological theories and organisational and management studies. In addition to approaches from the psychotherapeutic schools, approaches from business psychology and economic studies should be used. When there is expertise or experience in only one, this can limit or steer the coaching in a direction the coach is comfortable in, and not be necessarily the best direction for the coachee.

Due to the way the industry has developed and the diverse influences of its many origins, there are many models and approaches to coaching (Ives, 2008; Stober & Grant, 2006). These coaching approaches and coaching models are summarised in Table 2.

**Table 2: Models, approaches and objectives to coaching**

<b>Coaching Approach</b>	<b>An example of a Coaching Model</b>	<b>Objective of coaching</b>
Humanist	ACE Model (Stober, 2006)	"Coaching is above all about human growth and change" (Stober & Grant, 2006, p. 17)
Behaviourist	GROW (Whitmore, 1996 in Palmer, 2007)	"The purpose of coaching is to change behaviour" (Peterson, 2006, p. 51)

Coaching Approach	An example of a Coaching Model	Objective of coaching
Cognitive Behavioural	ABCDE – MODEL (Adapted from Albert Ellis in Palmer, 2007)	Coaching is foremost about developing adaptive thoughts
Goal-focused	GROW (Whitmore, 1996 in Palmer, 2007)	“Coaching is a goal-oriented, solution-focused process” (Grant, 2006, p. 156)
Positive psychology approach	Appreciative Inquiry (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010)	“Shift attention away from what causes and drives pain to what energises and pulls people forward” (Kauffman, 2006, p. 220)
Systemic coaching	Narrative Model (Drake, 2010)	“Coaching is a journey in search of patterns” (Cavanagh, 2006, p. 313)

Table 2.

Table 2 illustrates that there are standard features to the full array of coaching approaches and coaching models. These are firstly, a process designed to assist development and change, whether cognitive, emotional, or behavioural. Secondly, the coaching process is aimed at encouraging coachees to take charge of their lives by increasing their level of responsibility and awareness. Thirdly, the process is designed to access the inner resourcefulness of the coachee and build on their wealth of knowledge, experience, and intuition. Fourthly, the process is intended for the healthy population in an individualised approach and requires the executive coach to have listening and questioning skills. Fifthly, the process is designed to facilitate a collaborative, open and equal relationship where the coachee agrees to be held accountable for the choices he or she makes. Lastly, the aim is to achieve a clearly stated solution-focused goal (Ives, 2008).

The first column in Table 2.

**Table 2** are examples of coaching approaches. These reflect the style and the perspective from which the executive coach comes. This affects where the coach would put the emphasis and therefore the outcomes to the coachee. Examples of coaching models are shown in the second column of Table 2. These reflect the structure or flow the coach uses to guide the session outcomes. The coaching model has more to do with the way in which the

session is arranged. The coaching approach is the world-view or frame that guides the questions and the emphasis of impact to the coachee.

Although there are many commonalities to coaching approaches there is also wide divergence as to the nature of the coaching relationship, the purpose of coaching and the nature of the coaching intervention. The following are aspects of theory or practice where uncertainty still exists (Ives, 2008, p. 104):

- Do coaches need domain-specific knowledge or expertise?
- Do coaches only “ask” or can they also “tell”?
- Is coaching more to nurture personal growth or to increase performance?
- How essential is the coach-coachee relationship to the coaching process?
- Is it necessary for coaching to assume a holistic view?
- Is coaching mostly to deal with feelings or actions?
- Should coaching intend to change the coachee’s values?

Each coaching model shares similarities whilst displaying different approaches and emphasis.

More and more, coaching styles are therapeutic in kind and endeavour to recognise the deep psychological causes of the coachee’s problems (Judge & Cowell, 1997). Some coaches draw up a psychological profile of their coachee before starting the sessions (Gray, 2006). In contrast, goal-oriented coaching is designed to directly stimulate effective action. Given that coaching is designed to address the healthy population it is not necessary to incorporate a psychotherapeutic style (Gray, 2006). Coaching training organisations encourage that coaching and therapy remain distinct. Goal-oriented approaches to coaching often have an alternative perspective than therapeutic or personal-development approaches on the role of the coach and on the objective of coaching.

While psychotherapy focuses on the individual’s personal issues and the holistic person, coaching needs to focus on achieving work-related improvements (Hodgetts, 2002; Saporito, 1996). Similarly, Grant (2003, p. 253) claims *“In working with individuals to improve the quality of their lives, psychology has traditionally focused on alleviating dysfunctionality or treating psychopathology in clinical or counselling populations, rather than enhancing the life experience of normal adult populations.”*



Environments that focus on high results (such as business) tend to emphasise and focus on the performance theme, seeing coaching as about skills development, which would be reflective of a goal-focused approach, as well as positive-psychology and adult learning approach (Bluckert, 2005). The goal-focused approach will guide this study.

### **2.3 Expert performance, what is it?**

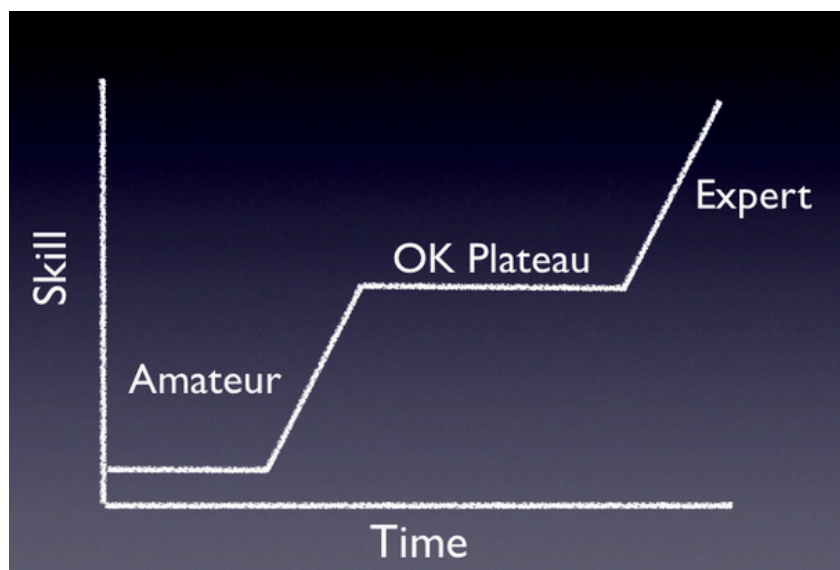
Expert performance can be defined in many ways. It is the ability to perform at any time with limited preparation (Ericsson, 2008) and is demonstrated by consistent superior performance on a specific tasks in the person's field of expertise (Ericsson & Charness, 1994). This definition of expert performance will guide this study.

Expert performance is the result of individuals' sustained efforts to improve performance while consistently managing motivational and external constraints (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993). In most areas of expertise, individuals in childhood get into a routine of effortful activities, known as deliberate practice. Deliberate practice is designed to accelerate improvement, which is then sustained into adulthood. Among elite performers, individual differences are closely linked to the amounts of deliberate practice. Many characteristics that were previously believed reflected innate talent are actually the result of concentrated practice extended for a minimum of ten years (Ericsson et al., 1993). Initially commonly held views on individual outstanding performance were attributed to divine intervention or to special gifts. With advances in science, these explanations have become less acceptable. Contemporary accounts assert that the characteristics responsible for exceptional performance are innate and transferred genetically (Ericsson et al., 1993).

Sir Francis Galton was the first scientist to conceptualise the idea that excellence in different fields have a common source (Ericsson et al., 1993). His view was that eminence (exceptional performance) in a field is transferred from parents to their children. Ericsson et al. (1993) found that Galton believed that eminence was a direct result of inherited natural ability, which includes capacity, passion and the power to do demanding work. Therefore, if a person is talented with great intellectual ability, together with the willingness and power to work really hard, he would succeed.

In exploring the importance of deliberate practice in acquiring expert performance, Ericsson et al. (1993) found that the most superior levels of expert performance are demonstrated by individuals with more than ten years of experience. In a wide variety of activities, most individuals develop quickly to acceptable levels of performance, which is then followed by a plateau and no further gains. Individuals then remain at a similar level of competence for years (or even decades) despite growing experience as measured by time of active involvement in a particular domain. This demonstrates the previous notion that exceptional levels of performance are the result of growing experience has not been confirmed in systematic research (Ericsson, 2006; Ericsson & Lehmann, 1996). Figure 1 is a visual representation of what has just been described.

**Figure 1: Normal competence growth cycle (Eyal, 2014a)**



Stages in expert performance acquisition are (Ericsson et al., 1993)

Stage 1 - Begins with an individual's introduction to activities in the field and ends with the start of instruction and deliberate practice.

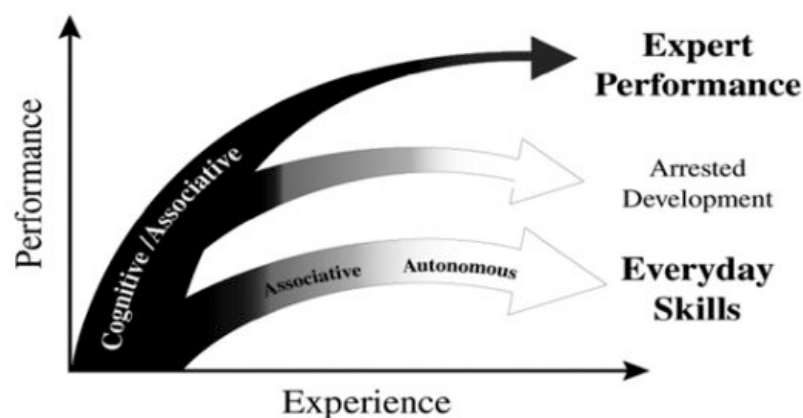
Stage 2 - The second stage includes lengthy periods of preparation and training and ends with the individual's commitment to follow activities in the field fulltime.

Stage 3 - The third stage entails a fulltime commitment to improving and increasing performance and ends when the individual either chooses to make a career as a professional in the field or ceases fulltime engagement in the activity. During all three phases, the individual requires support from external sources, such as mentors, trainers, and educational institutions.

This framework requires a fourth stage to allow for outstanding or exceptional performance (Ericsson et al., 1993).

Stage 4 - During the fourth stage, individuals go beyond the knowledge of their trainers to make a unique and original contribution to their field. Figure 2 is a visual representation of the expert performance growth cycle.

**Figure 2: Expert performance (Ericsson, 2006)**



### 2.3.1 Deliberate Practice

Baron and Henry (2010) indicate that, across many industries, outstanding performance stems largely from involvement in intense, prolonged, and highly focused efforts to improve current performance, known as *deliberate practice*. Comparing this to experience in a field and individual talent, it becomes evident that these play a smaller role in generating expert performance than what was previously assumed. There is more evidence that involvement in deliberate practice does not only enlarge domain-specific knowledge and skills, it also creates improvements to basic cognitive resources (Baron & Henry, 2010).

The goal of deliberate practice is improved performance (Ericsson et al., 1993). Deliberate practice involves the following key features: high levels of focus and concentration, being able to identify weaknesses and applying persistent efforts to improve these, and ten years of continued, robust effort (Colvin, 2008; Ericsson, 2006; Ericsson et al., 1993). Deliberate practice must continue and be repeated many times, with continuous feedback on results. Pre-performance preparation is mandatory, setting suitable goals that are specific and relate to the skills being practiced and acquired. Self-observation and self-reflection and lastly assessment on performance after practice sessions are completed.

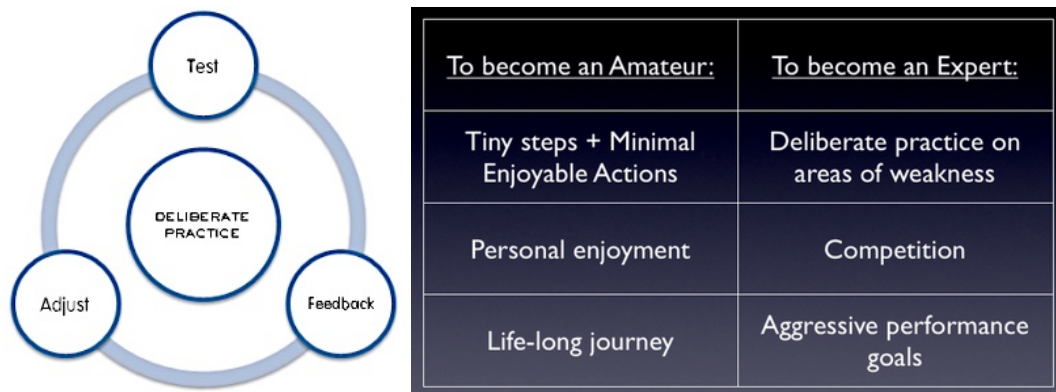
Excellence at performing a complex task requires a critical minimum level of practice (Levitin, 2011). Researchers have clarified the key number for true expertise which they believe is 10 000 hours. Ten thousand hours is the accepted number of hours of practice that is required to achieve the mastery associated with being a world-class achiever (Levitin, 2011). This is supported by Ericsson et al. (1993, p. 392) who explained that *“Individual differences in ultimate performance can largely be accounted for by differential amounts of past and current levels of practice”* and that *“the differences between expert performers and normal adults reflect a life-long period of deliberate effort to improve performance in a specific domain.”*

Deliberate practice is demonstrated by commitment to very structured activities that are created specifically to improve performance with immediate feedback. These activities require a high level of concentration and are not inherently enjoyable (Hambrick et al., 2014)

A crucial aspect of expert performance is deliberate practice and this involves high levels of effort, concentration and persistence and have been described by scholars as the ‘opposite of fun’ (Ericsson, 2006). The individuals who reach these levels do so as they recognise deliberate practice is a crucial ingredient in reaching exceptional levels of achievement. Those who are typically the highest achievers are willing to put in the effort irrespective of whether they feel like it or not.

Figure 3 is a visual representation of the deliberate practice cycle individuals must follow to reach levels of expert performance (Eyal, 2014b; Hinchliffe, 2015).

**Figure 3: Deliberate Practice Cycle (Eyal, 2014b; Hinchliffe, 2015)**



The diagram to the left of Figure 3 is the deliberate practice cycle proposed by Ericsson et al. (1993). Feedback links to being able to identify weaknesses and recognise areas for growth. Adjust links to setting new goals to integrate the feedback, and adjust accordingly. Test links to practice, applying strenuous continuous effort to improve previous areas to develop, and then the cycle begins again. The diagram to the right of Figure 3 illustrates the differences between a person committed to expert performance relative to someone who is not.

To be an expert requires one to have the capacity to engage in deliberate practice, and for this, certain factors play a role. There are six key factors that drive a person’s ability (Baron & Henry, 2010). These are firstly, achievement motivation (Ericsson, 2006; Ericsson et al., 1993). Secondly, self-efficacy, people’s belief that they can accomplish what they set out to accomplish (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997). Thirdly, self-regulatory mechanisms, cognitive systems that allow people to regulate their own behaviour in order to achieve specific personal goals (Winne, 1997). One such cognitive system is self-control and conscientiousness which is one of the Big Five dimensions of personality.<sup>1</sup> This refers to the extent to which individuals are organised, persistent, capable of hard work, and motivated to pursue goal accomplishment (Baumeister, Vohs, & Tice, 2007; Mount & Barrick, 1995; Yates

<sup>1</sup> The other four dimensions of the Big Five dimensions of personality are: extraversion; emotional stability; agreeableness; openness to experience (Barrick & Mount, 1991).

& Tschirhart, 2006). Table 3 sets out a summary of the factors required to engage in deliberate practice by author.

**Table 3: Factors required to engage in deliberate practice**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Author</b>
Achievement motivation	Ericsson et al. (1993); Ericsson (2006)
Self-efficacy	Bandura (1977); Bandura (1986); Bandura (1997)
Self-regulatory mechanisms	Winne (1997)
Self-control	Baumeister et al. (2007)
Conscientiousness	Yates and Tschirhart (2006)
Motivated to pursue goal accomplishment	Mount and Barrick (1995)

The most cited characteristics of deliberate practice is the individual's motivation to focus on the task and apply exertion to improve his or her performance (Ericsson et al., 1993). The structure of the undertaking needs to take into account the prior knowledge of the individual so that the activity can be correctly understood after a short period of training. The individual needs to receive immediate educational feedback and knowledge of results of their performance. The individual should continually perform the same or similar tasks. Under these conditions, practice improves precision and speed of performance on cognitive, perceptual, and motor tasks.

Even with a substantial amount of practice an individuals performance might only improve by an insignificant amount (Anderson, 1982; Newell & Rosenbloom, 1981). Efficient learning is not possible and improvement only negligible without adequate feedback, even for highly motivated individuals. The act of simply repeating an activity will not inevitably lead to improvement in, specifically, accuracy of performance (Trowbridge & Cason, 1932).

Ericsson (2007) clarifies that the benefits come from adjusting ones execution over and over to get closer to the goal and not from mechanical repetition. He states that an individual needs to continuously increase the complexity of the area they are trying to master, which allows errors to arise, helping the individual to increase their limits. The secret of winning is deliberate practice where the expert coach takes an individual through a well-designed

training over months and months, even years where one gives it their full attention. Ericsson (2007) says that how experts in any domain pay attention makes a crucial difference, and he refers to this as ‘smart practice’. Smart practice, he claims, always includes a feedback loop that allows the individual to recognise errors and instantly correct them (Ericsson, 2007).

In studies on musicians by Ericsson et al. (1993), they found all top rankings practiced far more than their peers did. There were no natural musicians in the top rankings who had reached that level without the same significant amount of practice as did the other exceptional musicians. The findings of their research suggest that, once a musician has enough ability to get into a top music school, the key determinant that distinguishes one performer from another is the amount of effort he or she puts in. They also recognised that the people at the very top worked much, much harder than their less accomplished counterparts.

Deliberate practice allows individuals to have repeated experiences where they can concentrate on the crucial factors of the activity and incrementally improve their performance in a response to knowledge of results and or feedback from an instructor (Ericsson et al., 1993).

The key differences between work, deliberate practice and play are described in

**Table 4.**

**Table 4: The key differences between work, deliberate practice, and play  
(Adapted from Ericsson et al., 1993)**

Activity	Distinguishing Characteristics
Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance with the aim to get the job done, no direct focus on the task at hand.</li> <li>• The external rewards of work activities include being recognised socially, and most important, financial rewards in the form of prizes and pay, enabling performers to sustain a living (Ericsson, Krampe, &amp; Tesch-Römer, 1993)</li> </ul>

Deliberate practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A highly organised activity with the specific intention to improve performance</li> <li>• Precise tasks are created to overcome weaknesses. Performance is vigilantly observed to provide cues for ways to improve it further.</li> <li>• External rewards are almost absent</li> <li>• Focused attention to maximise feedback and information about corrective action</li> <li>• Requires effort and is not inherently enjoyable; individuals are motivated to practice because practice improves performance.</li> <li>• Produces no immediate financial rewards and there are costs associated with access to teachers and training environments</li> </ul>
Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The goal of play is the activity itself, external rewards are almost completely lacking</li> <li>• Inherent enjoyment in adults is seen as “flow,” where an individual is completely immersed in an activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).</li> <li>• “Peak experiences” in sports reveal an enjoyable state of effortless mastery and execution of an activity (Ravizza, 1984).</li> <li>• A state of diffused attention</li> </ul>

The constraints of deliberate practice are summarised in

Table 5.

**Table 5: Deliberate practice requirement constraints  
(Adapted from Ericsson et al., 1993)**

Constraints	Requirements for expert performance
Resource constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliberate practice demands time and energy for the individual.</li> <li>• It also requires access to the relevant trainers and mentors, training material, and where applicable training facilities</li> <li>• If the individual is not an adult or is financially disadvantaged, the individual requires a sponsor who is willing to pay for training material and costs incurred for professional trainers or mentors.</li> </ul>



Motivational constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliberate practice is in itself not naturally inspiring or rewarding</li> <li>• Individuals seldom initiate practice spontaneously because of this lack of enjoyment in practice.</li> </ul>
Effort constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliberate practice is an activity that requires a lot of effort and can only be prolonged for a limited time each day during extended periods without leading to exhaustion</li> <li>• Individuals need to minimise practice to an amount from which they can completely recover on a daily or weekly basis.</li> </ul>

From

Table 5 it can be seen that the individual needs very specific qualities that enable them to stay engaged where many others might give up.

To be an expert requires one to have the capacity to engage in deliberate practice and for this certain factors play a crucial role, namely: achievement motivation, self-efficacy, and self-regulatory mechanisms (Baron & Henry, 2010). To gain a deeper understanding of how these factors contribute to expert performance a breakdown of each one is listed below.

### 2.3.2 Achievement motivation

Achievement motivation (or need for achievement) is about striving for competence; hence a large part of understanding a persons need for achievement is understanding their beliefs about competence, what it is and what it means about who they are (Dweck & Molden, 2000). Nicholls (1984, p. 328) defines achievement behaviour as “*behaviour directed or demonstrating high rather than low ability.*” To exhibit high competency an individual must achieve more with equal effort to another individual, or employ less effort than others and achieve an equal performance. The key differentiating factor of achievement behaviour is that the goal is competence or the perception of competence (Maehr & Nicholls, 1980)

Achievement behaviour is defined as “*behaviour where the goal is to develop or demonstrate to self or to others high ability, or to avoid demonstrating low ability*” (Kukla, 1978, p. 328; McFarland & Ross, 1982). Where there is an opportunity to achieve, to the degree that it

suggests superior competency individuals crave success and equally so, to the degree that it suggests low competency, individuals seek to avoid failure.

McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, and Lowell (1976, p. 79) define achievement motivation in terms of affect associated with performance that is evaluated in terms of standards of excellence. Standards of excellence are applicable for moral and achievement behaviour. Dispositions measured by the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)<sup>2</sup> are implicit motives and implicit motives are dispositions that were previously labelled as needs (McClelland, Koestner, & Weinberger, 1989). For example, need for achievement (nAch), need for power (nPower), and need for affiliation (nAff). These TAT-measured dispositions are motives in that they “drive, direct and select behaviour”. They are labelled implicit motives because they reflect the non-conscious motives of the individual (McClelland, Koestner, & Weinberger, 1989).

### 2.3.3 Self-efficacy

To be an expert requires one to have the capacity to engage in deliberate practice, and for this self-efficacy plays an important role (Baron & Henry, 2010). Self-efficacy is considered an individuals' personal judgment about their ability to make things happen to achieve their desired goals (Bandura, 1977, 1997). Bandura said:

*The capacity to exercise control over the nature and quality of life is the essence of humanness. Unless people believe they can produce desired results and forestall detrimental ones by their actions, they have little incentive to act or persevere in the face of difficulties.* (Hockenbury & Hockenbury, 2004, p. 413)

An individual's past performance is recognised to have the greatest impact on efficacy beliefs. Individuals learn vicariously by observing other people succeed in a task, which creates confidence in their own ability to succeed in the same task. (Feltz & Lirgg, 2001)

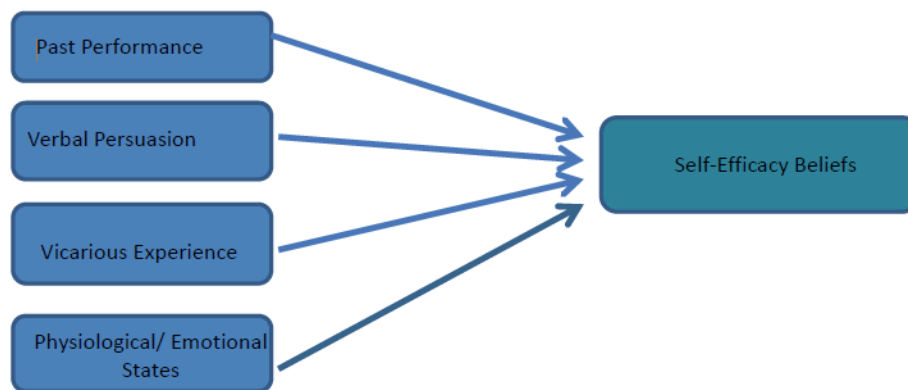
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<sup>2</sup> The **Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)** is a projective psychological test. Supporters of this technique claim that an individuals responses disclose their underlying motivations, concerns, and the way they see the social world through the stories or interpretations they make up about unclear pictures of people (Murray, 1943)

Bandura (1997) claims an individual's level of self-efficacy is a result of four key sources of efficacy information. They are a person's past performance achievements, verbal encouragement, vicarious experience and one's physical or emotional states.

Figure 4 illustrates the various ways self-efficacy is developed which then reflects in our performance and behaviour.

**Figure 4: Sources of Self-Efficacy Theory (Samson, 2015)**



Zimmerman (2000) says self-efficacy beliefs afford individuals with a means to inspire their learning through self-regulatory processes like setting goals, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation. To the degree students assess themselves as capable, is the degree to which they embrace more challenging goals (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992).

The most central and crucial aspects of personal agency are a person's belief in their ability to exercise control over themselves and their outer circumstances (Bandura, 1997). Efficacy beliefs form the foundation of human agency. Unless people believe they can create chosen results and prevent unfavourable ones through their actions, they have little motivation to act or to persist in the face of challenges. All other factors that operate as guides and inspiration stem from the core belief that a person has the power to create results by their actions. Meta-analyses verify the persuasive role played by efficacy beliefs in human performance (Holden, 1992; Holden, Moncher, Schinke, & Barker, 1990; Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998).

A person's self-efficacy plays an essential role in that efficacy beliefs affect adjustment and

change not only in their own right, but also through the impact they have on other components (Bandura, 1997; Maddux, 1995; Schwarzer, 2014). Efficacy beliefs play a fundamental role in the self-regulation of motivation through goal challenges and outcome expectations. These beliefs determine whether a person thinks negatively, in ways that are self-hindering, or positively and in ways that are self-enhancing.

Previously educational advancement was mostly determined by the school to which a student was assigned. Nowadays, the Internet offers a multitude of opportunities for students to determine their own learning. Students nowadays have access to the best libraries, museums and lecturers at their fingertips, not restricted by time or place. Good self-regulators expand their knowledge and cognitive competencies whilst poor self-regulators fall behind (Zimmerman, 1990). Schools are placing a premium on personal efficacy for self-development and self-renewal in the face of the rapid pace of informational, social, and technological change.

#### **2.3.4 Mastery**

Mastery goals signify a focus on learning and self-improvement. Performance goals on the other hand, signify a general concern with proving one's ability and trying to improve oneself, or not to appear worse than others (Ames, 1992; Dweck & Leggett, 1988).

There are three laws to mastery: mastery is a mind-set; mastery is a pain; and mastery is an asymptote (something you will never entirely reach) (Pink, 2011).

A crucial insight by Dweck and Molden (2000) is that 'what people believe shapes what they achieve'. In their book "Self Theories", they explore the nature of beliefs and the impact they have on how people interpret their experiences, and from this can set a boundary on what is possible to accomplish. In her book 'Mind-set: The New Psychology of Success', Dweck (2006) refers to two views people typically display, a "fixed mind-set" or a "growth mind-set". Those who have what she refers to as an entity theory (fixed mind-set), believe intelligence is finite, and cannot be developed. These types of people live with a limited view that the intelligence they have is what they have and cannot be further developed. The other type is what she refers to as incremental theorists (growth mind-set), who view intelligence as something you can develop. Having an incremental theory or growth mind-set is what allows for mastery as people who hold this view see every educational and professional encounter

as an opportunity to improve and increase their abilities. They do what they do, in order to learn, not to get a specific outcome.

In an article by Dweck (2010), another outcome from her research was how these two types of thinking generate very different results for dealing with adversity. Someone who holds a fixed mind-set often responds to adversity with what she calls “helplessness”. A growth mind-set responds from a place of “mastery orientation.” Those with a fixed mind-set gave up sooner when challenges arose, not recognising that if they kept engaging, they might find the answer. Those with a growth mind-set believed hard work in the service of learning and development would lead to success, and showed far higher results. This is directly applicable to expert performance, as those who demonstrate consistent superior results reflect an innate ability to continuously develop and improve their skill, which reflects a growth mind-set (Dweck, 2010).

Ericsson et al. (1993) has provided many new theories on what fosters mastery. He shares how what was previously seen as innate talent is now recognised as intense practice on the desired outcome for a minimum of ten years. Chambliss (2006) referred to this as the mundanity of excellence. In a study on Olympic swimmers over three years he noted those who achieved the greatest success were the ones who spent the most time and effort on the mundane activities that readied them for the race.

The third law to mastery says Pink (2011) is ‘mastery is an asymptote’<sup>3</sup>. Linking this to expert performance, mastery is something you can never reach. It is impossible to fully realise. What Pink (2011) shares is that the joy is in the pursuit much more than the realisation. Mastery goals and performance-approach goals were compared and it was found that mastery goals were especially effective in increasing intrinsic motivation for people low in the need for achievement. Only performance-approach goals increased interest for achievement-oriented individuals (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1994; Harackiewicz & Elliot, 1993).

### **2.3.5 Grit**

Intellectual talent linked to achievement has been well established in all professional domains, but less so in respect of other individual differences that predict success. The

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<sup>3</sup> Asymptote (noun): a straight line that continually approaches a curve but never meets it (Collins English Dictionary, 1988).

importance of the trait grit has been tested as a predictor of success (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007).

Grit is recognised as the perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Grit involves working tirelessly towards goals, upholding effort and interest over years despite adversity, failure and plateaus in progress (Duckworth et al., 2007). An individual high in grit moves towards achievement as in a marathon in which his or her gain is endurance. For individuals low in grit, disappointment or boredom are indicators that it is time to change course and cut losses, whereas the individual high in grit continues to pursue until completion (Duckworth et al., 2007).

Grit and related concepts are linked with lifetime educational attainment (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009) and professional accomplishment (Baum & Locke, 2004; Locke & Latham, 2013; Vallerand, Houliort, Forest, & Gagné, 2014; Wrzesniewski, 2012)

Grit is highly interrelated with the big-five personality trait of conscientiousness. Duckworth et al. (2007) in their tests on grit revealed incremental predictive validity of success measures well beyond IQ and conscientiousness. The findings suggest that the achievement of challenging goals is about talent and also the persistent and single-minded use of talent over time (Duckworth et al., 2007). Deliberate practice is the involvement in intense, prolonged, and highly focused efforts to improve current performance over time (Baron & Henry, 2010).

One study on grit has shown that in the “National Spelling Bee”<sup>4</sup>, grittier competitors amass more hours of deliberate practice over the course of years, which facilitates the effect of grit on final ranking (Duckworth et al., 2011). Related research has identified harmonious passion, which is self-directed internalisation of a passionate activity into one’s identity, as a predictor of deliberate practice and, in turn, performance (Vallerand et al., 2014).

Numerous other studies of expert performers in varied domains have found that thousands of hours of extremely effortful deliberate practice are an essential requirement for achieving world-class levels of skill (Ericsson & Charness, 1994). Many people can demonstrate highly effortful focused practice. Among these people grit predicts superior performance. Grit inclines people to work very hard, continuously, towards a highly valued goal for years and

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<sup>4</sup> The National Spelling Bee is an annual spelling competition held in the United States. Its goal is educational: to inspire students to perfect the art of spelling and help increase their vocabularies and knowledge of the English language. "Bee" is a chiefly US social gathering for specific purpose, as to carry out communal task (Collins English Dictionary, 1988).\*

even decades (Ericsson & Charness, 1994).

Dweck (2006) links effort to adding meaning to a person's life, in that one typically puts effort into the things that are important, and where one is willing to work for the results.

After interviewing individuals from many fields asking respondents to distinguish what in their mind differentiates star performers in their area of expertise, grit was cited as often as talent (Duckworth et al., 2007). What also arose from these interviews was how the respondents were impressed by the accomplishments of peers who did not seem as gifted as others but through their continued commitment to their aspirations were exceptional, and in reverse, the peers who they deemed exceptionally gifted, did not reach the upper echelons of their fields.

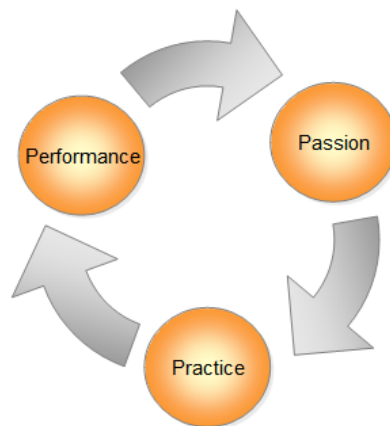
Hambrick et al. (2014, p. 33) refer to Galton (1892) who collected biographical information on eminent people from various fields including judges, statesmen, scientists, poets, musicians, painters, and wrestlers. Galton's (1892) conclusion was that ability alone did not bring about achievement in any field, but rather high achievers had "*ability, plus zeal, plus capacity for hard labour*".

### **2.3.6 Passion**

*"What psychological factors enable performers to maintain a sustained level of intense practice over a lifetime?"* In answering this question, Vallerand, Blanchard, et al. (2003, p. 506) found the concept of passion made a major contribution to such persistent involvement. Passion for an activity leads people to commit themselves fully to an activity, thereby enabling them to continue despite impediments, and ultimately to achieve excellence.

Harmonious passion greatly provides the energy and inspiration to invest in an activity directly predicting deliberate practice and positively predicted mastery goals. This results in positively predicted deliberate practice (Vallerand, Blanchard, et al., 2003). Deliberate practice, in turn has a direct positive impact on performance attainment. Harmonious passion is also positively related to subjective well-being. Figure 5 is a visual representation to illustrate how passion plays a vital role in deliberate practice and performance.

**Figure 5: Passion and Deliberate Practice (Davidson, 2012)**



The conceptualisation of passion is founded in part on Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which is a theory of motivation and personality that explores the role psychological need play in person's development (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). SDT advocates for people to grow psychologically, they need to satisfy basic needs. To fulfil these needs, people engage in various activities which result in their growth and development.

Vallerand, Blanchard, et al. (2003, p. 507) define passion as *"a strong inclination towards an activity that individuals like (or even love), that they find important, in which they invest time and energy, and which comes to be internalised in one's identity."* People engage in various activities to satisfy basic psychological needs of autonomy<sup>5</sup>, competence<sup>6</sup> and relatedness<sup>7</sup> (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 228).

Achievement motivation, or need for achievement, is about striving for competence (Dweck & Molden, 2000). Achievement behaviour is recognised as behaviour focused at developing and establishing high ability and skill (Nicholls, 1984). Self-efficacy beliefs afford individuals with a way to motivate their learning through self-regulatory processes like setting goals, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation (Zimmerman, 2000). Being passionate for an activity inspires individuals to devote themselves entirely to an activity, thereby enabling them to persevere, even in the face of obstacles, and to eventually attain excellence (Vallerand, Blanchard, et al., 2003).

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<sup>5</sup> Autonomy seen as a desire to act independently (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Competence seen as a desire to be properly qualified (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Relatedness seen as a desire to experience connection with others (Deci & Ryan, 2000).



### **2.3.7 Focus**

According to Auer (1980), an essential precondition for practice is that individual be fully focused while playing musical instruments so that they will notice potential areas for improvement and avoid errors. Auer (1980) believes that practice without such attentiveness and focus is even harmful or disadvantageous to improvement of performance. In studies on Olympic swimmers it was found that the secret to realising excellence is for swimmers to always maintain attention to every detail of their performance (Chambliss, 1988).

Neuroplasticity, which is the strengthening of old neural pathways and building new ones for a skill we are practicing, requires our full attention (Pink, 2011). Accordingly, if an individual's focus is elsewhere during practice, the brain does not rewire the relevant circuitry for that routine. In today's day and age more so than ever before people are bombarded with many distractions which take away from a person's ability to give undivided attention to tasks as they go through the day. Expert performers actively counteract such tendencies towards automaticity by engaging in training where their set goal exceeds their level of performance (Ericsson, 2007). On top of this, the more time expert performers can practice deliberate practice with full concentration, the further developed and refined their performance is.

Employing focused attention requires a lot of energy and for this reason world class performers tend to limit their training to roughly four hours a day to prevent strain (Ericsson, 2007). Taking time to rest and recharge mentally or physically is built into their training regimen. Optimal training maintains optimal concentration (Ericsson, 2007). Expert performance is consistent superior performance on a specified set of representative tasks for the domain that can be administered to any subject (Ericsson & Charness, 1994).

### **2.3.8 Summary of expert performance**

The literature shows the importance of deliberate practice tied to superior performance and the related requirements as set out in this section. Table 6 is a summary of these key qualities required for expert performance, as compiled by the researcher.

**Table 6: Summary of key qualities for expert performance**

Quality	Description
<b>Deliberate practice</b>	Involvement in intense, lengthy, and highly concentrated efforts to advance current performance (Baron & Henry, 2010), resulting in consistent superior performance (Ericsson & Charness, 1994).
<b>Achievement motivation (need for achievement)</b>	Implicit motives that drive behaviour, direct behaviour and select behaviour, eg: need for achievement (nAch), need for power (nPower), and need for affiliation (nAff) (McClelland, Koestner, & Weinberger, 1989)
<b>Self-Efficacy</b>	A persons personal evaluation of their ability to organise and execute courses of action to achieve their designated goals” (Bandura, 1977a, 1997)
<b>Grit &amp; self-regulation</b>	Self-regulatory mechanisms are cognitive systems that allow one to regulate his or her behaviour in order to achieve specific personal goals (Winne, 1997). Among these, self-control (Baumeister, Vohs & Tice, 2007) and conscientiousness, as noted by Yates and Tschirhart (2006), refers to the extent to which individuals are organised, persistent, capable of hard work, and motivated to pursue goal accomplishment (Mount & Barrick, 1995). Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals (Pink, 2009). Grit requires working tirelessly towards challenges, upholding effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress (Duckworth, et al, 2007).
<b>Incremental theorists (growth mind-set)</b>	Incremental theorists (growth mind-set) view intelligence as something you can develop. Having an incremental theory or growth mind-set is what allows for mastery. People tend to see encounters as opportunities to improve and increase their abilities. (Dweck & Molden, 2000). This allows a mastery orientation
<b>Passion</b>	<i>“A strong inclination towards an activity that individuals like (or even love), that they find important, in which they invest time and energy, and which comes to be internalised in one’s identity.”</i> Vallerand, Blanchard, et al. (2003, p. 507)
<b>Focus</b>	Auer (1980) an essential precondition for practice is that the individual be fully focused while practicing so that he or she will notice potential areas for improvement and avoid errors.

## **2.4 Qualities of an executive coach**

This section explores the qualities standard to executive coaches. The researcher aims to establish the basic quality requirements for executive coaching, providing the possibility to distinguish the qualities required to meet expert performance in business and executive coaching.

### **2.4.1 Psychological-mindedness and coaching competence**

Executive coaches should possess business and psychological-mindedness as well as coaching competence and argues that having a weakness in any of these areas creates a lopsided coaching style (Lee, 2003).

Psychologically-minded individuals have an ability to distance themselves from their experience, enabling them to notice their own internal processes (Bluckert, 2005). This skill enables them to remain neutral and to suspend judgement about the coachee's experience. Lee (2003, p. 175) defines the term psychological-mindedness as *"the ability of the coach to reflect on the cognitive and emotional states that drive behaviour."*

### **2.4.2 Self-awareness**

One of the key attributes of a coach is to be self-aware, which forms a key component of psychological-mindedness.

Self-awareness is when a person becomes conscious or awake to their present reality. It's the ability a person has to observe their environment and the capacity to name their perceptions, feelings, and nuances of behaviour (Kondrat, 1999). The self is aware of what it is experiencing. According to Kondrat (1999) this self is recognised as the perceiving subject, the locus for feelings, perceptions, and impressions. Self-awareness is influenced by gestalt and existential theory where the emphasis is on here-and-now interaction with the environment.

Without self-awareness people operate on autopilot, taking actions that lack any conscious control (Bandura, 2001). In terms of demonstrating control over one's life, Bandura (2001) says that the very substance of mental life is consciousness, that not only makes life

personally manageable but worth living.

To have any form of control in one's life involves consciously and deliberately monitoring one's internal and external environment to measure and evaluate courses of action in one's life. Carlson (1997) emphasises the central role that consciousness plays in the cognitive regulation of action and the flow of mental events.

Duval and Wicklund (1972) present a theory of objective self-awareness. According to the theory, human consciousness is bidirectional; it can either be focused on the self, or outside of itself in the external environment. When focused inwards, the self becomes the object of evaluation. According to Mead (1934), the self is largely a social-construct where self-focused attention is parallel to social evaluation, which is one of the most important activities in interpersonal relations. Self-Awareness Theory shows how social control operates within the individual (Geller & Shaver, 1976).

### **2.4.3 Mindfulness**

Passmore and Marianetti (2007) explore the role mindfulness has in coaching as a tool to help the coach cultivate and sustain focus in a coaching session. They see mindfulness as a practice to manage emotional detachment.

Effective coaching requires the coach to offer their coachees their full focus and attention. Mindfulness assists coaches to focus their attention in the only moment that 'is'. Being able to focus entirely in the moment, allows the coach to 'be' fully with their coachee (Passmore & Marianetti, 2007).

Mindfulness has its roots in Buddhist and other meditative traditions that teach the art of 'non-doing' to assist people in engaging in reality 'as is' (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Mindfulness develops conscious attention and awareness of the moment in a non-judgmental way. Mindfulness gives individuals a break from the limitations of their mental models and enables an individual a space for pure exploration (Passmore & Marianetti, 2007). Mindfulness is a new way of thinking about reality that tests one's sense of safety, which is derived from the illusion and the safety of 'knowing'. Mindfulness opens up a possibility to accept the 'not-knowing' that allows one to see the world 'as is'. Mindfulness directly influences our ability to

evaluate events and interpret them with a more objective view and a higher control of our response (Passmore & Marianetti, 2007).

Kabat-Zinn (1990, p. 25) says that *“it is not that mindfulness is the ‘answer’ to all of life’s challenges, it is that all of life’s difficulties can be seen more clearly through the lens of a clear mind”*. Mindfulness has been proven to foster health and well-being among medical patients and healthy individuals (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Shapiro, Schwartz, & Bonner, 1998).

Passmore and Marianetti (2007) show four specific uses of mindfulness in coaching. Mindfulness can be used for preparing for coaching, upholding focus in the session, staying emotionally detached, and teaching mindfulness techniques to the coachee.

#### **2.4.4 Authenticity**

The current literature primarily relates to the authenticity of the coach as a crucial aspect of the coach-coachee relationship; the idea of ‘authentic participation’ in the coaching process, and the importance of coachees’ authentic relationships with others (Palmer & Whybrow, 2014; Peltier, 2011; Stober & Grant, 2006). There is great recognition that authenticity is a key to a person’s well-being and optimal performance (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

A lot of coaching goals are to increase self-awareness, personal growth and to increase levels of authenticity (Burke & Linley, 2007). Authenticity is relevant in coaching engagements in that a key use for coaching is directed at coachees being able to identify and then follow personally relevant goals that are self-concordant (Burke & Linley, 2007).

There are many definitions of authenticity (Susing, Green, & Grant, 2011). Authenticity is defined as *“involving consistency between the three levels of: (a) a person’s primary experience; (b) their symbolised awareness; and (c) their outward behaviour and communication”* (Barrett-Lennard, 1998, p. 82).

Individuals feels authentic when there is alignment between emotional expression and behaviour, awareness of how one feels physically, emotionally or mentally, and when these are free from external sways (Barrett-Lennard, 1998). Authenticity is also defined as *‘the*

*unobstructed operation of one's true, or core, self in one's daily enterprise' and embodies "awareness, unbiased processing, action, and relational orientation' (Kernis, 2003, p. 1).*

The literature on authenticity reflects four core themes: 1) Understanding of self, 2) Openness to objectively evaluating desirable and undesirable self-aspects, 3) Actions and 4) Relationship towards interpersonal relationships (Kernis & Goldman, 2006, p. 284). These themes include four key components which are aligned with the conceptualisation of authenticity, namely: 1) awareness – confidence and faith in one's own value system, one's thoughts, feelings and intentions; 2) impartial processing - objectivity and acceptance of one's positive and negative attributes; 3) behaviour – performing according to one's own standards and in alignment with one's true preferences, values, and needs; instead of acting to only gain the approval of others; 4) relational orientation - achieving and valuing honesty and integrity in one's close relationships (Kernis & Goldman, 2006).

Harter (2002) says authenticity is taking full responsibility for one's personal experiences, thoughts, emotions, needs, desires and beliefs. Luthans and Avolio (2003) suggests it involves being self-aware and acting in alignment with one's true self by verbalising what one genuinely thinks and believes.

Executives are empowered by their interaction with executive coaches to lead authentically and to bring a more holistic self into their work space (O'Neill, 2000). To achieve this it is important for executive coaches to bring themselves forward as well (O'Neill, 2000).

#### **2.4.5 Trust**

Alvey and Barclay (2007) explored the development of trust in executive coaching relationships. They found it is the interplay of relational, situational, and behavioural factors that influence the development of trust in executive coaching. Their research showed that trust was highest when the following conditions were in place: a) the coachee was prepared to reveal honest feelings and thoughts to the coach and was met with a supportive, non-judgmental response from the coach; b) the organisation was supportive of the positive leadership development that could occur in executive coaching; c) the coach and coachee were clear about expectations of confidentiality and outcomes; and d) the coach supportively confirmed the coachee's developmental needs, and challenged the coachee's leadership behaviours. When these multiple, interdependent factors manifested throughout the

coaching relationship, it resulted in bonds of trust. (Alvey & Barclay, 2007).

Trust is fundamental to establish and maintain relationships, it supports the generation of mutually supportive relationships and as a consequence produces greater relationship commitment and satisfaction (Balliet & Van Lange, 2013; Campbell, Simpson, Boldry, & Rubin, 2010; Deutsch, 1958, 1960; McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998; Righetti & Finkenauer, 2011; Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew, 1999). Trust is frequently defined as a belief or expectation about others' motives during a social interaction (Balliet & Van Lange, 2013). Trust is a *“psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another”* (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998, p. 395). Trust includes *“expectations of benign behaviour from someone in a socially uncertain situation due to the beliefs about the person’s dispositions including feelings towards you”* (Yamagishi, 2011, p. 27).

#### **2.4.6 Self-control**

Executive coaches are in a position of influence to coachees. Another key attribute of an executive coach is self-control, which enables a capacity for self-regulation. Bandura (2001) says agency is about deliberately making things happen by a persons' actions and that agency embodies a persons' talents, belief systems, self-regulatory abilities among others, through which personal influence is exercised.

Self-directedness works through self-regulatory practices that link thought to action. The self-regulation of motivation, affect, and action is managed by self-monitoring, performance self-guidance through subjective standards, and corrective self-reactions (Bandura, 1986, 1991).

Research has established that advanced levels of self-control earlier in life predict later academic accomplishment and achievement; pro-social behaviour, work, income, investments, and physical health (Duckworth & Carlson, 2013; Eisenberg et al., 2009; Mischel, 2014; Moffitt et al., 2011).

The capacity to regulate attention, emotion, and behaviour is essential to everyday success as Galton (2006), both Freud (1920) and James (1890) speculated. Self-control is associated with positive life outcomes. Many consequential outcomes like general intelligence or socioeconomic status are a result of self-control. Self-control was previously referred to as

willpower (de Ridder, Lensvelt-Mulders, Finkenauer, Stok, & Baumeister, 2012; Duckworth & Seligman, 2005; Hofmann, Luhmann, Fisher, Vohs, & Baumeister, 2014; Mischel, 2014; Moffitt et al., 2011)

In exploring what makes some people more successful than others, it was found that key determinants of success are self-control and grit (Duckworth & Gross, 2014). Self-control, like related theories of ego strength, effortful control, and conscientiousness, is the capacity to regulate attention, emotion, and behaviour in the presence of temptation. Grit is the tenacious pursuit of a dominant overall goal despite setbacks. The two are linked with slight nuances. Some people with high levels of self-control capably handle temptations but do not consistently pursue a dominant goal. Similarly, some exceptional achievers are tremendously gritty but succumb to temptations in domains other than their chosen life passion (Duckworth & Gross, 2014).

The literature discussed above shows a link between self-control and academic accomplishment and achievement. Regulating attention, emotion, and behaviour is essential to everyday success (Galton, 2006). Given the intention behind most coaching interventions is enhanced performance and personal development, self-control might be a quality key to executive coaching.

#### **2.4.7 Social Intelligence**

Many definitions of executive coaching make reference to the one-on-one nature of the relationship. It is frequently associated with enhancing professional skills, interpersonal awareness, and personal effectiveness. For this, an executive coach requires a high degree of social intelligence.

There are still differences within and between the definitions of social intelligence, a capacity or potential, and social competence, an achievement or actualisation of potential (Huitt & Dawson, 2011). Gardner (1983, p. 239) defines social intelligence (labelled interpersonal intelligence) as *“the ability to notice and make distinctions among other individuals and, in particular, among their moods, temperaments, motivations, and intentions”*. Goleman (2006, p. 11) defines social intelligence as *“being intelligent not just about our relationships but also in them”*. Goleman’s definition includes the capacity to be socially aware, which includes aspects of primal empathy, empathetic accuracy, and social cognition, as well as the



capability to develop social aptitude, which includes components of synchrony, self-preservation, influence, and concern (Huitt & Dawson, 2011).

Social intelligence is *“the ability to get along well with others and to get them to cooperate with you”* (Albrecht, 2006, p. 3). Social skills enable individuals to succeed not only in their social lives, but also in their academic, personal, and future professional activities (Baker, Wuest, & Stern, 1992).

Coaches with a high level of social intelligence demonstrate a capacity to: a) hold off judgement about a person’s feelings, thoughts and behaviours; b) elicit and build an account of a person’s history and its emotional meanings; c) understand the conscious and unconscious motivation of others and its effect on their thoughts and behaviour; d) identify patterns of relating from the past that are being re-enacted in the present and e) make links between different domains of a person’s experience (Lee, 2003).

#### **2.4.8 Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence is a type of social intelligence that includes the capacity to monitor one's own and others' emotions; to distinguish between them, and to use this awareness to direct one's thinking and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1989). Emotional intelligence includes verbal and non-verbal evaluation and expression of emotion, regulating emotion in the self and others, and the use of emotional content in problem solving (Mayer & Salovey, 1993).

When speaking of emotional intelligence, Goleman (2013) explains how attention only gets spoken about indirectly and is known as ‘self-awareness’, which is the basis for self-management, and as ‘empathy’, the foundation for relationship effectiveness. He claims that it is in managing one’s inner world and outer relationship from the awareness of one’s self and of others that is the essence of emotional intelligence. Goleman (2013) refers to Signe Spencer who claims that in order to predict how people will respond, an individual needs to be able to read another’s reaction to them. To do this requires self-awareness and empathy in a self-reinforcing cycle, which in turn enables the individual to become more aware of how they are coming across to other people.

The most noticeable qualities for people in positions of influence build on empathy, self-management and sensing how what they do affects others (Goleman, 2013). It is in drawing

together empathy, attention and performance that creates the hidden driver for excellence (Goleman, 2013).

In reference to empathy, a supersensitive reading of emotional signals can represent heightened cognitive empathy, the ability to think or rationalise feelings (Goleman, 2013). This is a conscious and deliberate act. In the digital age where a lot of communication is done on-line this might be a skill worth developing. Rapport begins with complete shared focus between two individuals creating unconscious physical synchrony, resulting in good feelings. Such shared focus with a teacher puts a child's brain in the best mode for learning. Empathy depends on a muscle of attention. One needs to pick up the facial, vocal, and other signs of their emotion to tune into another's feelings (Goleman, 2013).

Emotional empathy is embodied in that a person actually feels what is going on in the body of the other person. The anterior cingulate, which is part of the attention network, enables people to feel another's distress by tapping our own amygdala, which resonates with that distress (Goleman, 2013).

#### **2.4.9 Presence**

The coaching relationship is built on trust, the capacity to give and receive feedback, and genuine presence from the executive coach and the executive (O'Neill, 2000). In the coach coachee relationship, an executive coach's signature presence can evoke the signature presence of the coachee. To achieve this, an executive coach must occupy the role of coach in a manner no one else does. O'Neill (2000) says executives need true partners in their developmental process. They require executive coaches who will join them in their most overwhelming work challenges. Executives require executive coaches that can be who they are and not hide behind the coach role.

In a study of executive presence, Dagley and Gaskin (2014) aimed to understand how business professionals who have expertise in the effectiveness of organisational executives interpret executive presence. They state that the literature on executive presence thus far includes themes like non-verbal communication, emotional intelligence and empathy. These have been linked to being vulnerable and real, remaining calm under pressure, aware of how one's presence and behaviour impacts others, and to a lesser extent, ability to manage impression, IQ, and personality (Dagley & Gaskin, 2014).

There are three pillars to executive presence: gravitas, communication, and appearance (Hewlett, Leader-Chivée, Sherbin, & Gordon, 2012). Gravitas they claimed to be the key characteristic of executive presence, which includes the following qualities: a) projecting confidence and 'grace under fire' b) being decisive and 'showing teeth' c) demonstrating integrity and 'speaking truth to power' d) showing emotional intelligence, e) shining reputation, and f) projecting vision. Communication was a secondary characteristic, incorporating the following qualities: great speaking abilities, ability to command a room, and ability to read an audience. Appearance they felt functioned as a conduit through which gravitas and communication skills became apparent.

Voros (2000) identified eight aspects central to executive presence: 1) focus seen as a commitment to the long term and strategic drivers; 2) intellect; 3) charisma, seen as a combination of confidence, intensity, and commitment, as well as appearing caring, concerned, and interested; 4) communication skills; 5) passion; 6) cultural fit; 7) poise; and 8) appearance.

It appears that presence incorporates many of the qualities already listed for executive coaches, namely intentionality, forethought, self-control (poise), social and emotional intelligence, authenticity, trustworthiness, gravitas, confidence, and decisiveness.

#### **2.4.10 Most valued qualities in executive coaching according to the 2013 Ridler Report**

The Ridler Report ("The Ridler Report 2013: Trends in the use of executive coaching," 2013) is an annual international coaching survey done in collaboration with the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) that sets out the current and future trends in the coaching industry. The findings from the survey reflect the views of sponsors of coaching done in approximately 150 large organisations. For purposes of this research paper, sponsor refers to the organisation.

In the 2013 Ridler Report ("The Ridler Report 2013: Trends in the use of executive coaching," 2013) they asked the question:

*"What qualities do sponsors most value in coaches?"*

In their 2011 Ridler Report, 'personal chemistry' they found was by a substantial amount,

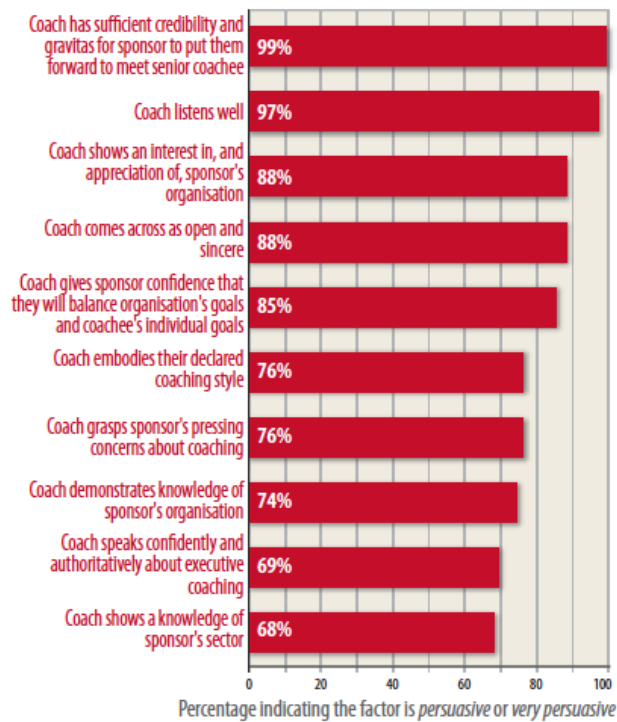
highly ranked by organisations considering employing external coaches. In the 2013 research, the researchers wanted to clarify in more detail the key aspects of personal chemistry in its role in coach selection. Below in Figure 6 - 9 are some of their findings.

### **i. Credibility and Gravitas**

Figure 6 shows that credibility and gravitas are the most imperative aspects (99%, within this group 66% rated it 'very persuasive'). Interviews with organisations showed that these qualities reflected the coach's impact and presence. These relate to the coaches' experience of successfully coaching business leaders, the coach's extensive grasp of business and recognition of the organisations particular business context, the coaches business and coaching experience and a perception that they would easily relate to senior business leaders.

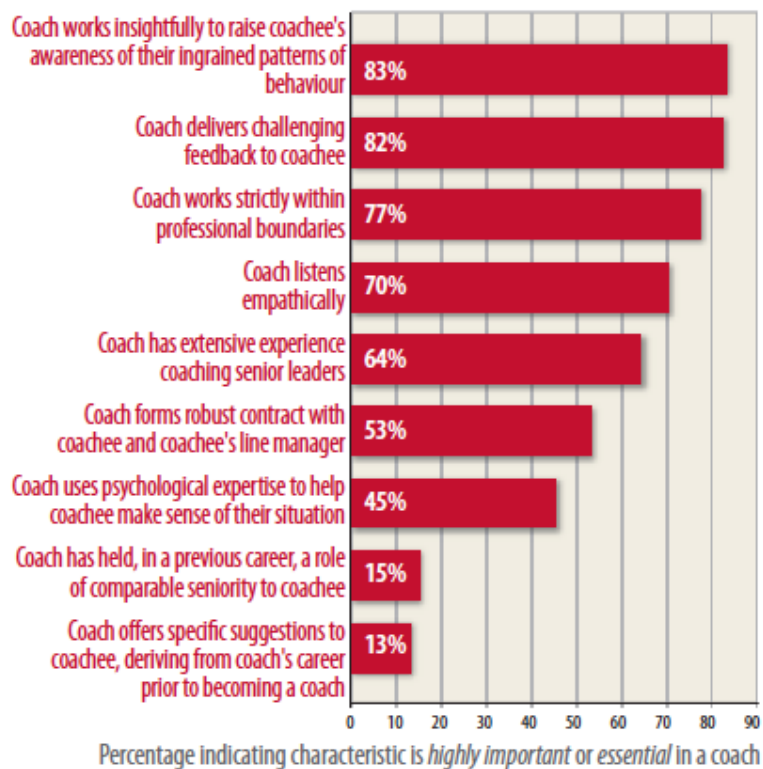
The findings from the survey, as shown in Figure 6, reflect that the coach's interest in and appreciation of the clients' organisation (88%), is valued more highly than their knowledge of it (74%). The coach's knowledge of the industry in which the organisation operates was regarded by organisations as of relatively low importance. It was recognised as high importance for the coach to demonstrate empathy with the complexity of the organisation, and also that the coach has capacity to swiftly understand the specific challenges the coachee faces within their organisations context.

**Figure 6: Indications for sponsor to include coach to preferred supplier list, Ridler Report 2013.**



The findings from the 2013 Ridler Report show that once a coach is working within an organisation, it is mandatory that the coach demonstrates professional coaching expertise. This would include the coach's ability to raise the coachee's awareness of their entrenched patterns of behaviour (83%), which was recognised as the most crucial factor. The coach's ability to give challenging feedback (82%), was also highly rated and least of all, for the coach to make recommendations to the coachee. These are set out in Figure 7.

**Figure 7: Highly important or essential abilities in a coach, Ridler Report 2013.**



**ii. Continuous personal development**

Another aspect of coaching the Ridler Report wanted to clarify was the following statement: *“Sponsors want coaches who can work with coachees’ ingrained patterns.”*

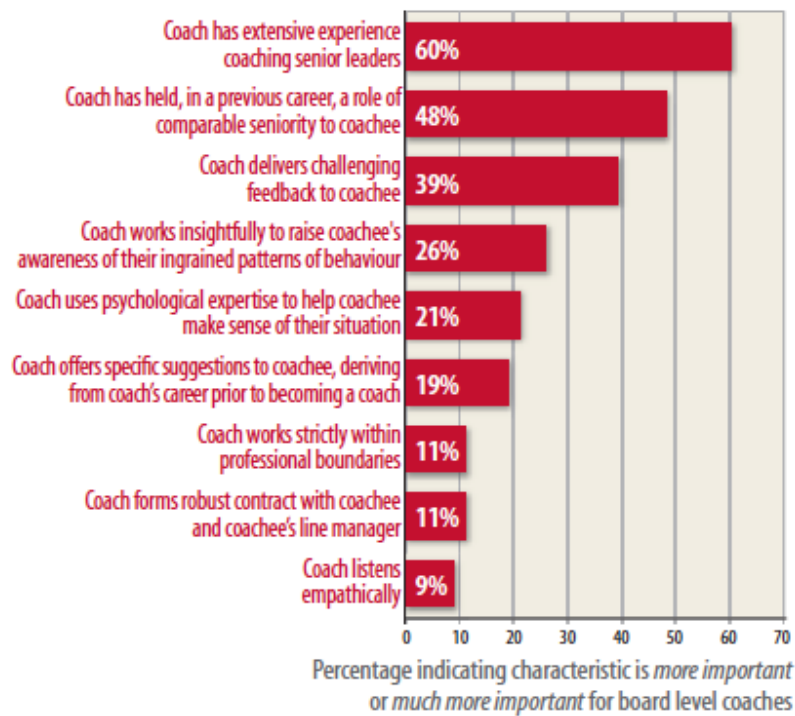
83% of respondents voted ‘higher importance’ or ‘essential’ for a coach to work insightfully to raise the coachee’s awareness of their ingrained patterns of behaviour, which was the most highly rated option.

The Ridler Report describes ingrained patterns as a coachee’s ‘blind spots’, which cause automatic reactions when the pattern has been triggered. Only with awareness of these ‘blind spots’ or pre- programming, can the coachee recognise the impact they are having on their environment and choose to act differently if required. To actually cause a shift in this dynamic the coachee needs to a) have awareness of the programme, b) understanding of when the programme was initiated c) recognise when it is activated and d) consciously choose alternative responses in alignment with desired chosen coaching objectives.

Sponsors claim without this ability in the coach, they anticipate the coaching will be unsuccessful. According to the findings, sponsors view coach’s work on their own ingrained patterns of behaviour as mandatory to their ability to work with their clients’ ingrained patterns.

In Figure 8, the qualities and abilities of board level coaches is plotted in terms of the percentage of importance.

**Figure 8: Qualities and abilities of board level coaches, Ridler Report 2013.**



### iii. Willingness to challenge

In the 2013 Ridler Report ("The Ridler Report 2013: Trends in the use of executive coaching," 2013) organisations claimed a coaches real value is shown when they are able to give challenging feedback to their coachees. For the coachee to receive the feedback, the coach needs to ensure it is given in a professional environment where there is privacy and boundaries (77%) and ethics are in place. Giving challenging feedback is a highly sophisticated skill as the coach needs to come from an empathic position (70%) and the timing needs to be right. To challenge requires the coach to enable the coachee to relate to

the problem in an alternative way and must be delivered with integrity.

#### **iv. Extensive coaching and business experience**

To coach at a board level, it is vitally important for the coach to have had extensive coaching experience with senior leaders, as set out in Figure 8. Board level coachees furthermore want their coach to have held an equivalent position of seniority in previously, along with the related business experience.

Figure 8 shows organisations choose coaches with vast amounts of experience because they recognise a coaches' ability to work with underlying patterns as more important on a board level, and they perceive that extensive experience gives coaches this ability. From these statistics the 2013 Ridler Report ("The Ridler Report 2013: Trends in the use of executive coaching," 2013, p. 5) raises an interesting question:

*How many executive coaches are there who can truly claim to combine experience at having worked at board level with the advanced level of personal development and professional training to be able to work in-depth with board members ingrained patterns of behaviour?*

Glaxo Smith Kline<sup>8</sup> (GSK) sets out the essential coach requirements for choosing executive coaches for GSK's senior and Board level executives. They require accreditation with a respected coaching body to a professional level. (eg: Professional Certified Coach (PCC) with the ICF<sup>9</sup>). Executive coaches must also prove they are in regular supervision with a professionally qualified supervisor ("The Ridler Report 2013: Trends in the use of executive coaching," 2013, p. 17).

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<sup>8</sup> Glaxo Smith Kline is a science-led global healthcare company that researches and develops innovative products in areas of Pharmaceuticals, Vaccines and Consumer Healthcare.

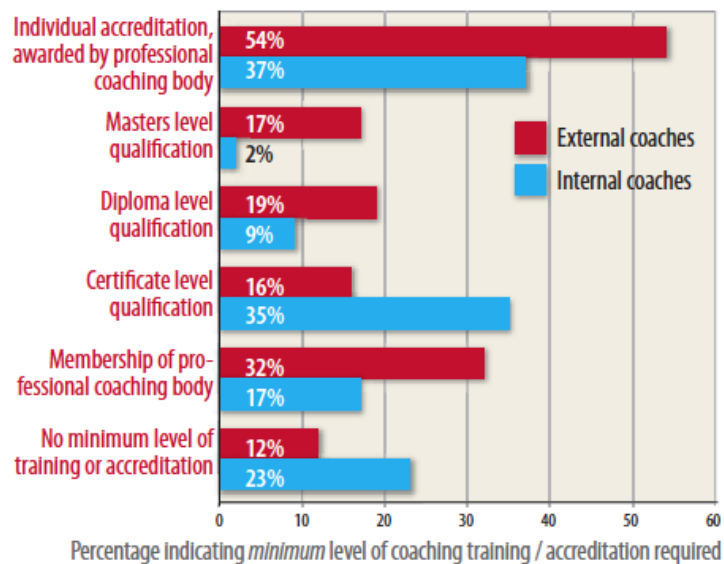
<sup>9</sup> To be accredited as a Professional Certified Coach (PCC) with the ICF, it is required that the executive coach will have delivered 750 or more coaching hours.



Figure 9 reflects the statistics for these requirements below.

**Figure 9: Fundamental coach requirements, Ridler Report 2013**

**Chart 16: Minimum levels of coaching training / accreditation required for internal and external coaches**



The effectiveness of the coach’s coaching process is also assessed, this includes the contracting process; the coaches membership of a professional body in case of recourse; the executive coaches progress reviewing methods; the coaches inclusion of the organisations line managers in the coaching; the professionalism of the organisation to which the coach belongs and the capacity of the coaches organisation to deliver a service to a global organisation

In the 2013 Ridler Report ("The Ridler Report 2013: Trends in the use of executive coaching," 2013, p. 6) they quote GSK on having the following additional essential criteria for being an executive coach at a senior or board level:

1. Business and Leadership credibility – Executive coaches need to show understanding of the difficult environment in which executives work.
2. Inner Awareness  
Executive coaches need to be highly self-aware and continually questioning their

inner psyche. To achieve the executive coach would have needed to have undergone extensive personal development over many years comprising modalities like therapy or intensive development retreats like Landmark Education<sup>10</sup>. The executive coach also needs to be in regular self-reflection practice such as meditation, journaling or retreats and any other disciplines involving self-reflection.

Sally Bonneywell, VP Coaching at GSK ("The Ridler Report 2013: Trends in the use of executive coaching," 2013, p. 6) says:

*Of all the aspects to judge, self-awareness is the hardest. Where there is limited awareness it is relatively easy – people talk of going to a course or learning skills or just own that they haven't really done much there. It becomes trickier when a coach is aware of what personal development work comprises and therefore is skilled in the language but has not really done the work.*

The conclusion she draws as reflected in the 2013 Ridler Report is that coaches who have done their own personal development work who are highly self-aware are able to cause transformation and sustainable change for clients. Coaches who have not done their own work may have initial impact, but they seldom have the capacity for sustainable deep change as they have not walked the path themselves ("The Ridler Report 2013: Trends in the use of executive coaching," 2013, p. 6). Table 7 has been compiled by the researcher and summarizes the required qualities of executive coaches.

**Table 7: Summary of required qualities of an executive coach**

Quality	Description
Psychological-mindedness	The capacity of the coach to think about the cognitive and emotional states that underpin behaviour (Lee, 2003).
Self-Awareness	Becoming awake to one's present realities, observing one's environment, and being able to name one's perceptions, feelings, and nuances of behaviour (Kondrat, 1999).
Mindfulness	Mindfulness develops conscious attention and awareness of the moment in a non-judgmental way (Passmore & Marianetti, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Landmark is an international personal and professional growth, training and development company—a global educational enterprise committed to the fundamental principle that people have the possibility of success, fulfilment and greatness

<b>Quality</b>	<b>Description</b>
Self-Control	<p>The capacity to regulate attention, emotion, and behaviour is essential to everyday success (Freud, 1920; Galton, 2006; James, 1890).</p> <p>To be the cause in creating the outcomes one desires requires self-motivation and self-regulation. Agency comprises the deliberate ability to make choices and action plans, and the ability to give shape to suitable courses of action and to influence and control their implementation (Lee, 2003).</p>
Social intelligence	<p>The ability to notice and make distinctions among other individuals and, in particular, among their moods, temperaments, motivations, and intentions (Gardner, 1983). Social intelligence is defined as “being intelligent not just about our relationships but also in them” (Goleman, 2006)</p>
Emotional Intelligence (EQ)	<p>Emotional intelligence includes the capacity to monitor one's own and others' emotions; to distinguish between them, and to use this awareness to direct one's thinking and actions (Salovey &amp; Mayer, 1989)</p>
Authenticity	<p>Authenticity is defined as taking full responsibility for one's personal experiences, thoughts, emotions, needs, desires and beliefs (Harter, 2002).</p>
Trust	<p>Trust is fundamental to establish and maintain relationships, and generates mutually supportive relationships (Balliet &amp; Van Lange, 2013; Deutsch, 1958, 1960; McKnight et al., 1998)</p>
Credibility and gravitas	<p>A function of the coach's personal impact and presence that relate to the coach's track record of successfully coaching business leaders ("Ridler Report ", 2013 p. 4)</p>
Continuous personal development (CPD)	<p>CPD is an ongoing, self-directed, structured, outcomes focused cycle of learning and personal improvement, (Rouse, 2004, p. 2069)</p>
Willingness to challenge	<p>Reframing a problem in a way that the coachee has not thought about it before, delivered in a respectful, firm and honest way ("Ridler Report ", 2013 p. 5)</p>
Extensive coaching and business experience	<p>Having extensive coaching experience with senior leaders is the most important differentiator when coaching at a board level. Board level coachees want executive coaches who have had extensive business experience and have held a comparable role of seniority as the coachee in previous careers ("The Ridler Report 2013: Trends in the use of executive coaching," 2013, p. 6)</p>
Presence	<p>Includes themes like non-verbal communication, emotional intelligence, the ability to manage impression, IQ and personality.</p>

The discussion that follows explores what qualities are required for expert performance in executive coaches.

## 2.5 Qualities of exceptional coaches

To better understand what distinguishes the work of exceptional coaches, Dagley (2010) researched human resource professionals responsible for purchasing executive coaching services. His findings revealed that the purchasers of executive coaches recognised a great outcome from coaching as behaviour change. The work of exceptional coaches is at its most distinctive when the required behaviour change is especially demanding, and when the results are based on transformational change (Dagley, 2010).

Executive-coachees' experiences were categorised into themes of engagement, deeper conversations, insight and responsibility, and positive growth. The exceptional coaching abilities that enabled these experiences were credibility, empathy and respect, holding the professional self, diagnostic skill and insight, approach flexibility and range, working to the business context, a philosophy of personal responsibility, and skilful challenging, which can be seen in Table 8 (Dagley, 2010).

**Table 8: Exceptional executive coaching capabilities Dagley (2010)**

<b>Executive experience themes</b>	<b>Coaching capabilities</b>
Engagement	Credibility
	Empathy and respect
	Holding the professional self
Deeper conversations	Diagnostic skill and insight
	Approach flexibility and range
Insight and responsibility	Works to the business context
	Skilful challenging
	A philosophy of personal responsibility

In comparing what Dagley (2010) refers to as exceptional coach qualities to the qualities recognised in executive coaches in general (psychological mindedness, self-awareness, mindfulness, self-control, social intelligence, emotional intelligence, authenticity and trust, and presence), the standard qualities associated with executive coaches appear to be base qualities required to fulfil the capacity to enter executive coaching.

In contrast, the qualities identified by Dagley (2010) appear to embody qualities, which stem from having experience and theoretic knowledge deeply ingrained.

In linking these qualities to the qualities of expert performance, consistent superior performance in any field is often associated with deliberate practice, which requires self-efficacy, achievement motivation, mastery, grit, passion, and focus.

## **2.6 Conclusion of literature review**

The summary of the literature shows executive coaching needs to be distinguished from traditional coaching, specifically relating to the dual-coachee aspects of the work with the consequent need to produce results not only for the coachee but the organisation as well.

Coaching has the potential to open up deep-seated anxieties and long-standing behavioural problems that might require the coach to be equipped to deal with a range of psychological pathologies. Coach training might not have training that includes psychological pathologies. The literature suggests that, to be an expert coach in the field of executive coaching, a coach needs to have psychological theories, organisational and management studies and employ approaches from business psychology and economic studies.

Recent studies also place strong emphasis on the importance of the personal development of the coach, and as such, Bluckert (2005) made a call for coach training courses to have a more substantial focus on the personal development of the coach, which would then result in coaches being better equipped to meet the challenges they face in the business world today.

According to Ericsson, Charness, Feltovich, and Hoffman (2006) and Colvin (2008), deliberate practice involves high levels of focus and concentration, being able to identify weaknesses and applying strenuous efforts to improve these, and ten years of continued vigorous effort (Ericsson, 2006).

From the literature self-awareness is a key ingredient of being an expert executive coach. Another component is a person's belief in their ability to exercise control over themselves and their circumstances.

Duckworth and Gross (2014) show that key determinants of success are self-control and grit. Self-control, like the related theories of ego strength, effortful control, and conscientiousness, is the capacity to regulate attention, emotion, and behaviour in the presence of temptation. Grit is the tenacious pursuit of a dominant overarching goal despite setbacks.

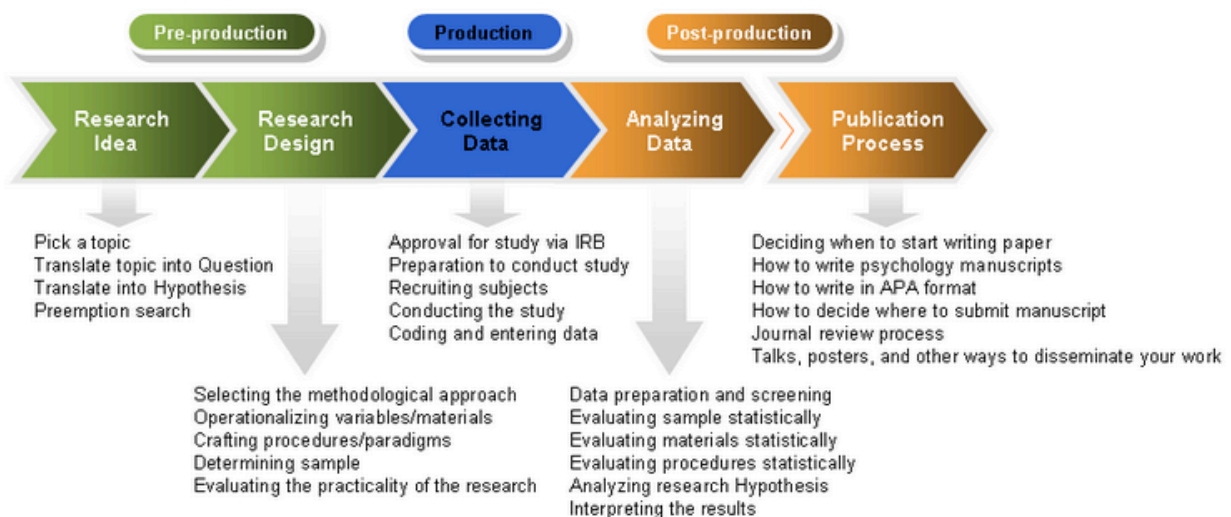
It is also necessary for a coach to demonstrate social and emotional intelligence (Lee, 2003). Accordingly, the most visible qualities for individuals in positions of influence build on empathy, self-management and sensing how what they do affects others. It is in pulling together empathy, attention and performance that creates the hidden driver for excellence (Goleman, 2013).

Chapter 3 sets out the research methodology, design and collection methods used in this research paper.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to document the research methodology process that was used to conduct this research. It will describe the research paradigm, the research design, the data collection methods, the procedure for data collection and the data analysis process and interpretation. Lastly this chapter will describe the limitations of the study, and what was done to ensure validity and reliability. Figure 10 below is an example of a visual representation of the process to complete this research ("Overview of Research Process ", 2007).

**Figure 10: Research Methodology Process**  
 ("Overview of Research Process ", 2007)



The objective of research is aimed at identifying answers to questions through applying scientific techniques (Kothari, 2011). Research aims to establish the truth, which might be hidden or has not been discovered yet. Whilst each research study has its own intent, research objectives as a whole fall into a number of broad groupings. They are a) familiarising with a phenomenon or achieving new insights into it, known as exploratory research studies; b) to accurately depict the characteristics of an individual, situation or group, known as descriptive research studies; c) to define the occurrence something occurs or the degree to which it is associated to something else, known as diagnostic research studies and d) to verify a hypothesis of an instrumental relationship between variables,

known as hypothesis-testing research studies (Kothari, 2011; Wimpenny & Gass, 2000). This research made use of the exploratory research study.

For research methodology various steps are explored by the researcher in studying the research problem as well as the logic behind them. The researcher must know the research methods/techniques as well as the methodology (Kothari, 2011).

The aim of research methodology is to choose the most applicable research approach (Wimpenny & Gass, 2000). The method of gathering data has to be in alignment with the underlying methodology of the specific research technique selected, and the chosen method needs to be in alignment with the research question (Baker, Wuest, & Stern, 1992; Wimpenny & Gass, 2000). Once the methodology and technique have been chosen, it is imperative to ensure that the sample population, data collection and analysis process provide valid and reliable results that are relevant to the research study. Chapter 3 sets out the methodology and analytical process that the researcher undertook in the research study.

### **3.1 Research paradigm**

A paradigm can be defined as a “*set of interrelated assumptions about the social world which provides a philosophical and conceptual framework for the organized study of that world*” (Creswell, 2012, p. 34). The chosen paradigm guides the researcher in assumptions around the research; the choice of tools, instruments, participants, and methods employed in the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). A research paradigm sets the context for a researcher’s study. There are several paradigms used to direct research. Authors combine different paradigmatic schemas to hypothesise and categorise their research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

The research paradigm for this dissertation was interpretivism which adheres to the relativist position that assumes multiple, equally valid realities (Schwandt, 1994). Interpretivists see reality as constructed in the mind of the individual in contrast to a single external entity (Hansen, 2004). Meaning is hidden and needs to be brought to the surface through deep reflection, which can be achieved through the dialogue between the interviewee and the interviewer (Schwandt, 1994).



Interpretivism was chosen due to the direct personal interaction required with respondents to obtain their life experiences of the phenomenon under investigation, and in so doing develop the outcome of the research topic (Ponterotto, 2005). This paradigm was selected on the basis that it was appropriate for the research question and was consistent with the prevailing literature (Creswell, 2008)

### **3.2 Research design**

Phenomenology is a term originated by German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859 – 1938) It is recognised as a specialized study of experience or consciousness (Gallagher & Sørensen, 2006).

To gain certainty, Husserl claimed anything not part of one's immediate experience must be ignored. The external world is reduced to the contents of personal consciousness. Hence, realities are seen as pure phenomena and the only absolute data from where to begin. Husserl named his philosophical method 'phenomenology', the science of pure 'phenomena' (Eagleton, 1983, p. 55). The intention of phenomenology is to return to the concrete by describing as accurately as possible the observed, or phenomenon (Eagleton, 1983, p. 56). *"The phenomenologists are concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved"* (Welman & Kruger, 1999, p. 189). This research aimed to identify the phenomenon of expert performance in business and executive coaching.

Mouton (2001) uses a metaphor of a house to describe research design. Research design is the equivalent of the house's architectural design or blueprint. Without this, the construction process cannot begin. The research design used for this research was phenomenology and explored the phenomenon of expert performance in business and executive coaching. This research aimed to deepen the understanding of expert performance in business and executive coaching, and as a secondary focus, to explore what is required to have expert performance as an executive coach, and how it is recognised (Mouton, 2001).

The types of research questions used were essence questions, questions to inquire into what lies at the heart of the phenomenon experienced by all persons, also known as the lived experience (Morse & Field, 1995).

A qualitative approach to research subjectively assesses the attitudes, opinions and behaviour of the phenomenon being researched (Davidson, 2012). In light of this, research is a function of the researcher's insights and impressions. The results to this research approach are either in non-quantitative form or where the research has not been subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis. Commonly, focus group interviews, projective techniques and depth interviews are techniques that are used (Davidson, 2012)

A phenomenological research design was chosen based on the research tool being used, which was interviewing respondents to gain an understanding of their personal experiences of what constitutes expert performance in executive coaching. The aim of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was to explore in detail how respondents make sense of their world. The main value that one can gain from an IPA study is the meanings that certain experiences, events and states hold for respondents (Smith, 2007).

The phenomenological approach, according to Smith (2007), involves a detailed assessment of the respondents' life-world related to the topic of the research. It aims to explore personal experience concerned with an individual's personal perception or account of an object or event, in contrast to producing an objective statement of the object or event itself.

The purpose of a qualitative research design is to elicit respondents' accounts of meaning, experience or perceptions (Kothari, 2011). It is capturing this that produces descriptive data that includes identifying the respondents' beliefs and values from the coaching experience (De Vos & Strydom, 1998). Phenomenology was an appropriate choice as it elicited the respondents' knowledge and opinions of expert coaching, and how they currently recognise this in the executive coaching realm in the South African context.

### **3.3 Population and sample**

This section covers the population and sample used for this research study.

### 3.3.1 Population

For this research, the population was be registered executive coaches in South Africa, executives from various organisations, and heads of Human Resources (HR) or learning and development.

### 3.3.2 Sample size and sampling method

Research that is field oriented in nature with no focus on statistical generalizability frequently uses non-probabilistic samples (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011). In applied research the most commonly used samples are purposive (Feltz & Lirgg, 2001). There are many varieties of purposive samples but the shared element is that respondents are carefully chosen according to predetermined criteria related to the specific research objective.

Deliberate or purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of specific respondents to be interviewed for purpose of a research study (Davidson, 2012). The respondents for this study were purposefully selected. The researcher identified executives and HR executives from large multinational organisations that had been employing coaching into their company for more than five years. The researcher sought out executive coaches renowned for being highly respected and sought after in the executive coaching field. The majority of executive coaches interviewed had been coaching for more than ten years, and were involved in the original efforts to bring coaching to South Africa and executive managers that had received coaching within the last three years of the date of the study. The number of participants interviewed in set out in Table 9:

**Table 9: Profile of participants**

<b>Description of participant</b>	<b>Number interviewed</b>
Executive Coaches	6
Organisational Representatives	6
Executives	6
Total respondents	18

The consent letter that was sent to the participants requesting their participation in the research study is presented in Appendix C.

Many articles recommend that the size of a purposive sample is established inductively. They also claim that sampling continues until theoretical saturation occurs (Guion et al., 2011). Data saturation occurs when the researcher is obtaining no new data from the interviewing and coding process (Hansen, 2004). Theoretical saturation occurs when all the main differences have been recognised and assimilated (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Given the research was to explore the phenomenology of expert performance in business and executive coaching, the minimum sample size was between 12 and 18 interviews (Filstead, 1979). Triangulation was achieved by interviewing executive coaches, executives and organisational representatives in order for the questions to be viewed from different points of view and to avoid bias.

The aim of qualitative sampling was to achieve saturation, both theoretically and in the interviewing process. In interviewing 18 different respondents, no new data emerged. The success of the research was determined by the quality of the data acquired from the interview, and this was determined by the quality of the participants chosen. The researcher took care to ensure the quality of the participants involved in the final interviews was adequate.

The research design included six interviews with executives who had experienced executive coaching, interviews with six executive coaches, and six interviews with HR executives involved in the coaching or development aspect of the organisation and who were therefore privy to its effects.

### **3.4 Data collection methods**

The research method chosen was qualitative research, as this allowed the exploration of human experience to do with the phenomenon being studied and the recording of the data collected (Baker et al., 1992). The source of data was semi-structured interviews with selected respondents across three categories, to allow for triangulation. (Jick, 1979) said the term *triangulation* was borrowed from the military and is used to signify the use of multiple

reference points to locate an object's exact position. By interviewing coaches, executives, and organisational representatives, the researcher aimed to gain a wider and more thorough idea of the phenomenon under investigation than would have been possible using a single respondent type.

Participants who were interviewed did so voluntarily, and appointments were scheduled via email. The email included the nature of the interview, the purpose, that it would remain confidential, and that it would be recorded and to verify if a) they would want to partake in the interview, and b) if they accepted the terms of engagement. At the inception of the interview confidentiality was again confirmed and a confidentiality agreement was signed. Most interviews took place at the respective organisations; three of the interviews were conducted over Skype due to the international location of the participant. Interviews ranged from 20 to 90 minutes and were then sent to an independent company to be transcribed.

The researcher was punctual for the interviews and came in prepared so did not need to refer to notes as a guide for the conversation. This allowed the researcher to remain fully present and connected to the interviewee for the duration of the interview.

Audio recordings were done to increase the reliability of the research process and findings. Semi-structured interviews allowed for a conversation that was natural and free flowing, incorporating openness to views the questions had not alluded to, while also enabling the researcher to compare responses to similar questions. This approach enabled the researcher to capture both the depth of experience from respondents and their detailed perspectives.

The advantages of the interviews were that they were confidential, which created a space for executives to share openly and transparently and due to the nature of a face-to-face interview, every conversation was different and new questions arose from the flow of the conversation which gave rise to new insights and information. The semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility, which enabled the researcher to take into account things that had not been anticipated. By the nature of an interview, it also facilitated depth of understanding, meaning, and it also gives the researcher the capacity to capture complex ideas and information.

The disadvantages of the interview set up were potential loyalty to the coach, which might have prevented the respondents from telling the full truth from fear that the information

somehow would get back to the coach, or impact the coach in a negative light. As a result of this, objectivity is difficult to gauge.

### **3.5 The research instrument**

According to Britten (1995) a lot of qualitative research is interview based. Interviews provide a way to get to the heart of the persons understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The research instrument used for this research paper was a semi-structured interview. The format of the questionnaire began by establishing trust with the respondent by stating the context of the study and the intended outcomes, which built rapport and brought the respondent into the process. It then went into a pre-history set of questions to establish the history of the interviewee, which gave the interviewer the right lens through which to receive their feedback.

For example, if the respondent was new to the executive coaching industry, that might impact the level of depth and experience the respondent might have, and as a result affect the level to which the respondent was able to answer the questions. Once the respondent's background was clarified, it gave the researcher the ability to adjust the following line of questions, or to ask questions relevant to the content shared about their background.

The researcher sought also to clarify their academic history, their current job and their most important duties. If they lead a team and if so what their experience of this was like. The researcher also wanted to establish if the respondents had received any training in coaching or leadership development and if yes, how it had impacted them or their respective organisation. Each respondent was also asked whether they had experienced coaching in their own right irrespective of whether they were a coach, the executive or the organisational representative. Have you personally had executive coaching? Once their background and coaching history was established, the remained of the interview was devoted to discovering what in their view expert performance in business and executive coaching was, and how they recognised it.

Refer to Appendix A for the interview schedule.

### **3.6 Data analysis and interpretation**

The main means of analysing the data in this research paper was through inductive data analysis. (Thomas, 2006)

Thomas (2006) states that inductive analysis is a method that primarily includes detailed readings of raw data that researchers use to develop concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data. This is consistent with Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 12) understanding of inductive analysis, who describe inductive analysis as: *“The researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data”*.

According to Thomas (2006), there are several purposes underlying the development of the general inductive analysis methods, namely to reduce extensive and diverse raw text data into a brief, summary format; to determine clear associations between the research objectives and the summary findings resulting from the raw data and to ensure that these connections are both transparent and justifiable. Lastly, it is to create a model or theory about the underlying configuration of experiences or processes that are obvious in the text data (Thomas, 2006). Thomas (2006) found that a general inductive approach is frequently used in health and social science research and evaluation.

To analyse the interview transcripts, codes were established across the interviews from the responses of the respondents. The researcher went through the data and where similar perceptions were held, assigned a code to the perception used to identify patterns throughout the data. For this research, 314 codes were allocated across the different transcripts, which were then further broken down into higher-order constructs (or code families), where codes that would fit under one construct were then merged. This resulted in 26 code families, the ones relevant to this topic are summarised in chapter four

### **3.7 Limitations of the study**

This research study employed deliberate or purposive sampling. The problem with this approach was a requirement to state up front in the research proposal the number of respondents to be involved in the research study (Cheek, 1999). In light of this, coming to a process of real saturation in the interviewing process might not be possible or realistic given

the requirement for researchers to fulfil the number of interviews they propose in the research proposal (Cheek, 1999).

There were opportunities for further elaboration of constructs by respondents where the researcher should have inquired more into the meaning the respondent had for each construct.

As the researcher is a coach trainer, many of the executive coaches the researcher has direct access to have been trained and mentored, increasing the chance of bias. To avoid this, the researcher interviewed and researched executive coaches and executives where there was limited or no prior connection.

### **3.8 Validity and reliability**

The purpose of Validity in qualitative research is to establish whether the findings from the research study are true and certain (Guion et al., 2011). True, in this context, refers to whether the findings correctly mirror the situation, and certain which would indicate the findings are supported with evidence.

Guba and Lincoln (1981) claim that all research needs to have “truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality” for it to be considered worthwhile. Different paradigms, they continue, require paradigm-specific measures for addressing rigor. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued the measures for a qualitative paradigm are “credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability”.

Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, and Spiers (2008) argue that to verify is to check, to confirm, to make sure or be certain, which in qualitative research refers to the tools used in the process to consistently contribute to ensuring validity and reliability and therefore the rigor of the study (Creswell & Miller, 1997). Qualitative research is iterative, not linear, which demands the qualitative researcher to move back and forth between design and implementation to ensure congruence between the questions formulated, the literature, the data, and the analysis (Morse et al., 2008).

Qualitative researchers use a technique called triangulation to check and establish validity in their studies by evaluating a research question from different viewpoints (Guion et al., 2011).



There is a shared misinterpretation that the aim of triangulation is to reach consistency among the different data sources, however Patton (2002) views these inconsistencies as opportunities to discover deeper meaning in the data. There are many kinds of triangulation, this research study employed data triangulation, where different sources of information were used to increase the validity of this study (Guion et al., 2011)

Saturation is recognised as the point where no new information or themes are observed in the data, and is crucial for excellent qualitative work (Guion et al., 2011). Saturation is the highest criteria by which purposive sample sizes are determined in health science research, however procedures for defining non-probabilistic sample sizes are essentially non-existent. Their size normally depends on saturation which occurs within the first twelve interviews, though the undeveloped features for meta-themes existed as early as six interviews (Guion et al., 2011). Saturation is dependent on several variables, namely: 1) the number and complexity of data; 2) the researcher's level of experience; and 3) the number of analysts reviewing the data (Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

In interpretive research there were various ways to test validity and reliability. The researcher ensured validity by keeping copies of all the signed interview authorisation sheets, the audio recordings of each interview and the related transcript.

### **3.8.1 External validity**

The intention behind most research studies is for the researcher to generalise their findings to the larger population of the research study that are not included in the experiment (Maehr & Nicholls, 1980). To the degree the results of the research can be generalized to different subjects, settings, researchers, and, possibly, tests, the research meets the criteria for external validity. There are some threats to external validity and they appear to fall into two general groups, those dealing with generalisations to populations of persons and those dealing with the environment of the research. These two general groups correspond to two types of external validity, namely population validity and ecological validity (Maehr & Nicholls, 1980). This research study was concerned with population validity.

### **3.8.2 Internal validity**

Internal construct validity defines how accurately instrument scale constructs can be distinguished from one another and to what degree the constructs account for the variance

found in the sample (Kayes, Kayes, & Kolb, 2005). Internal validity explores whether or not an observed co-variation should be considered a causal relationship (Calder, Phillips, & Tybout, 1982).

The researcher ensured impeccable order and structure of filing and reporting throughout the research process. The researcher furthermore ensured the interview questionnaires were the same in every interview. Given the interviews were semi-structured, this allowed room for differences to come in, while coming from a consistent base. The researcher aimed to capture as much detail and depth as possible in the interviews.

### **3.8.3 Reliability**

Reliability is a measure of internal consistency of an instrument across similar scale items (Kayes et al., 2005). The researcher took time to carefully and purposefully select the executive coaches and executives asked to participate in the interview process, which aimed to increase the reliability of the research tool. The use of triangulation in the data collection process also aimed to assist reliability and validity. The researcher had regular supervision sessions to further increase the reliability of the research process and findings.

The use of triangulation in the data collection process also aimed to increase reliability and validity.

## **3.9 Conclusion of research methodology**

This chapter documented the research methodology used for this research paper. The research paradigm for this dissertation was interpretivism which was chosen because of the direct personal interaction required with respondents to gain their life experiences of the phenomenon under investigation, and in so doing develop the outcome of the research topic (Ponterotto, 2005). A qualitative research design was chosen based on the research tool being used, which was interviewing respondents to gain an understanding of their personal experiences of what constitutes expert performance in executive coaching. The sampling strategy was a systematic purposive sample. The source of data was semi-structured interviews with selected respondents across three categories, to allow for triangulation.

## 4. FINDINGS

This research is based on 18 semi-structured interviews of (a) executives who have received coaching, (b) executive coaches, and (c) participants who head up learning and development in various organisations. The purpose of having the three categories of respondent was to allow for triangulation.

### 4.1 Definitions of coaching

Given that executive coaching still lacks an agreed definition, the interview approach was to begin by establishing the respondents' general view of executive coaching. The analysis below begins with the respondents' views of how executive coaching should be defined. Respondents viewed coaches as truth seekers and coaching as a practice that enables people to maximise their potential and increase their skills and abilities. They saw coaching as a powerful means of enabling individuals to achieve their goals. This can clearly be seen in the following quotes:

The coaches commonly viewed executive coaching a technology that enhances performance

*It's a technology which is deeply practical and is an applied technology that enables us to raise our game. P22: Coach Interview 1f RG - 22:20 (137:137)*

*The ultimate aim of an expert coach is the empowerment of the individuals and the organisation. P19: Coach Interview 1c RS - 19:125 (823:823)*

*Coaching is for the human being to find the place from which they generate themselves and to leave them self-correcting and self-generating. P20: Coach Interview 1e SJ - 20:65 (154:154) sic*

The organisational representatives viewed coaching as:

*Exceed your competence that you didn't even think possible. P 4: Organisation Interview 1d - 4:75 (314:314)*

*Coaching must leave the individual self correcting and self generating. P 2: Organisation Interview 1b - 2:17 (65:65) Executive coaching is actually not about what they need to do in the job as how they do it. P 2: Organisation Interview 1b - 2:33 (135:135)*

In the quotes above *self-generated* is probably intended to mean *self-regulating*.

A common view expressed by the executives was that executive coaching was ideal for gaining clarity and acting as a sounding board.

*Coaching is useful for venting and improving myself as an individual. P14: Executive Interview 1c - 14:7 (50:50) You wouldn't share your personal life experiences with the executive coach, you keep it strictly to work. P14: Executive Interview 1c - 14:4 (45:45)*

*I've always found it very good to have somebody that you can sound ideas off and just test things, test your own, kind of, train of thought on things. P15: Executive Interview 1d - 15:3 (63:63)*

#### **4.1.1 Summary of definitions of coaching**

Among respondents, there was consensus on what coaching is and its benefits. Coaching is a means of pulling the coachees out of their comfort zones and of stretching them beyond their limits. It is a practice that enables people to become more self-regulating.

Respondents were asked to identify the criteria for expert performance in executive coaching. Their responses are presented in the sub sections below.

## **4.2 Criteria for Expert Performance in Executive Coaching**

Table 10 reflects the frequency with which views were held by respondents. The listed views are criteria deemed to be necessary for expert performance in executive coaching. It can be seen from the figures in Table 10 that the frequency of views cited varies widely by

respondent type. For example, coaches cited the need for qualification far more frequently than did executives or organisational representatives.

**Table 10: Criteria for Expert Executive Coaching ranking**

<b>Criteria for expert performance in executive coaching</b>	<b>Coaches</b>	<b>Executives</b>	<b>Organisations</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Coach is qualified	48	10	34	92
Coach walks the talk	49	11	18	78
Demonstrates relationship skills	26	20	15	61
Creates powerful results	36	9	6	51
Self Awareness	33	3	14	50
Presence	12	8	24	44
Client-centric	20	10	10	40
Has experience	13	8	17	38
Continuous development	19	0	11	30
Can say no to work	22	3	4	29
Willingness to challenge	14	7	6	27
Can easily unlock potential and depth	11	9	4	24
Can go with the flow and not know	9	1	6	16
Can express what they do	12	0	0	12

The above table raises some questions, for example, none of the executives thought that the coach needs to know how to express what they do or that they needed continuous development. Executives quoted the most around elements of relationship skills. The organisational representatives had more to say about the presence of the coach and their level of experience than did the coaches and the executives.

#### **4.2.1 Criteria for Expert Executive Coaching: Creates powerful results**

Coaching in general is associated with results, that a coach enables a coachee to produce results is a given in terms of the general understanding of coaching as seen by respondents. Respondents claim that an executive coach performing on an expert level can bring immediate value. That value can be business results or catalysing employees.

*They want to achieve beyond and that is what they're paying for. So they're actually asking that person to push them beyond what they are able to see. P 4: Organisation Interview 1d - 4:52 (334:334)*

An expert executive coach can have a permanent life impact. For this, the coach needs to work with the coachee as a person who has both a business and a personal life. They must work at the deeper levels of human psychology to uncover limiting beliefs and patterns of self-sabotage.

In the executive coaching industry, coaches are measured by their testimonials and referrals. Often the difference in the coachee is not obvious. Most times that difference is in how a person feels, their relationship to themselves and their environment. This motivates and inspires individuals to resolve conflicts, perform better and produce more results. One coach recognised that the shift took place when the coachee demonstrated a shift towards achieving his desired outcomes.

#### **Summary for Creates powerful results**

Creating powerful results was held by many of the coaches as a key criterion to distinguishing expert executive coaches from their non-expert colleagues. The following criteria are viewed as the means through which expert executive coaches achieve powerful results.

#### **4.2.2 Criteria for Expert Executive Coaching: "Is qualified"**

Coaches viewed qualification as the most important criterion for expert executive coaching. The organisational representatives saw it as important, but less so than the coaches. Only a small portion of executives saw this as important. In general, coachees took comfort from

their coaches having a qualification. Initially, there were no coach training courses in SA so those wanting qualifications went overseas. In interviews for this study, those who had had proper training from reputable institutions exuded a sense of pride and confidence.

*I spent a year and a half solid training, really in what I would describe as the best consciousness technologies that I could find in the world. P22: Coach Interview 1f  
RG - 22:14 (73:73)*

Several of the respondents interviewed had studied with some of the top coaches with influence and pioneers in the field. The credibility of the institute played a role in people's level of confidence.

*Chartered Business Coach accreditation with Middlesex and the WABC to become a Chartered Business Coach. P 5: Organisation Interview 1e - 5:7 (24:24)*

There were varying views on whether a coach needs business acumen or not. Some respondents were very much for having a business qualification and business experience, while others were neutral, holding the view that a basic understanding of the culture and mechanics of business was enough. Others thought that a business qualification did not give business experience and that the latter was of greater value.

#### The organisational representatives view:

*So greatly dispute this premise that you have to have business experience because, okay, now we're entering into a really challenging domain. Tell me how much is enough. Tell me how do we distil that business experience? Is it number of years? Oh ok so we're going back to the CV linear bullshit thing instead of looking at portfolio. It's oh so you worked for X company for so many years, you might have done one year ten times over; so it's not ten years' experience it's one year many times over. Don't get me into that space. P 3: Organisation Interview 1c - 3:67 (227:227)*

*I'm saying it's not a prerequisite, because if you making that a prerequisite you're changing the model of what coaching is, and we're getting back into a tell rather than enable and empower, and I promise you that you will not get sustainable, revolutionary change in people if you're telling them. P 3: Organisation Interview 1c - 3:68 (230:230)*

*You have to be as curious and engaged and invested and immersed in a business world if you want to be of help to someone who functions in a business world, and that doesn't mean that you have to have been the executive on a board, I mean an executive or on a board or studying an MBA. It's the same as the psychology piece, you just have to invest in being curious and keeping yourself up to date. P 1: Organisation Interview 1a - 1:25 (141:141) I think you have to have a business mind-set as a context. P 1: Organisation Interview 1a - 1:26 (144:144)*

The executive coaches view:

*I would expect them to have of business process, the structure, I would expect that an expert executive coach understands the politics of business, someone who has incredible political savvy. P19: Coach Interview 1c RS - 19:42 (319:319) They will complete work within boundaries, professional boundary methods become important. An expert coach can tell you how to manage that. They will know that confidentiality is contextually bound and they can give you how they negotiate that. P19: Coach Interview 1c RS - 19:133 (841:841)*

*You need formal training in business and must have informal experience in business, and formal training in the body, heart and mind complex. P22: Coach Interview 1f RG - 22:115 (1193:1193) It's important to feel that they're talking to somebody you know, who's relevant to them. P22: Coach Interview 1f RG - 22:43 (435:435)*

*I also would require them to have a clear theory or understanding around how people learn, change and grow. P19: Coach Interview 1c RS - 19:41 (319:319)*

The executives view:

*It's important that a coach has both business acumen and psychological. P14: Executive Interview 1c - 14:24 (120:120)*

One respondent felt that having some knowledge of the law, corporate law and labour law would be beneficial, and specifically mentioned the law of contracts.

*There's some stuff around labour law that I think any coach should be getting their teeth sunk into, and have some idea about contracts. P19: Coach Interview 1c RS - 19:48 (329:329)*



Regarding training in psychology, views varied as to whether or not a qualification in that field was mandatory.

*I think it's important that coaches study psychology, absolutely and critically important as psychology is very much part of the landscape of being a coach, familiarity with the psychological theory, with psychological theory and the mechanics of psychological life – how the mind works. P 5: Organisation Interview 1e - 5:25 (87:87)*

*You need formal training in the body, heart and mind complex. P22: Coach Interview 1f RG - 22:114 (1193:1193)*

*I liked the fact that she was a psychologist. P13: Executive Interview 1b - 13:16 (65:65)*

Some of the respondents reported to having employed psychologists do their coach training, and others were themselves trained as psychologists and became coaches.

*The company in London had a very senior psychologist who was the technical expert who did all the training and when we came here and when we finally got big enough to be organised like that, we had a senior psychologist who was our technical expert who did all our training. P 2: Organisation Interview 1b - 2:4 (28:28)*

Coaches also bear a responsibility for being up-to-date with the trends in their industries and with coaching.

*Having a deep knowledge of human beings and continuously keeping that knowledge up to date about how human beings function. P 1: Organisation Interview 1a - 1:59 (121:121)*

Several respondents felt an expert executive coach had innate ability. Some coaches have many certificates and much experience and yet are average coaches. In contrast, other coaches have no qualifications but are exceptional at the business of coaching. What they meant by this was how sometimes, to reach expert levels is not as much about the qualification or experience, but rather an innate ability.

The expertise comes from that innate ability and from the experience. *P 2: Organisation Interview 1b - 2:21 (95:95) I believe expertise is, to a degree, about innate ability, that it doesn't matter how many certificates you've got on the wall or hours of coaching you've got that doesn't necessarily mean that you're going to be the best kind of coach. P 2: Organisation Interview 1b - 2:39 (206:206)*

### **Summary for “Is qualified”**

Respondents expressed mixed views on the qualifications required to be an expert executive coach. Coaches viewed having a qualification as important, as did organisational representatives. However, there was no consensus on the nature of the qualification. Moreover, executives did not see this as the most important criterion. In contrast, some respondents attributed expert executive coaching to innate ability, implying that even qualifications and experience were insufficient for achieving expertise in coaching.

#### **4.2.3 Criteria for Expert Executive Coaching: “Walks-the-talk”**

Respondents expressed strongly held views on the importance of the authenticity of coaches, of coaches living what they teach, and of their being the same when they are with coachees as they are in their personal lives. An analysis of frequency of mentions shows that coaches felt most strongly about this quality of authenticity, making more than double the number of references to this than did organisational representatives. In comparison, executives did not reference this at all.

Some coaches said they would coach even if they did not get paid. This suggests they have a passion and drive for what they do. Coaches and organisational representatives felt the passion would be conveyed to coachees.

*I have a burning desire, to uncover alongside him, what could that be. P17: Coach Interview 1a DC - 17:33 (106:106)*

*I would do it even though I wasn't getting paid. P19: Coach Interview 1c RS - 19:4 (55:55)*

Consistently across all the interviews the importance of the coach leading by example was raised. Respondents elaborated by saying coaches need to ensure their behaviour is

consistent with their stated coaching values. As part of leading by example, coaches must hold themselves accountable.

*You should demonstrate to a greater or a lesser extent the lifestyle of somebody who, of the very things you espouse and are trying to bring out in the other person that you're coaching to. P 3: Organisation Interview 1c - 3:50 (131:131)*

*Consistent, superior level of whole person performance. P22: Coach Interview 1f RG - 22:57 (591:591)*

### **Summary for “walks-the-talk”**

For coaches to ‘walk-the-talk’, it is important that the coach leads by example, meaning they demonstrate by their actions that they live and have integrated what they stand for. As coaches are seen to hold coachees accountable, walking the talk would imply they hold themselves accountable as well. It was said that when a coach espouses what they stand for, they are perceived to be genuine, and this engenders trust.

#### **4.2.4 Criteria for Expert Executive Coaching: Relationship skills**

A key area identified was the ability to maintain confidentiality and boundaries. Any breach or perceived breach in confidentiality would directly influence the quality of the relationship and the outcomes of the coaching. Without trust the coaching stayed at a surface level and the benefits were minimal.

The respondents expressed that, due to the dual nature of the coachee, being the coachee and the organisation, executive coaches need to remain neutral and not have a bias to either one. It was said, an executive coach might coach an entire team, in which case the need for confidentiality is even more important than it is when a single individual is involved. Among the three categories of respondent, relatively similar importance was attributed to relationship skills as a criterion for expert executive coaching, as assessed by frequency of reference.

*If you're dealing with somebody in a leadership position they are going to be sharing very sensitive materials with you, it's like the same as marriage counselling. P18: Coach Interview 1b MC - 18:33 (160:160)*

*Not so much a method or a technique as it is a relationship process. P 5: Organisation Interview 1e - 5:14 (62:62) You understand that there's an equitable coachee relationship and you, in many respects are working with the relationship between the individual and the organization that they're working in. P 5: Organisation Interview 1e - 5:17 (68:68)*

*It's the only time in your life, the only time where you will be able to engage with somebody, to put your heart out on your sleeve, to put all your things on the table and know, one that it's safe, know that you're not going to be judged, know that there's not going to be opinion that's given, that the person is there entirely for you and that they're going to facilitate the best for you. P 3: Organisation Interview 1c - 3:33 (97:97)*

An aspect of relationship skills, the ability to build trust, was cited 23 times. Coaches were mindful of how easily trust could be broken by, for example, a breach of confidentiality and by the perception that the coach is judging them.

*Want to know that they can, it's more than trust, that they can take me in, that I'm on their side. And that is a, it's a twelve month relationship. P17: Coach Interview 1a DC - 17:31 (88:88)*

*I do not want to share my coach with anyone and I also do not want to think that my coach needs to say anything back to the organisation. P13: Executive Interview 1b - 13:34 (136:136) I think that kind of level of trust is actually crucial and very, very important. P13: Executive Interview 1b - 13:31 (122:122)*

*I will not meet with you without my coachee, boundary management is an important aspect in maintaining trust. P18: Coach Interview 1b MC - 18:34 (163:163)*

This last-quoted respondent asserted the importance of never meeting either a representative from the organisation or the coachee to discuss organisational matters without all three being together. The respondent felt that if the coach met the organisational representative without the coachee's knowledge, it would be grounds for breach of trust.

Respondents felt that a coach needs to be able to read people, and to understand human nature and how to bring out the best in others.

Respondents perceived expert executive coaching to result in the coachee feeling listened to, seen and heard, and that he or she would not leave a session feeling as if they were just a number and as if the coach was merely going through the motions.

*It's really about chemistry as well, you can have a coach who's the greatest coach but, I think, you need to have a chemistry with the individual. P14: Executive Interview 1c - 14:8 (54:54)*

As part of relationship skills an expert executive coach is able to facilitate courageous conversations where necessary. This might, for example, take the form of conflict resolution or mediation between the coachee and his or her line manager.

*Ability to facilitate those tough conversations and make everybody feel really good when they leave the room. P18: Coach Interview 1b MC - 18:41 (195:195)*

As part of building trust and connection, respondents thought it was important that the coach had the skill to create an environment for coachees to experience safety, which enabled the coachee to open up. A sense of safety is enhanced by a coach's ability to create rapport in the first session.

The respondents felt an expert executive coach is able to empathise, immerse themselves in the coachee's world, and see things from the coachee's perspective. For this they believed the coach needed to have a high level of awareness of human dynamics, of how people function optimally, and of the nature of dysfunctional behaviour. In addition, given that coaching is about learning and change, an expert executive coach should be well versed in the dynamics of learning and change and how these affect people. They felt it was also essential to understand what motivates people.

*How human beings function and are happy or are dysfunctional and not happy. P 1: Organisational Interview 1a - 1:45 (121:121)*

*I do think that you have a responsibility if you're dealing with people to understand and to keep learning about people. P 1: Organisational Interview 1a - 1:61 (126:126)*

As part of relationship skills, respondents held the view that having emotional intelligence was essential for being an expert executive coach. This is the ability to discern the coachee's moods, temperaments, motivations, and intentions. For this,

the coach must be capable of a supersensitive reading of emotional signals, must demonstrate heightened cognitive empathy. This is an ability to empathise with the coachee's emotional state while maintaining the necessary emotional distance. In addition, emotional intelligence enables the coach to remain connected to the coachee.

*Your feedback naturally just comes out with empathy and sympathy and it helps them to see that other people also understand their world. P 6: Organisational Interview 1f- 6:36 (162:162)*

An expert executive coach knows when to share personal experiences to build trust, and knows how much to share.

*Sharing some of herself but not a lot. P13: Executive Interview 1b - 13:30 (122:122)*

*I will share elements from my own experience or from other coachees experience, that it's more of a talking point than I think you should do this. P21: Coach Interview 1d SM - 21:21 (80:80)*

What also makes one an expert executive coach is being sensitive to undercurrents in the organisation.

*Political savvy. You need to know who's who in the zoo. P19: Coach Interview 1c RS - 19:45 (325:325)*

### **Summary for relationship skills**

Respondents felt a coach needed to display and demonstrate the following: an ability to manage confidentiality; to maintain boundaries; to build trust; and to facilitate courageous conversations. They felt it was important for coachees to feel the coach was sincere. The coach needs to have a high level of emotional intelligence, and ability to empathise. The coach needed to understand human psychology, in particular, understanding people's motivations.

#### 4.2.5 Criteria for Expert Executive Coaching: Self Awareness

Respondents across all three categories held the view that a coach needs to have a superior level of self-awareness. Respondents saw self-awareness as an ability to demonstrate that they can monitor and moderate their own thoughts and behaviours. Eleven respondents expressed the view that an executive coach should be able to observe himself or herself and to be aware of their own cognition.

*I think to be an extraordinary coach, you have to get to know yourself and that's a journey. P17: Coach Interview 1a DC - 17:45 (166:166) Uncovering who you are at heart is an integral part of being able to sell yourself. P17: Coach Interview 1a DC - 17:46 (166:166)*

*So people that are there have actually journeyed inside and they've got, they're beyond themselves. P 4: Organisation Interview 1d - 4:39 (295:295)*

Respondents repeated that in having a high level of self-awareness, an expert executive coach has the capacity to separate self from ego, and as part of this can acknowledge what is their responsibility and what is not. A high level of self-awareness accordingly enables the coach to be clear about his or her own range of competency. Without self-awareness, coaches operate on autopilot, performing actions that lack conscious control. Self-awareness enables self-control, which is the capacity to regulate attention, emotion, and behaviour in the presence of temptation. As part of being human, there are urges to appear successful and build status. In a coaching context, this would take away from the focus on the coachee. Having a high level of self-awareness and self-control enables coaches to make the session about the coachee, rather than consuming session time validating their own importance or ability.

*What makes an excellent executive coach is no ego. You cannot have the ego standing in front of you. Then you are not an excellent executive coach. P 4: Organisation Interview 1d - 4:40 (295:295)*

*An expert coach can tell you what their ego needs are without fear. P19: Coach Interview 1c RS - 19:103 (715:715) An expert executive coach has the ego maturity to say here's my stuff. P19: Coach Interview 1c RS - 19:105 (721:721)*

*My primary driver is and should be to serve. P 3: Organisation Interview 1c - 3:84 (97:97)*

Self-awareness was said to enable the coach to reflect on the sessions and recognise what in them contributed to the success of the session, and in contrast, what in them contributed to a session that lacked impact.

*What's my part in things that didn't work out right? P20: CI 1e SJ - 20:58 (136:136)*

Self-awareness is needed for a coach to be self-correcting. It was said that there are coaches who believe they are expert as they can articulate the theories they espouse, when in reality, their coaching efforts do not produce the desired results.

*How do you know that you're on a plateau you see? If you have zero self-awareness. P20: CI 1e SJ - 20:62 (141:141) For me flaky can be people who theorise and who're not living the thing they're theorising and they don't even know it. P20: CI 1e SJ - 20:32 (46:46) sic*

### **Summary for self-awareness**

Having a high level of self-awareness was seen by respondents as the ability of the coach to reflect on the cognitive and emotional states that drive behaviour, both of the coachee and of themselves, and an ability to demonstrate that they can monitor and moderate their own thoughts and behaviours.

High levels of self-awareness enable a coach to observe himself or herself while coaching. It also provides the capacity to separate the coach's self from his or her ego, making it possible to take ownership and responsibility for what worked in the session and what did not, and for their part in it.

Respondents also felt self-awareness gave coaches clarity about their own range of competencies.



#### 4.2.6 Criteria for Expert Executive Coaching: Presence

Respondents commented that many coaches are highly trained and skilled at what they do, yet few coaches can sell themselves, or secure opportunities to show what they can do. Personality was seen to play a role in this. An extroverted coach, with a powerful and charismatic presence, was more likely to be seen by the right people than his introverted counterpart. Organisational representatives held that coaches with strong presence were typically preferred. According to these respondents, a coach's presence or lack thereof is immediately apparent on meeting them. This played a role in whether they were taken on board in the organisation or not. From a coach's perspective, presence was linked to how visible they were in the market. Being well-known in the industry was seen to be responsible for the referrals received.

*Being in the industry for 10 years, I've got an established network of people who know of me and trust me and will refer business to me. But once you get entrenched into a couple of core coachees, kind of word of mouth spreads you'll get one referral onto the other. So it's more referral-based and people know my presence. P21: Coach Interview 1d SM - 21:23 (85:85)*

*Most coaches are trained to be able to demonstrate presence. However, few coaches will be able to get in there and get the airtime to show what they can do. And that's the difference. And there comes in your personality and who you are. And so yes you can say people can train for it. You can to a certain extent but I do believe the personality factor plays a big role in it. P 4: Organisation Interview 1d - 4:21 (161:161)*

*Through interviewing and through checking the rigour, if the person understands what they're talking about and also in the way that they are being in the interview. You can see immediately. It's like a feeling that you get. P4: Organisation Interview 1d - 4:32 (291:291) When our senior people choose coaches to help them with those aspects they definitely go on so how does this coach come across to me? An executive coach is in the presence already wherever they are, they are being with you P4: Organisation Interview 1d - 4:22 (161:161)*

*Needs to start with passion because if you don't have the passion, it doesn't actually just stand out. P 6: Organisation Interview 1f - 6:12 (57:57)*

*Really great coaches need to be secure in themselves, sure of who they are, comfortable, they need to have done work themselves. P 3: Organisation Interview 1c - 3:70 (250:250)*

Organisational representatives held that coaches who were mature and experienced had presence, authority, and credibility as a coach. In contrast, less expert coaches did not exude the same level of presence. Respondents said that, if coaches are not fully in the moment with the coachee, this took away from their presence, both in stature and availability. Effective coaching, respondents claimed, came when the coach could offer the coachee full focus and attention. This appears to be a reflection of the construct of mindfulness that enables coaches to focus their attention in the moment. The following reference is a link to the literature on mindfulness done in Chapter 2 (Gunaratana & Gunaratana, 2011).

*It doesn't help if the guy keeps referring to notes, but if he actually recalls what you say, what you, what you felt, etc. So, I think that's also something that sets the person apart. P14: Executive Interview 1c - 14:21 (96:96)*

*It doesn't just speak to your functional capability, it has to speak to your intentionality and the spirit in which you do things and who you are. P 3: Organisation Interview 1c - 3:20 (83:83)*

Executive coaches and organisational representatives saw presence as the ability of the coach to show up powerfully without the intrusion of your ego, and by this they meant being available with no need to do or add value, with no need to be noticed or to stand out. In contrast, a coach driven by his ego or personality might need to prove his competence and is likely to feel the need to share expertise, coupled with a drive to demonstrate value.

An expert executive coach, according to respondents, can just listen, not needing to add value. They can say to the organisation or the coachee, this is not a coaching issue, this requires a different intervention. In this, respondents felt expert executive coaches are secure in themselves, and are mature. They have a natural confidence and boldness. One

respondent referred to a Zen saying in describing the presence characteristic of an expert executive coach, “There is an effortless in the effort.”

*There’s a degree of moving towards the expert stage when you’re happy to just listen to somebody and say, oh, that’s all interesting. This all sound good, you know, without feeling, oh good, here’s the problem. P 2: Organisation Interview 1b - 2:36 (151:151)*

### **Summary for presence**

Organisational representatives linked presence to the aura of the coach, something the coach radiated. They felt coaches who were mature and had coaching and business experience had authority and credibility as a coach.

Expert executive coaches had innate ability which reflected more who the coach was than what they did or the qualifications they held. In summary, respondents viewed presence as being available with no need to do or add value, with no need to be noticed or to stand out. It is an ability to just listen, to allow themselves to be fully in the moment with the coachee.

#### **4.2.7 Criteria for Expert Executive Coaching: Client centric**

Some coaches claimed to be exceptional as executive coaches; it was about demonstrating the ability to be entirely coachee-centric. By this they meant having a genuine interest in the coachee. One respondent commented on how impressed she was that prior to meeting her, the coach had taken the time to read up about her so he already knew her professional background in the introduction session.

*Truly getting out of the way and letting the other person show you what it is that they honestly need. P 1: Organisation Interview 1a - 1:60 (121:121)*

*In being an expert coach my primary driver is and should be to serve, not to tell, not to prescribe, not to be the hero. We want to create heroes in the people that we coach. P 3: Organisation Interview 1c - 3:31 (97:97)*

As part of coachee-centricity, creating trust and respect came up many times, and how crucial it was to coaching success. Hence, expert coaching involves attending to coachee needs and making them feel safe so that they can share about themselves.

*It's got to be completely about the other person, and not the coach. P 3: Organisation Interview 1c - 3:24 (83:83)*

*Creating or cultivating an environment of trust and respect. P18: Coach Interview 1b MC - 18:63 (363:363)*

Numerous respondents said that, in their opinion, the highest level of executive coaching is to be a servant and the willingness to be that servant and to serve.

*It's about serving the greater good. P17: Coach Interview 1a DC - 17:41 (154:154)*  
*To be coach is a privilege. P17: Coach Interview 1a DC - 17:63 (310:310)*

Masterful coaching happens when a coach can integrate multiple bodies of knowledge and adjust according to the coachee they are within the moment.

There was a strong emphasis on the importance of humility. Executives felt more drawn to coaches who were not trying to sell themselves and who instead considered the needs of the coachee, assessing whether they were the right coach for the coachee. They thought of humility as having presence and stature, as a result of experience and trust in themselves, without the need to sell it. Respondents felt exceptional coaching is founded on a desire to serve the greater good and recognised that coaching is a privilege.

*Humility, but at the same time presence and stature which would come from life experience. P 3: Organisation Interview 1c - 3:46 (131:131)*

### **Summary for Client-centric**

For those who experienced it, coachee-centricity made a big difference to the experience of the coaching process. Clients experienced this when their coaches adjusted to their needs or learning style. When the coach was able to follow the coachee and engage with the session according to the coachee's needs, they experienced a high level of coachee-centricity.

#### 4.2.8 Criteria for Expert Executive Coaching: Has experience

Across all interviews, reference was made to having business experience in order to be an effective executive coach, not so much to be able to guide the coachee, more so as a means to understanding the context in which executives operate and the nature of the challenges they face. This allowed executives to feel the coach operated on an equal level and that their empathy was real. Industry-specific experience enables an expert executive coach to understand the coachee's business context.

*You must have experience in business; operating at a particular level. P 1: Organisation Interview 1a - 1:17 (116:116)*

*He's coming from: yes, I've been in the industry, I know what I'm talking about. P15: Executive Interview 1d - 15:25 (244:244)*

*Having content could be very valuable in being able to empathize with the person's space and place, and there's a very real space and place for top coaches and expert executive coaches to be business minded and business experienced people, albeit it's not a prerequisite. P 3: Organisation Interview 1c - 3:29 (95:95)*

Experience gives the coach maturity, and breadth and depth of critical thinking. Coaches are then self-assured. This level of maturity only comes from substantial experience, which many respondents saw as one of the most important criteria for expert executive coaching performance. Having business experience helps the coach to frame the right questions.

*You have to understand that grinding context, and have the strategic and breadth and depth of you, which is a maturity thing to some degree. It's just a different, more complex way of thinking that you can engage with a person. P 1: Organisation Interview 1a - 1:28 (147:147)*

*They don't just want a life coach. They want a coach that's been there, done it and that's got the stripes to show it. And that's not something you can train. P 4: Organisation Interview 1d - 4:15 (123:123)*

## Summary for Has Experience

Organisational representatives viewed experience as one of the key criteria for choosing coaches to work in their organisations. There were varying views on the kinds of experience required. The constant across all categories was for coaching experience. This was seen as mandatory.

### 4.2.9 Criteria for Expert Executive Coaching: Continuous development

Respondents were asked, “What do you think makes one coach exceptional, and stand miles above the rest in contrast to their less exceptional peers?” In response, continuous personal and professional development constantly came up. Some respondents stated that expert executive coaches are continually stepping out of their comfort zones (implying growth and expansion), confronting their fears, taking risks, and being willing to constantly be a student by, for example, partnering with a coach better than themselves to develop their skill, which might be a colleague coach, a mentor, or supervisor coach.

*Our coaches are in a state of continued learning. Almost all of our coaches now have either completed or are completing master’s degrees in either management in philosophy and management in coaching or in research psychology. P 3: Organisation Interview 1c - 3:14 (44:44)*

*Expert speaks of a current state and it should speak to a continuum, and if it’s a continuum then it implies on-going learning and cannibalization and being able to relinquish what you’ve learnt as much as you acquire new learning’s. P 3: Organisation Interview 1c - 3:21 (83:83)*

The above quote was to suggest the expert executive coach should continue with an on-going journey of learning and be as willing to let go models and theories that are outdated or no longer relevant as they are to take on new models that perhaps challenge previously held views.

*I think you have to have an interest in developing yourself to be a good coach, continuous, regular, brave, courageous, interest in developing yourself all the time. P 1: Organisation Interview 1a - 1:18 (118:118)*

According to executive coaches and organisational representatives, coaches who have high-level skills are continuously developing themselves professionally and personally. They consistently assess their current level of competence relative to the level they aspire to operate at, and continuously develop themselves to meet the required level. They first get clarity on the aspect they want to enhance or develop in a measurable way. Second, they take the actions required to implement the plan. Third, they review their performance making notes of where they still need to develop. This process then gets repeated indefinitely, consistently increasing the desired level of competence.

Respondents believed that this process reflected a high level of self-discipline. They drew a link between passion for one's profession and the ability to continuously develop. Respondents suggested that passion provided the source of consistent motivation.

*Action and reflection, I think that that is a key component of mastery. P20: Coach Interview 1e SJ - 20:59 (136:136)*

### **Summary for continuous development**

Expert executive coaches are continually developing their level of competence by stepping out of their comfort zone, confronting their fears, taking risks, and being willing to constantly be a student by applying themselves to on-going learning and development, staying up to date with trends and developments in the industry, and constantly increasing their level of self-awareness.

Continuous development implies a willingness to let go of models and theories that are outdated or no longer relevant and take on new models.

#### **4.2.10 Criteria for Expert Executive Coaching: Can say no to work**

Executive coaches and organisational representatives held that view that too often coaches accepted work that they should have declined. Reasons could be lack of competence, lack of experience, or lack of working at the required level, all contributing to reducing the efficacy of coaching. This they felt was one of the distinguishing factors that separates expert from non-expert executive coaches. Expert executive coaches can say no to work. They are clear on what inspires them and where they can affect the greatest change, and where they do

not make an impact. They are capable of declining for their own sakes and the sake of the coachee.

According to the respondents, an ability to say no to work implied that, if you ask the coach where they do not work, they would be able to tell you. Coaches that can say no to work also have the ability to refer, if they see coaching is not the right approach, or to challenge where necessary, even if this might lead to losing the contract.

*I feel perfectly comfortable saying, no you don't need coaching for that. That's not what coaching does. Or equally, yes, but that's not the person who needs the coaching. So yes, that's I think, where you're recognized as an expert at work where people will accept that level of feedback from you. P 2: Organisation Interview 1b - 2:31 (131:131)*

Coaches who could say no to work demonstrated what respondents claimed to be an ability to remain incorruptible to their own value system. In contrast, coaches driven by a need for income risk saying yes to work they are not at the level to accept.

*I know what work I'm not going to do, and I will say no to it. If I were to say yes, even though we can physically get into a rapport, they'll like me and I'll like them and we'll have trust, and all those things, all the relationship pieces, our conversations, at times, will be uncomfortable for both of us because they're too down here, in the operational space, and I'm too far over there in the strategy space. P19: Coach Interview 1c RS - 19:87 (511:511)*

Respondents claimed the ability to say no gave coaches great credibility and authority. This enabled them to establish themselves in a niche where they could then develop as first class coaches, and be recognised for that.

*Don't employ me if what you have is a performance issue. P19: Coach Interview 1c RS - 19:36 (287:287)*

### **Summary for Can say no to work**

A distinguishing factor to separate expert executive coaches from non-expert executive coaches is their ability to say no to work. Expert executive coaches are clear on what



inspires them and where they can effect the greatest change, and where they do not make an impact and can decline for their own sakes and the sake of the coachee.

#### **4.2.11 Criteria for Expert Executive Coaching: Willingness to challenge**

From the definitions of coaching and how respondents viewed the outcomes of coaching, coaching is associated with increased performance and increased levels of self-awareness. It is about pushing coachees out of their comfort zones and enabling them to reach goals they never thought possible. In order for this to be possible, coaches needed to demonstrate an ability to challenge, which in some instances meant embracing risk, in that to challenge a senior executive could mean losing the relationship. Most coaches and organisational representatives felt the willingness to challenge was important. In contrast, executives did not cite this much.

One coach thought a willingness to challenge and hold people to their highest was mandatory, not only towards coachees, but for themselves and other coaches in the industry.

*Being prepared to stand up and say, I'm sorry, but you're not a coach if you've...if you do this. P 2: Organisation Interview 1b - 2:69 (206:206)*

It was said that an expert executive coach encourages people to let go their limitations about who they are, what they are, and what they can do. They feel confident to challenge at every point, implying the coach should not buy into the coachee's limitations. The quote below argues that as a coach if you do not challenge the coachee to stretch out of their comfort zone and you charge for the session, you are ultimately colluding with the coachee's limitations, which acts against the purpose of coaching.

*If you don't challenge them, and two, if you don't take their money, you are an inherent colluder. P22: Coach Interview 1f RG - 22:70 (767:767)*

It was said that an exceptional executive coach can stretch coachees in a way that encourages them to pursue their desired outcomes. A willingness to challenge included empowering coachees to step out of their comfort zones.

*True executive coach can stretch you without you giving up because it's too great. P 4: Organisation Interview 1d - 4:53 (346:346)*

*Encouraging people to not accept their limitations or their self-talk about who they are and what they are and what they can do but to rather really dig into well, who am I and what can I do? And what am I—why am I limiting myself? And equally, why sometimes, am I overselling myself? P 2: Organisation Interview 1b - 2:9 (44:44)*

Respondents said that to excel in the business world as a coach you need to be able to hold your own and not to be intimidated by positional power. Sometimes the sheer IQ of senior executives could be daunting, and that to be successful in being effective at that level, the coach must not be affected by levels of positional power. Alternatively, they would have needed to have occupied a position of similar level in their previous careers.

*You actually need me to work with your senior team because I can hold my own, I'm not afraid of them. P19: Coach Interview 1c RS - 19:89 (519:519)*

An expert executive coach can challenge in a way that is neutral, which enables a coachee to receive the challenge without feeling coerced. Another term used for willingness to challenge was to playfully provoke or to be creatively disruptive.

### **Summary for willingness to challenge**

At the heart of willingness to challenge lay an ability to challenge the coachees limiting assumptions about themselves, others, or the organisation, and to do this in the face of being fired or creating conflict. Coaches need to empower coachees to step out of their comfort zones and to stretch coachees in a way that encourages them to meet their desired outcomes.

#### **4.2.12 Criteria for Expert Executive Coaching: Can easily unlock potential and depth**

The expert executive coach is able to see beyond the coachee's blind spots; help the coachee to recognise them and to then provide the space for the coachee to assess how they want to move forward. They demonstrate an ability to successfully expose crucial aspects required to cause the related shifts for the desired outcomes to be achieved.

*Access the higher levels of meanings and intention and belief, bringing them contextually to awareness in terms of where the person is, and holding them accountable to the answers that they make. P 3: Organisation Interview 1c - 3:36 (100:100)*

One respondent stated expert executive coaches do deep psychological work, and that it can look remarkably similar to therapy. Some respondents claimed that, to be a successful coach you need to get to the root of the problem early in the coaching cycle. A top coach, they believed, can help a coachee see what is behind the defences, reaction, or behaviour, and how to move beyond it.

*An expert coach is someone that can enable someone to find that blueprint for themselves so that they can chart their own course essentially. P21: Coach Interview 1d SM - 21:5 (38:38)*

*What's the hurdles that's keeping me from doing a certain thing and allowing me to get over those. What is that thing that's keeping you from being who you can be. P13: Executive Interview 1b - 13:45 (159:159)*

### **Summary for Can easily unlock potential and depth**

The expert executive coach is able to enable the coachee to recognise their blind spots and to then provide the space for the coachee to assess how they want to move forward. They have an ability to successfully raise crucial insights required to cause the desired results.

#### **4.2.13 Criteria for Expert Executive Coaching: Can go with the flow and not know**

An expert executive coach can separate themselves from their knowledge base and access it if and when required.

*Expertise, for me, comes when you can play that, when it's, rather than a rock or a hammer, it becomes a piano, that piece around the flexibility for each coachee. P19: Coach Interview 1c RS - 19:23 (263:263)*

Respondents claimed that executive coaching is a dynamic relationship, which requires an ability to let go of the need to control the session and the consequential outcome. It requires a comfort with having no idea of where a session might go.

*It's about being agile enough to change your process if it calls for it, but really staying on focus. P18: Coach Interview 1b MC - 18:57 (273:273)*

### **Summary for Can go with the flow and not know**

Executive coaching is a dynamic relationship, which requires the coach to adjust as much as is needed.

#### **4.2.14 Criteria for Expert Executive Coaching: Can express what they do**

For an executive coach to express what they do it requires them to have clarity on where they can affect the greatest change and where they as an executive coach are most in flow (eg: working with strategy, or increased performance, or working with a coachees ingrained patterns of behaviour). If an executive coach's niche is externalised performance and a coachee approaches them for clarity on their area of expertise, an expert executive coach would be able to tell them.

*Coach to be able to be explicit about what they do and how. What informs their practice, how does that turn up in practice, what does the process look like, do they use one on one models, how do they know when they use different ones? P19: Coach Interview 1c RS - 19:84 (499:499) "The piece around are coaches explicit is actually a precursor to where should you work" P19: Coach Interview 1c RS - 19:142 (897:897)*

*It certainly helps a coach to really understand the sector that he or she is playing in. P17: Coach Interview 1a DC - 17:61 (294:294)*

### **Summary for Can express what they do**

The ability to be explicit helps an executive coach define the kind of coachees they take on and their ability to create a positive and effective outcome.

#### **4.2.15 Criteria for Expert Executive Coaching: Shift between theory and reality**

Some of the respondents claimed to excel as an executive coach they need to have the capacity to shift between business and coaching theory and what is occurring practically for the coachee. The following quote illustrates this point stating executive coaches need to be able to connect fully with a coachee who is experiencing exceptional levels of stress and strain and to help them deal with reality as it is.

*Can you sit down with an executive who is facing a restructuring and work with that executive around the theory and practice of restructuring? P20: Coach Interview 1e SJ - 20:33 (46:46)*

#### **Summary for shifts between theory and reality**

If we want to be relevant as executive coaches or as facilitators, it requires context or situational specific knowledge and awareness of the practical implications involved; enabling the executive coach to shift between the two.

#### **4.3 Consequence of Expert Executive Coaching: Referrals and returning coachees**

In this industry, one way of benchmarking success as a coach is being continuously in demand and never being without work. Respondents claimed a consequence of expert executive coaching was to have consistent referrals and returning coachees.

*Totally in demand all the time and never being without work. P 4: Organisation Interview 1d - 4:67 (465:465)*

If you have also remained in the same organisation for several years, this also indicates the coach is providing value and having an impact on the organisation.

*And the capacity to instil confidence in all of the stakeholders is going to get you good reviews. P18: Coach Interview 1b MC - 18:24 (142:142)*

Having been in the industry for many years and having managed to secure several core coachees, sets up a natural referral system by which the coach's skills are shared via word of mouth.

*Reputation is, again, it's a marketing element. P18: Coach Interview 1b MC - 18:47 (233:233)*

*Being in the industry for 10 years, I've got an established network of people who know of me and trust me and will refer business to me. But once you get entrenched into a couple of core coachees, kind of word of mouth spreads you'll get one referral onto the other. So it's more referral-based and people know my presence. P21: Coach Interview 1d SM - 21:23 (85:85)*

### **Summary for referrals and returning coachees**

A way to benchmark your success as a coach is when you are in demand all the time and never without work. If you have also remained in the same organisation for several years, this also indicates the value and an impact.

## **4.4 Further developments for coach training**

Respondents were asked; "In order for us to raise the bar in the coaching industry and for the coach training institutes to produce more coaches that qualify and are already exceptional, or at a far higher level, what do you think is needed to add to the coach training programmes?"

Some respondents saw a need for advanced training programme for coaches who are already qualified and are already experienced. In addition, long-term advancement programmes taking the form of professional learning groups or communities of practice could be established.

*Advanced coach training programme, it's such a nice gap in the market. P18: Coach Interview 1b MC - 18:14 (78:78)*

*Coach training should be a more longer term thing. P 1: Organisation Interview 1a - 1:52 (173:173)*

*I would love to see is more coaches who are at the level of Olympic sportsmen. P22: Coach Interview 1f RG - 22:58 (615:615)*

Other views were that what might support the development of more exceptional coaches would be a coaching apprenticeship, by which coaching could be managed more as a craft, as in some trade-based learning environments.

*Instead of professionalising it, we should go to is a trade or craft model where people are apprenticed and over time, through an apprenticeship, they actually then gain experience and become more and more accepted in a free market and I think it should remain in a free market way. P 5: Organisation Interview 1e - 5:35 (117:117)*

Several respondents felt an important development would be to bring coaching and the health professions closer together with a view to having coaching covered by medical insurance. This would allow many more individuals to benefit from coaching.

*Bring coaching and the health professions closer together. P 4: Organisation Interview 1d - 4:84 (534:534)*

*The other gap is in raising coaching to a level of a health professional whatever you want to call it. To be seen as a health professional. P 4: Organisation Interview 1d - 4:24 (163:163)*

Another identified gap in the market was for coach training institutes to have a greater emphasis on organisational structures and processes, and enabling graduates to enter organisations and meet their required level of professionalism.

*How do you play by business's rules to bring the stuff, soft stuff into the business world. P18: Coach Interview 1b MC - 18:16 (94:94)*

Progress could also be made by helping organisations to become enlightened buyers of coaching services. A means of doing this would be to establish a role of Chief Coaching Officer, who sits on the board of the coachee organisation and coaches the board.

*What if you had a chief coaching officer? P22: Coach Interview 1f RG - 22:106 (1049:1049)*

Various views were expressed about creating recognised levels of coaching, akin to the accounting profession as an example, where should accountants get to a certain level of certification, they can call themselves a Chartered Accountant. The intention behind this would be to place a far greater emphasis on distinguishing expert levels of executive coaching. It was also claimed that to increase the professionalism of the industry, coaching bodies like COMENSA or ICF would need to have more influence to enforce recourse for unethical behaviour.

*Discriminate between basic and advanced and masterful coaching. P 1: Organisation Interview 1a - 1:54 (175:175)*

*You could be a chartered coach, chartered executive coach, CEC, or you could be any other kind of coach, but that's fine, you're not one of those, you're, you know. P 2: Organisation Interview 1b - 2:58 (214:214)*

Coach training institutes could also enable coaches to define their range of competence so they are more specific about the domain in which they are qualified.

*Do we produce coaches with the relevant skill levels who are able to define a range of competence? P19: Coach Interview 1c RS - 19:145 (897:897)*

### **Summary of further developments for coaching**

Further developments for the coaching industry include creating an advanced coach training programme for coaches who are already qualified and experienced. This can possibly enable coaches to define their range of competence so they are more specific about the domain in which they are qualified. Coaching should aim to bring coaches and the health professions closer together. Students should be empowered to graduate in such a manner as to be able to operate within the professional standards required to meet organisational standards. Training programmes should be audited and evaluated to determine that they are merit-worthy. A process could be put in place to help organisations to become enlightened buyers of coaching services.



## 4.5 Summary of findings chapter

Many of the respondents who are now coaching or have had a career in coaching, had either been coaching without realising it was coaching, or were drawn to the industry from a desire to experience more meaningful work and to contribute to the development of people. Many also had a strong personal interest in human development and or a passion for their own personal and professional development.

There was a consensus that, for coaching to be successful, the individual having coaching needs to a) want coaching, b) initiate it, and c) assume responsibility for choosing the coach. It became apparent that when assigned a coach by the organisation, the value gained from the experience was minimised by a number of factors, namely, lack of clarity on the purpose of the coaching engagement, lack of trust in the coach, and lack of understanding of the value of coaching, and, because of this, a lack of engagement. The factors for coaching success included informing the individual about the process, and giving the freedom to choose to be coached. If the individual opts for coaching, then they should be given the freedom to choose the coach. Under these conditions, the likelihood of positive impact was greatly increased.

The criteria for choosing a coach are to check testimonials and references, to get clarity on the coach's qualifications and experience, and to establish the coach's processes and niche. Moreover, the coach's motivation for coaching should be assessed. The coach needs to build trust and rapport immediately and exude confidence and passion.

A key subject of enquiry of this study was to establish the criteria deemed to be essential for expert executive coaching. Sixteen criteria emerged. In no order of priority they are:

1. Relationship skills - The ability of the executive coach to manage confidentiality and boundaries; trust and respect; the ability to bring out the best in others; and to have a high degree of emotional intelligence and empathy.
2. Willingness to challenge - Confident to challenge at every point, being incorruptible, meaning the coach can challenge or mirror at the risk of being fired or creating conflict; and able to stretch the coachee without them giving up.

3. Presence - Ability of the executive coach to present themselves powerfully without their ego, demonstrated by not needing to add value or to stand out, and an ability to listen deeply without needing to say anything to fill the 'awkward' silence.
4. Walks-the-talk - Lives up to what the executive coach advocates, and passionate about what they do. Executive coaches need to lead by example and be a product of the product. They need to hold themselves accountable and be incorruptible to their own value system.
5. Continuous development - Continually stepping out of their own comfort zone and being a life student, constantly keeping up to date with the latest developments in the coaching industry. Being willing to be supervised and put themselves with people who will help them to improve their level of skill and competence.
6. Self Awareness - Able to hold a deep self-focus while maintaining full connection with the coachee, demonstrating as an executive coach they are clever at monitoring and then moderating their own thoughts and behaviours in that environment
7. Can say no to work - An expert executive coach can say no to work, they are clear on what inspires them and where they can effect the greatest change. An expert executive coach acknowledges where they don't make an impact and can decline the work for their own sake and for the sake of the coachee.
8. Can express what they do - Ability to be explicit about what they do helps define the kind of coachees that they take on and their ability to have an impact on them
9. Has experience - A level of experience gives the executive coach a sense of maturity; there is a level of breadth and depth to the executive coach, which brings a more complex way of thinking and a sense of self assurance, inner knowledge and strength to the sessions.
10. Is qualified - Has a qualification in coaching, and if possible has business acumen and psychology, and the relevant experience in both business and psychology.

11. Can easily unlock potential and depth - The expert executive coach is able to see beyond the person's blind spots and then take them beyond the blind spots. The executive coach has an ability to extract issues and help coachees find all their resources and how to use them.
12. Can go with the flow and not know - Executive coaching is really a dynamic relationship, which requires you to dance in the moment and be willing to adjust as much as you need.
13. Creates powerful results - An expert executive coach can add value from day one, whether that is business results or by being a catalyst and a channel for the person to find themselves in a safe space.
14. Client centric - Numerous respondents stated that in their opinion, the highest level of executive coaching is to be a servant, the willingness to be that servant and to serve both the coachee and the sponsor. Truly masterful coaching comes when a coach can integrate multiple bodies of knowledge and adjust according to the coachee they are with at that time.
15. Referrals and returning coachees - A way to bench mark the success of an executive coach is when the executive coach is in demand all the time and is never without work. If the executive coach has also remained in the same organization for several years, this also provides a higher rating to the executive coach and the impact the coach has.
16. Shift between theory and reality - If coaches want to be relevant as coaches or as facilitators, they have to have a command of both the theory and practical reality.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings from the research and compares what was found to the literature review done in Chapter 2. This chapter is divided into themes which aimed to capture a summary of the categories identified in Chapter 4.

## 5. DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter compares the literature and the outcomes of the interviews conducted to assess if the findings from this research are consistent with, or contradictory to, the literature on the topic. From the outcomes of this chapter, conclusions are drawn.

In identifying the themes for this study, the researcher went through the categories to identify connections between them, which were then put together into themes as described in Chapter 3. The related categories are shown in the tables under each theme to demonstrate the link between the categories and the themes in each case.

### 5.1 Theme 1 – The perception of authenticity and the consequence of trust

#### 5.1.1 Meaning of the theme

This theme demonstrates the importance of the executive coach being authentic and of the trust that results. This theme speaks to the important of creating the conditions for safety and trust which are the foundation for the sessions to have the real impact they can have. The categories in Table 11 below reflect the code families that are included in this theme.

**Table 11: Breakdown of code families included in Theme 1**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>
Walks the talk	Walking the talk entails that the coach embodies everything her or she espouses, being a product of the product and leading by example
Relationship skills	Having strong interpersonal ability demonstrating a natural ability to build rapport, to empathise and in order to cause sustainable results, to have done their own work
Continuous development	Coaches need to be passionate about what they do, which radiates enthusiasm and energy, which is reflected by the coaches' continuous personal and professional development
Self-aware	They need a high level of self-awareness, and other awareness. Emotional intelligence includes empathy and rapport and is mandatory to create success in the relationship.

### 5.1.2 Manifestations in the data

Throughout the interviews, it was said that a coach's ability to build trust and connection within the first session would count as an example of what constitutes an expert executive coach. There was a link between this ability and the qualities of authenticity and trust. Trust as a construct has two parts, namely, structural and personal trust. In lieu of personal trust, which builds over time as the relationship gets established, a coach should provide structural trust. The findings in this study show that for executives to accept and trust the coach at the start of the relationship, the perception of authenticity, which has been linked to walking the talk and leading by example, resulted in trust. Trust was recognised as a quality that contributes to an expert executive coach's success and efficacy.

In terms of being authentic as an executive coach, exercising authenticity, according to the respondents, would be to integrate and embrace all the qualities and beliefs they espouse. This they felt generated trust and safety, which allowed the coachee to open up. As part of building trust and connection, it was said that it is important that people feel the coach is being real or genuine. If they do not feel that, it will stand as a barrier between the coach and the coachee.

In terms of building authenticity and trust as an executive coach, while coaches believed strongly in attending regular supervision, and ongoing development, practically there were questions around whether this is actually happening. The respondents claimed that too many coaches are not willing to invest in coaching for themselves, in supervision, or in mentoring. It was said that ideally, for every ten coaching sessions a coach has, they should have one supervision session. In questioning people about whether this is actually happening, too often the answer was no. Attending regular supervision and group mentoring would form the basis for deliberate practice in the coaching industry, and yet there was doubt about the number of coaches that are doing this on a regular basis.

Professional development is another aspect of authenticity and walking the talk. The other is personal development. Most coaches felt very strongly about the ongoing personal development of the coach.

### 5.1.3 Comparison with the literature

Authenticity is taking full responsibility for one's personal experiences, thoughts, emotions, needs, desires and beliefs (Harter, 2002). It involves being self-aware and acting in alignment with one's true self by verbalising what one genuinely thinks and believes (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Authenticity is a function of acting with integrity and produces social benefits, as authentic people are generally well liked, thus creating stronger relationships (Hodgins, Koestner, & Duncan, 1996). The requirements for moral character for a good coach are commitment to the coachee's success and that the coach demonstrates openness, honesty, and integrity (Hall et al., 2000).

Trust is fundamental in establishing and maintaining relationships, it supports the generation of mutually supportive relationships and as a consequence produces greater relationship commitment and satisfaction. Trust in this light plays a vital role in the executive coach coachee relationship to foster confidence in the coach and coaching process, which might play a role in the overall results (Balliet & Van Lange, 2013; Campbell et al., 2010; Righetti & Finkenauer, 2011; Wieselquist et al., 1999).

Authenticity in the executive coach included having: a) high self-awareness; b) having strong interpersonal ability, demonstrating a natural ability to build rapport; c) an ability to empathise and, in order to really cause sustainable results, and d) to have done their own work. Kernis and Goldman (2006) assert authenticity reflects one's understanding of self, an openness to objectively evaluating their desirable and undesirable self-aspects, their actions and their relationship towards interpersonal relationships. Included in the concept of authenticity is: a) the coach's level of awareness; b) the coach's objectivity and acceptance of their positive and negative attributes; c) the coach's choice to act in alignment with their preferences, values, and needs rather than merely acting to please others, and d) achieving and valuing truthfulness and openness in the coach's close relationships Kernis and Goldman (2006, p. 284).

In terms of building bonds of trust, Alvey and Barclay (2007), claim trust in executive coaching is developed by interplay of relational, situational, and behavioural factors. Trust, they claim is highest when the coachee discloses honest feelings and thoughts to the coach and receives a supportive, non-judgmental response from the coach. It is also highest when the organisation is supportive of the leadership development that could occur in executive

coaching and the coach and coachee are clear about expectations of confidentiality and the outcomes to be achieved. Lastly, trust is highest when the coach supportively confirms the coachee's developmental needs, and challenges the coachee's leadership behaviours. When these various interdependent aspects are exhibited throughout the coaching relationship, Alvey and Barclay (2007) claim it results in bonds of trust.

#### **5.1.4 Conclusion**

Respondents claim to recognise authenticity and trust when the coach integrates and embraces all the qualities and beliefs they espouse, which in turn is believed to generate the trust and safety that allows the coachee to open up. Respondents linked authenticity to walking-the-talk and leading by example, which gives coachees the feeling the coach is being real or genuine.

The research by Luthans and Avolio (2003) suggests authenticity involves being self-aware and acting in alignment with one's true self by verbalising what one genuinely thinks and believes. (Hodgins et al., 1996) see authenticity as a function of acting with integrity and state that it produces social benefits, as authentic people are generally well liked, thus creating stronger relationships. Research by (Alvey & Barclay, 2007) claim trust is highest when the coachee discloses honest feelings and thoughts to the coach and receives a supportive, non-judgmental reaction from the coach.

Therefore, the data supports the literature in terms of the relationship between authenticity and trust and the importance thereof.

## **5.2 Theme 2 – Clearly defined roles and identities**

### **5.2.1 Meaning of the theme**

This theme speaks to the executive coaches' ability to conform to professional codes of conduct and to conduct themselves as if coaching were a professional field. Coaching in

itself does not have a confirmed definition, and given the extent to which executive coaching is fast becoming standard protocol in business, it might be of value to find the clarity here.

**Table 12: Breakdown of code families included in Theme 2**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>
Can say no to work	An expert executive coach can say no to work; they are clear on where they don't make an impact and can decline work, for their own sake and the sake of the coachee
Willingness to challenge	An expert executive coach is incorruptible, can challenge or mirror at the risk of being fired or creating conflict.
Can express what they do	They are clear on what inspires them and where they can affect the greatest change

### **5.2.2 Manifestations in the data**

According to some of the respondents, expert executive coaches can say no to work and express what they do. To fulfil this, it requires a coach to be clear on the area in which they are trained and in which they have experience, in contrast to the areas in which they are not. Respondents stated *professionalism* most captured what this was about. Professionalism linked to the theme “clearly defined roles and identities”, includes key characteristics that expert executive coaches display to build and establish trust, respect, and credibility in the industry.

The respondents said coaches demonstrated professionalism when they were comfortable in expressing their own views and felt comfortable to challenge the organisation. Professionalism was also demonstrated when the executive coaches were able to articulate with clarity their roles, which enabled first class results. When executive coaches are clear on where they perform at their best, they can say no to work instead of agreeing and then delivering lower quality results. Professionalism enables a willingness to challenge without fearing they will lose the coachee or cause conflict. The respondents claimed that, to be an expert executive coach, the coach must have the ability to refer coachees to other professionals if they see coaching is not the right modality.

Another area that respondents felt was key was the coach’s qualifications, experience and



accreditation with coaching bodies. The qualification, they felt, was mandatory in that, because the industry is still unregulated, it separated those who have invested in coach training from those who have not. When accredited with a coaching body, such as the International Coaching Federation (ICF), the coach adhered to professional codes of conduct and ethical standards and could be held to them, if required. The experience was important as respondents said coaches with an advanced amount of experience deliver superior results to those who are starting out. They would have a clearer idea of where they perform best, and where they should not coach. They would also be able to decline work that was not in their niche or recognise when the coachee was not ready for coaching.

Several executives responded in the negative to the question, "Would you pay for the coaching if the company was not?" There were many factors that contributed to this, and it might indicate that there are too many coaches who cannot express what they do or who can decline work and that coaches are more often accepting contracts irrespective of fit. This can be potentially damaging to the credibility of coaching in the industry.

In terms of clearly defined roles and identities, from the executives' perspective, one of the key reasons coaching engagements failed was due to the unprofessional manner in which the process was conducted. Executives had no idea why they were getting a coach; what this entailed; or how the process worked. Under these conditions, executives did not gain the maximum from the coaching engagement, as much time was spent on trying to establish what it was, how it worked, and how it could benefit them. It was said that sometimes it was only in the third session that the value became apparent. Aside from the lack of professionalism in terms of how the process was conducted, this also speaks to the inability of the coach to manage that situation. Coaches are brought into organisations to engage in large leadership development projects. If they do not establish the necessary trust and rapport in the first session to get the process underway, it greatly impacts the effectiveness of the coaching and subsequently the return on investment.

The respondents claimed that, to demonstrate professionalism, executive coaches need to have a membership with one of the professional coaching bodies, which requires adhering to professional codes of conduct and codes of ethics. They need to have a certain level of coaching experience. In terms of the qualifications required, an executive coach needs to hold a coaching certification, and either business or psychological acumen (by qualification

or experience), and they need to be accredited at a professional level, for example, with the Professional Certified Coach accreditation of the International Coaching Federation.

### **5.2.3 Comparison with the literature**

Alvey and Barclay (2007) claims coaches that have a measurable impact on the success of coaching usually have a high level of credibility. The literature substantially supports the importance of coaches' knowledge and their credibility Bacon and Spear (2003); Judge and Cowell (1997). De Vos and Strydom (1998) assert that a coaching programme's success relies in part on coaches' professionalism and ethical standards.

The survey results presented in the Ridler "The Ridler Report 2013: Trends in the use of executive coaching" 2013) mirrored the data. Their results claimed that to uphold professionalism executive coaches need to: a) be affiliated with one of the professional coaching bodies; b) be accredited on a professional level; c) hold a recognised coaching certification, and d) either have business or psychological acumen, by qualification or experience Stober and Grant (2006); Ridler "The Ridler Report 2013: Trends in the use of executive coaching" 2013).

### **5.2.4 Conclusion**

Expert executive coaches can say no to work and can express what they do. This is the key to true professionalism – the ability to say no. Having clearly defined roles and identities enabled the executive coach to espouse key characteristics that build and establish trust, respect, and credibility in the industry.

Clearly defined roles and identities also had to do with the executive coaches' affiliations. They claimed that being accredited or affiliated to one of the coaching bodies increased the professionalism and credibility of the executive coach. The literature confirms having a high level of credibility impacts the success of the coaching process and that a coaching programme's success relies in part on the coach's professionalism and ethical standards.

The data was consistent with certain aspects of the literature, and what is reflected by this theme is the lack of clarity on the specific role requirements executive coaches need to fulfil to be seen as an expert executive coach.

### 5.3 Theme 3 – Self-efficacy communicates presence which communicates credibility

#### 5.3.1 Meaning of the theme

This theme considers the executive coach’s ability to create powerful results that stem from the coach’s self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997). Presence includes issues like nonverbal communication, emotional intelligence, and empathy, which enable the coach to recognise subtle cues with which they can then engage the coachee. Coaches without this level of belief in their ability might miss the clues. This might contribute to superior results for the coachee, which, as a by-product, builds the credibility of the coach.

**Table 13: Breakdown of code families included in Theme 3**

Category	Description
Presence	Coaches’ passion and energy is reflective of their relationship to the coaching process, which with highly energised coaches shows a real belief in the principles they adhere to and their own ability.
Has experience	Coaches with years of experience demonstrated a higher level of maturity and self-confidence
Creates powerful results	Because they believe in their product, and can stand for and vouch for the value of the process, this energy impacts the dynamics in the relationship

#### 5.3.2 Manifestations in the data

Respondents claimed a level of experience gives the coach a sense of maturity and a breadth and depth which brings a more complex way of thinking. Coaches are then self-assured and confident and can bring with them their inner knowing and strength to the sessions, which builds credibility.

The organisational representatives felt that coaches who were mature and had the level of coaching and business experience had an aura (presence) of authority and credibility as a coach. Organisational representatives held that coaches with a strong presence were often the coaches they chose as they recognised presence from the coach. The organisational representatives claimed as executive coaches, they either have it or they don’t. These

respondents said that, when interviewing coaches for the purpose of potentially taking them on board, their presence could be seen, and that this played a role in whether they were taken on or not. Presence, in this context, they linked to the aura of the coach.

The respondents said expert executive coaches are secure in themselves and have a sense of maturity. There is a natural confidence and boldness. One respondent in describing the presence reflective of an expert executive coach, referred to the Zen saying, '*there is an effortless in the effort*'.

Respondents claimed when an expert executive coach is in demand all of the time and never without work, this reflects the credibility the coach has in the market. Moreover, if the coach has remained in the same organisation for several years, this also reflects the value and impact the coach is having, again acknowledging credibility.

### **5.3.3 Comparison with the literature**

According to Baron and Henry (2010), to be an expert requires one to have the capacity to engage in deliberate practice, and for this, one of the factors that play a vital role is the coaches level of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997). Self-efficacy beliefs provide individuals with a means to motivate their learning through self-regulatory processes like goal setting, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation. (Bandura, 1977, 1997) saw self-efficacy as an individual's assessment of their own ability to make things happen to achieve their desired results. Zimmerman et al. (1992) show that the more capable students judge themselves to be, the more challenging the goals they embrace.

### **5.3.4 Conclusion**

Respondents claimed the level of knowledge and experience gave the coach maturity and a level of breadth and depth, enabling a more complex way of thinking. Coaches with a lot of experience are self-assured and confident. There was consensus that the level of experience and practice a coach has determines their self-efficacy and gives rise to confidence and boldness in the coach. This greatly contributed to the presence of the coach and his or her ability to create results. Experience coupled with constant professional

development leads to self-efficacy, which communicates presence and builds credibility. Therefore, the data supports the literature in this case.

## 5.4 Theme 4 – The relationship between passion and deliberate practice

### 5.4.1 Meaning of the theme

This theme explores the relationship between coaches' passion and deliberate practice. A requirement for deliberate practice is self-regulation and control, which arguably stems from a passion for what they do. Passion drives self-regulation, and deliberate practice requires motivation, which comes from the need for achievement and a love for what one does.

**Table 14: Breakdown of code families included in Theme 4**

Category	Description
Presence	Coaches' passion and energy is reflective of their relationship to the coaching process, which with highly energised coaches shows a real belief in the principles they adhere to and their own ability.
Has experience	Coaches with years of experience demonstrated a higher level of maturity and self-confidence
Creates powerful results	Because they believe in their product, and can stand for and vouch for the value of the process, this energy impacts the dynamics in the relationship
Referrals and return coachees	Coaches who had been in the industry for ten or more years also did not need to market themselves, they had an existing coachee base and got consistent referrals and return coachees.
Continuous development	Coaches need to be passionate about what they do, which radiates enthusiasm and energy, which is reflected by the coaches' continuous personal and professional development

### 5.4.2 Manifestation in the data

This theme could be detected in the data in the notions of confidence and passion. Respondents said, when around someone with positive and high spirits, those around them naturally feel happier and more energised. The executives had experienced coaches who were flat and monotonous and who arrived for the session and went through the motions with little or no benefit to the coachee. The executive coaches who were most able to assist their coachees to create sustainable results radiated energy, passion and confidence in what

they did. Passion, the respondents felt, was reflected in the commitment and enthusiasm the coach radiated. The belief in their product enabled coaches to stand for and vouch for the value of the process, and this energy impacted the dynamics in the relationship. Typically those who had years of experience demonstrated a higher level of maturity and confidence than did less advanced coaches.

In asking the coaches what motivated them to choose coaching as a career, many said they did not feel coaching was a career, but rather a vocation. They felt called to do the work, and a few said they would coach irrespective of whether they were getting paid or not. It was also said by some that they felt coaching was an act of service, and that they came from a place of serving mankind. The respondents stated it is about engaging with people motivated by passion and honour.

Some respondents stated that the energy of the coach played a critical role in the outcomes achieved in the process. Coaches that display high levels of energy reflect a level of passion and confidence, which stemmed from having done their own work, and having the right level of experience required to effect change. Their passion and energy was also reflective of their relationship to the coaching process, which with highly energised coaches shows a belief in the principles to which they adhere.

#### **5.4.3 Comparison with the literature**

Baron and Henry (2010) indicate that outstanding performance stems largely from involvement in intense, prolonged, and highly focused efforts to improve current performance. This is known as *deliberate practice*, which according to Ericsson (2006) has been described as the “opposite of fun”. The goal of deliberate practice is improved performance.

Vallerand, Salvy, et al. (2003) found the concept of passion made a major contribution to the capacity for deliberate practice. Being passionate for an activity, they claimed, leads people to devote themselves fully to activities, persisting even in the face of huge difficulties, until excellence has been achieved. Vallerand, Blanchard, et al. (2003, p. 507) define passion as “*a strong inclination towards an activity that individuals like (or even love), that they find important, in which they invest time and energy, and which comes to be internalised in one’s identity.*”

Dweck (2000) state that achievement motivation (or need for achievement) is about striving for competence. Nicholls (1984) states achievement behaviour is defined as behaviour focused at developing and establishing high ability and skill. Zimmerman (2000) states self-efficacy beliefs provide individuals with a means to motivate their learning through self-regulatory processes like goal setting, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation. Vallerand, Salvy, et al. (2003) state that being passionate about an activity lead individuals to dedicate themselves fully to the activity, thereby allowing them to persist, even in the face of obstacles, and to eventually reach excellence.

#### **5.4.4 Conclusion**

In comparing the data and the literature, there does seem to be a link between deliberate practice and a passion for what someone does. Some coaches felt drawn to coaching irrespective of whether they were paid or not, and saw coaching as an act of service. Passion appears to be a precursor for self-regulation and control. Key features of deliberate practice, according to Ericsson et al. (2006); and Colvin (2008) are high levels of focus and concentration, being able to identify weaknesses and applying strenuous efforts to improve these, and ten years of continued, vigorous effort (Ericsson, 2006). For this, a high level of self-control and self-regulation are required and the motivation to stay committed in the face of obstacles. Need for achievement also plays a vital role, which is an intrinsic drive to strive for competence. Expert performance is the result of individuals' sustained efforts to improve performance, while consistently managing motivational and external constraints, say Ericsson et al. (1993). Therefore, the data is consistent with the literature.

### **5.5 Theme 5 – Context and situation-specific expertise**

#### **5.5.1 Meaning of the theme**

This theme explores the expertise required to be an expert executive coach, such as talent, experience and expertise. Expertise relates specifically to context and situation specifics relative to what the coachee requires.

**Table 15 Breakdown of code families included in this Theme 5**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>
Is qualified	Talented executive coaches need to be grounded in both business and psychological acumen.
Has experience	One of the highest and most important predictors of choosing a coach and of coaching success was the coach's level of experience, more so than his or her qualification

### **5.5.2 Manifestation in the data**

The kinds of expertise required to be an expert executive coach resulted in three core domains, namely coaching-specific expertise, psychological expertise, and business expertise.

There were varying views on whether to be an expert executive coach required business or psychological acumen, or both. There were varying views on whether a coach needed to have been in business to be an executive coach, or whether having studied business and understanding it was enough. Likewise, there were conflicting views around the requirement to be trained in psychology. Concerns were raised that long-standing behavioural issues in an executive might not be recognised by a coach without a psychology background, which potentially could do more harm than good. There did seem to be consensus that to be an expert executive coach one requires coach-specific training and experience.

Respondents were adamant that it was necessary to do a background check and to check the references and testimonials of coaches in assessing which coach to hire. There was a responsibility from the executive coach to be continuously up-to-date with the trends in the industry, be it business or coaching. To be an expert executive coach is to be world-class in what you do, someone who demonstrates consistent superior performance, which is a result of what is known as deliberate practice.

In the data what came out was that it is not true that to be an expert executive coach you need to be qualified. There were several instances of coaches who have been in the industry from the beginning who are known to create powerful results and yet who do not have the training offered today by coaching institutes. An individual who fulfils certain requirements can enter into a Master's degree in coaching and have never coached or had any formal



coach training before registering for the degree. Coaches who qualify will then hold a Master's degree in coaching, which places them in the higher echelons in terms of a coaching qualification, but which does not mean they will be good coaches practically. To be recognised as an expert executive coach respondents claimed requires both qualification and experience.

There were strong views that upheld all perspectives. Some felt strongly that to be an expert executive coach having been in the business world and having had business experience was mandatory. Others disagreed and felt, should this be a requirement, it defeated the object of coaching, which is strictly non-directive. Some respondents felt there should be a stronger emphasis on developing psychological acumen, given the nature of coaching is largely around the human psyche. Others felt this would slant the direction coaching went and did not have a place in business.

According to the respondents, one of the highest and most important predictors of choosing a coach and of coaching success was the coach's level of experience, more so than his or her qualification.

### **5.5.3 Comparison with the literature**

Neither the data nor the literature showed consensus on the required level of experience or education in business and psychology (Ives, 2008), and whether executive coaches need to have previously attained a comparable level of seniority as the coachee; Ridler "The Ridler Report 2013: Trends in the use of executive coaching" 2013). There was no consensus on whether executive coaches needed to have extensive coaching experience with senior leaders to coach at that level. There were comments on the requirement for executive coaches to work with a coachee's ingrained patterns and to do so would need to have worked on their own ingrained patterns of behaviour (Claire Hack, Head of Organisational Development, AB Agri). There were also comments around the coach's required levels of self-reflectiveness about their own abilities, their level of functioning, and their own clarity on the meaning and purpose of their life pursuits.

Wasylyshyn (2003) states that talented executive coaches need a grounding in both the business and psychology domains. Spence, Cavanagh, and Grant (2006) background is therapeutic and clinical experience, emphasising his psychodynamic theory, thus, those who

believe in this approach tend to have backgrounds in clinical or counselling psychology.

Berman and Bradt (2006) claim executives rate “professional certification”, “unique subject matter expertise” and a psychology degree as factors that have a positive impact on the effectiveness of the coaching process. Authors like Spence et al. (2006); De Vos and Strydom (1998), and Berman and Bradt (2006) express the importance of industry or organisation knowledge or experience as important and relevant coaching skills (Kilburg, 2000; McDermot et al., 2007).

De Vos and Strydom (1998) highlight the importance of business acumen and that executive coaches should have a solid background and understanding of the psychological sciences. Kilburg (1996) states a lack of expertise in the focus area of concern to the coachee coupled with poor technique results in poor outcomes.

De Vos and Strydom (1998) state the coach is likely to affect the attitude, thinking, and behaviour of the coachee and thus the strategic actions of the coachee, and therefore claim it is vital to choose coaches who are well versed and thoroughly briefed in the organisation’s strategy, culture, and orientation.

Increasingly, coaching approaches are therapeutic in nature (Judge & Cowell, 1997). In contrast, goal-oriented coaching is designed to directly stimulate effective action (Gray, 2006).

According to Bluckert (2005), those individuals from highly results-focused environments such as business tend to emphasise and focus on the performance theme, often seeing coaching as about skills development, which reflects a goal-focused approach, as well as positive-psychology and adult learning approach.

Spence et al. (2006), claim deep seated issues and anxieties can open up through the coaching process, calling for coaches to be better equipped to deal with a range and depth of issues like long-standing behavioural problems. Exceptional coaches are those most effective in dealing with such issues (Berman & Bradt, 2006).

#### 5.5.4 Conclusion

The data reflected consensus that executive coaches need to have a coaching qualification and be accredited or affiliated with a coaching body, which meant they adhered to their ethics and codes of conduct. There is no consensus in the data and the literature about the specific expertise required. There were views that what is required is context or situation specific expertise.

### 5.6 Theme 6 – Ability to perform and produce outcomes envisaged.

#### 5.6.1 Meaning of the theme

It is accepted that an executive coach has the ability to perform and produce the outcomes envisaged. However, this theme explores the extent to which expert performance of the executive coach actually achieved the anticipated outcomes for the coachee.

**Table 16: Breakdown of code families included in this Theme 6**

Category	Description
Can go with the flow; and not know	An expert executive coach can sit with the discomfort of not knowing, and they have no need to know.
Referrals and return coachees	Coaches who had been in the industry for ten or more years also did not need to market themselves, they had an existing coachee base and got consistent referrals and return coachees.
Continuous development	Coaches need to be passionate about what they do, which radiates enthusiasm and energy, which is reflected by the coaches' continuous personal and professional development
Client-centric	Truly getting out of the way and letting the other person show you what it is that they honestly need; it has to be completely about the coachee, and not the coach

#### 5.6.2 Manifestation in the data

According to the data, the expert executive coach has an ability to see beyond a person's blind spots. They have an ability to get crucial insights out and help a coachee connect with their resources and use them. Experience enables an executive coach to get to the core of the issue in a much shorter period of time.

According to the respondents, executive coaches that consistently develop themselves typically exemplify advanced coaching skills. Continuous development creates an opening for coaches to let go models and theories that are out of date or no longer relevant and take on new models. Familiarity with many models and approaches allows a coach to adjust accordingly to the coachee. In this, they have a much more eclectic approach, which provides far greater scope to unlock potential and depth and ultimately produce the results envisaged.

Expert executive coaches do deep psychological work, and it can look remarkably similar to therapy. They integrate multiple flows of information with the coachee. To be a successful executive coach you need to get to the root of the problem early in the cycle. A top coach, according to respondents, can help a coachee see what is behind the defences, reaction, or behaviour, and how to move beyond it. This, respondents claim, is mostly possible due to the extensive personal development of the coach.

The respondents said expert executive coaches are continually stepping out of their comfort zones, confronting their fears, taking risks, and being willing to constantly be a student. The respondents claimed that to be an expert requires continuous personal and professional development, staying up to date with the trends in the industry, and being what they referred to as *a product of the product*. What became apparent was not enough coaches are doing what is required to continuously develop. There is a general perception that coaches resist investing into their own development and do not regularly engage in supervision coaching. There was a consensus for coaches to develop continuously and invest in supervision or to engage with a more-advanced peer. The discrepancy lay in what coaches are actually doing in practice.

### **5.6.3 Comparison with the literature**

Expert performance is the result of individual's sustained efforts to improve performance while consistently managing motivational and external constraints, say (Ericsson et al., 1993). Expert performance is also defined as consistent superior performance (Ericsson & Charness, 1994). Baron and Henry (2010) show outstanding performance stems largely from involvement in intense, prolonged, and highly focused efforts to improve current performance, known as deliberate practice.

Grit and related concepts are linked with lifetime educational attainment Duckworth and Quinn (2009) and professional accomplishment (Baum & Locke, 2004); (Locke & Latham, 2013); (Vallerand et al., 2014); (Wrzesniewski, 2012). Duckworth et al. (2007) state that grit has been defined as the perseverance and passion for long-term goals and involves working tirelessly towards challenges, upholding effort and interest over years despite adversity, failure and plateaus in progress.

In the Ridler "The Ridler Report 2013: Trends in the use of executive coaching" (2013), some of the survey results expressed that coaches' work on their own ingrained patterns of behaviour was mandatory to their ability to work with their coachees' ingrained patterns. It was argued that only coaches who have done their own personal development work and who are highly self-aware can cause transformation and sustainable change for coachees.

#### **5.6.4 Conclusion**

Executive coaches who have extensive experience in the executive coaching field are those who are most able to affect sustainable change, by unlocking potential and accessing levels of depth. This experience gave them more confidence and maturity than less experienced coaches displayed. The experience furthermore allowed coaches to challenge coachees more, and they were also clearer on where they were able to coach and where they were not. Having a high level of experience enabled coaches to stay in the present and to not know where the session would go, and they did not need to refer to a specific methodology. Typically the coaches who had been in the industry for ten or more years also did not need to market themselves, they had an existing coachee base and got consistent referrals and return coachees. Therefore, the data supports the literature.

### **5.7 Theme 7 – The consequence of mindfulness in the coaching process**

#### **5.7.1 Meaning of the theme**

Mindfulness of the coach in the coaching process allows a far greater ability to synthesise and assimilate information provided by the coachee. Mindfulness enables hyper-awareness and enables a holistic perspective in the coaching process. This theme explores the impact mindfulness has on the coaching process.

**Table 17: Breakdown of code families included in this Theme 7**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>
Can go with the flow and not know	An expert executive coach can sit with the discomfort of not knowing, and they have no need to know.
Presence	Ability to show up powerfully without ego; not needing to add value or to stand out and an ability to listen deeply without needing to say anything to fill the space
Self-awareness	Able to hold a deep self-focus, and to demonstrate an ability to monitor and then moderate thoughts and behaviours in that environment
Client-centric	Truly getting out of the way and letting the other person show you what it is that they honestly need; it must be completely about the other person, and not the coach

### **5.7.2 Manifestation in the data**

Mindfulness captures a number of characteristics respondents felt were reflective of expert executive coaches, namely self-awareness, presence, their ability to go with the flow, and their ability to be coachee centric. Having a high level of self-awareness was seen by respondents as an ability of the coach to hold a deep self-focus while simultaneously holding the focus on the coachee coupled with an ability to demonstrate that they can monitor and moderate their own thoughts and behaviours in an environment.

Respondents felt self-awareness was mandatory in that it enabled coaches to take responsibility, and to recognise projection and transference. Self-awareness enabled a coach to be mindful of where they were in terms of their ability to cause results for the coachee. Respondents also felt self-awareness gave a coach clarity about their own range of competency.

Organisational representatives linked presence to the aura of the coach, what the coach radiated. The organisational representatives said that coaches with advanced levels of coaching and business experience were mature and had an aura of authority and credibility. Respondents said if coaches are not fully present, this took away from their presence, both in stature and availability. Expert executive coaches were always in the here-and-now, fully with the coachee with whom they were talking. They did not need to prepare before the session.

Coaches with a strong presence were able to go with the flow and not know where the session was going, which enabled them to go to depths that might not have been possible without this. There was a connection between having the required levels of expertise and experience, which gave rise to maturity, humility and confidence in the coach, which showed up as presence, the ability to be fully in the moment with the coachee so to respond as authentically as possible to their needs.

### **5.7.3 Comparison with the literature**

Passmore and Marianetti (2007) state that mindfulness in coaching is a tool to help the coach cultivate and sustain focus in a coaching session and as a practice to manage emotional detachment. Effective coaching requires coaches to offer their coachees their full focus and attention (Passmore & Marianetti, 2007). Mindfulness assists coaches to focus their attention to the only moment that 'is'. Being able to focus entirely in the moment, allows the coach to 'be' fully with his or her coachee.

Langer and Moldoveanu (2000) states that mindfulness is the process of drawing novel distinctions, which leads to a greater sensitivity to one's environment, more openness to new information, the creation of new categories for structuring perception, and enhanced awareness of multiple perspectives in problem solving. The subjective feel of mindfulness is a heightened state of involvement and wakefulness or being in the present and the whole individual is involved.

Passmore and Marianetti (2007) state mindfulness frees the mind from the limitations of one's mental models. It nurtures one's ability to 'think outside of the box' and to 'not-know'; it inspires creativity (Carrington et al., 1980). It also allows one to pay attention 'on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally' (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2012).

Passmore and Marianetti (2007) argue that a state of mind that is present and non-judgmental allows one to see the world as it actually is. This perspective changes the way the coachee relates to the challenge and increases the power of their resources, which opens up a path to growth and development. Mindfulness directly sways one's ability to evaluate the events and to see them for what they are, which in turn allows one to gain a more objective view of the events and maintain higher control of one's response.

Exceptional coaches, according to Dagley (2010), can get to deeper conversations more quickly and they motivate people to take personal responsibility for their own development and growth. Executives' experiences of exceptional coaching include the following: a) engagement, b) deeper conversations and c) insight and responsibility, which came out of associated coaching capabilities.

#### **5.7.4 Conclusion**

Mindfulness brings a heightened sensitivity to one's environment, more openness to new information, the creation of new categories for structuring perception and enhanced awareness of multiple perspectives in problem solving, from this perspective the data supports the literature linking the effects of mindfulness on the coaching process.

### **5.8 Theme 8 – The executive coach demonstrates high levels of self-awareness**

#### **5.8.1 Meaning of the theme**

Requirements to be an executive coach are self-awareness, social intelligence and coaching specific expertise. This theme explores how expert executive coaches demonstrate high levels of self-awareness and the impact this has on the coach-coachee relationship.



**Table 18: Breakdown of code families included in this Theme 8**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>
Self-awareness	Self-awareness is about being able to hold a deep self-focus whilst remaining fully present with the coachee, and to demonstrate skill at monitoring and then moderating one's own thoughts and behaviours in that environment
Relationship skills	Relationship skills embody intra- and interpersonal intelligence.
Presence	As part of presence, it is an ability to show up powerfully, without ego, so not needing to do or add value, not needing to be noticed or stand out.
Client-centric	Truly getting out of the way and letting the other person show you what it is they honestly need; it must be completely about the other person, and not the coach

### **5.8.2 Manifestation in the data**

What came from the data was, in having a high level of self-awareness, an expert executive coach has capacity to separate self from his or her identity or ego, and as part of this have well defined boundaries. A high level of self-awareness, the respondents said, enables coaches to be clear about their own range of competence, what they can and cannot do, and to have this allows them to come from a worldview of service, making it about the other, not about themselves.

Intrapersonal intelligence in the coach, the respondents claimed, reflected self-awareness, which allows for self-regulation and self-management. Interpersonal intelligence in the coach enables a high emotional intelligence, which includes empathy and rapport, building trust, and connection. A criterion for expert executive coaching was relationship skills, which embodies self-awareness and social intelligence. According to the respondents, self-awareness is about being able to hold a deep self-focus whilst simultaneously being fully present with the coachee, and to demonstrate skill at monitoring and then moderating one's own thoughts and behaviours.

A perspective of one of the respondents was that the heart of all significant transformation is self-awareness, raising the consciousness of the coach and the coachee. Without self-awareness, no change is possible. The respondents shared that self-awareness is mandatory as a coach as it enables emotional intelligence, a major and crucial criteria for coaching.

### **5.8.3 Comparison with the literature**

Self-awareness is defined by Kondrat (1999) as becoming conscious of one's present realities, being able to name one's perceptions, feelings, and nuances of behaviour, and being aware of one's environment. The self is aware of and can recognise what it is experienced and is recognised as the perceiving subject, the locus for feelings, perceptions, and impressions (Kondrat, 1999).

The most visible qualities in people who are in a position to influence and impact others according to Goleman (2013) build on: a) empathy; b) self-management and c) sensing how what they do affects others. Goleman (2013) argues in pulling together empathy, attention and performance. These form the hidden driver for excellence.

Intrapersonal intelligence is a result of self-awareness, which is the basis for self-management; and empathy is the foundation for relationship effectiveness (Goleman, 2013). Duval and Wicklund (1972) claim human consciousness is bidirectional; it can either be focused on the self, or outside of itself in the external environment. When focused inwards, the self becomes the object of evaluation. Mead (1934), states the self is largely a social-construct where self-focused attention is parallel to social evaluation, which is one of the most important activities in interpersonal relations. Self-awareness theory shows how social control operates within the individual (Geller & Shaver, 1976).

### **5.8.4 Conclusion**

Self-awareness as seen in the data and in the literature is the foundation for many crucial skills in coaching. Self-awareness enables self-regulation and self-management. These are essential for deliberate practice. Without self-awareness, coaches might not have insight into their range of competency or where they can coach and where they should not. Self-awareness theory shows how social control operates within the individual (Geller & Shaver, 1976), so the heart of relationship skills is self-awareness and social intelligence. Goleman (2013) states empathy, self-management and awareness of how ones actions impact others, this plus attention and performance form the hidden driver for excellence. Therefore, the data is consistent with the literature.

## 5.9 Theme 9 – Executive coaches have a developed social intelligence

### 5.9.1 Meaning of the theme

Social intelligence in executive coaching reflects the executive coaches ability to recognise and work with individuals moods, motivations and intentions Gardener (1983, p. 239). Goleman (2006, p. 11) defines social intelligence as “*being intelligent not just about our relationships but also in them*”. The requirements to be a coach are self-awareness, social intelligence, and coaching-specific expertise. This theme explores how expert executive coaches demonstrate high levels of social intelligence and the impact this has on the coach coachee relationship.

**Table 19: Breakdown of code families included in this Theme 9**

Category	Description
Self-awareness	Self-awareness is about being able to hold a deep self-focus, and to demonstrate skill at monitoring and then moderating one’s own thoughts and behaviours
Relationship skills	Relationship skills embody intra- and interpersonal intelligence.
Presence	As part of presence, it is an ability to show up powerfully, without ego; thus, not needing to do or add value, not needing to be noticed or stand out
Client-centric	Truly getting out of the way and letting the other person show the coach what it is they honestly need; it must be completely about the other person, and not the coach

### 5.9.2 Manifestations in the data

Respondents claimed, given the nature of the coaching relationship, a high level of social intelligence (interpersonal ability) is mandatory. Social intelligence, the respondents claimed, gives one a natural ability to create rapport, and to show empathy. For this the coach needed to have a high level of awareness of human dynamics, how people function optimally, and what is dysfunctional behaviour in a business context. Furthermore, given that coaching is about learning and change, an expert executive coach will be well versed in the dynamics of learning and change.

As per the findings from this research, a coach needs to have relationship skills. Coaching in itself is a relationship process. It will not be effective without the right relationship rapport between the coach and the coachee and it works on the foundation of trust and respect and the ability to connect. In building trust and connection, people need to feel as a coach you are being real or genuine.

### **5.9.3 Comparison with the literature**

In many of the definitions of executive coaching, reference to the one-on-one nature of the relationship occurs. It is frequently associated with enhancing professional skills, interpersonal awareness, and personal effectiveness. For this, an executive coach requires a high degree of social intelligence. (Gardener, 1983; "GlaxoSmithKline: About us," 2015) defined social intelligence (labelled *interpersonal intelligence*) as "*the ability to notice and make distinctions among other individuals and, in particular, among their moods, temperaments, motivations, and intentions.*" Goleman (2006) defined social intelligence as "*being intelligent not just about our relationships but also in them.*"

Interpersonal intelligence, according to Lee (2003), is demonstrated by a coach's capacity to: a) suspend judgement about a person's feelings, thoughts and behaviours; b) to evoke and build an account of a person's history and its emotional meanings; c) to understand the conscious and unconscious motivation of others and its effect on their thoughts and behaviour; d) to identify patterns of relating from the past that are being re-enacted in the present; and e) to make links between different domains of a person's experience (Lee, 2003).

Albrecht (2006) defined social intelligence as "*the ability to get along well with others and to get them to cooperate with you*". According to Elias (1997), social skills enable individuals to succeed not only in their social lives, but also in their academic, personal, and future professional activities.

### **5.9.4 Conclusion**

To summarise, one's level of self-awareness determines one's ability to manage oneself, and in having better self-management abilities, one is naturally able to influence others more.

Therefore, self-awareness, self-management, empathy, and emotional intelligence are at the heart of having high social intelligence. Therefore, the data is consistent with the literature.

## **5.10 Conclusion to discussion of research chapter and findings**

A summary of the comparison of the literature and the data is as follows:

Theme 1 shows alignment between the data and the literature around the meaning of authenticity and trust and the important role these play in a successful coaching intervention. Without this it creates a breakdown in safety in the coach-coachee relationship which might cause the sessions to remain at a superficial level and prevent the sessions from ever gaining a level of depth where real shifts can occur.

In Theme 2 the data was consistent with certain aspects of the literature. De Vos and Strydom (1998) assert that a coaching programme's success relies in part on coaches' professionalism and ethical standards. While coaching bodies like the ICF are actively pursuing their intension to increase professionalism and credibility in the coaching industry, interviews with respondents provided another side to this. There is still room for organisations to reassess their processes for bringing executive coaches into their organisations such that the executive coaches that are right for the job get the work, and coachees understand and buy-in to the process. This will enable coachees to gain the full value available to them from executive coaching, and organisations can in turn capitalise on their investment. This theme also shows a lack of clarity on the specific role requirements executive coaches need to fulfil to be seen as an expert executive coach.

Theme 3 explores the link between self-efficacy, presence and credibility. The degree to which coaches have confidence and belief in their ability, they exude presence, which communicates credibility. Baron and Henry (2010) claim that to be an expert requires one to have the capacity to engage in deliberate practice. Self-efficacy beliefs provide individuals with a means to motivate their learning through self-regulatory processes like goal setting, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation. The level of experience and practice a coach has determines their self-efficacy and gives rise to confidence and boldness in the coach, recognised as presence which in turn builds credibility.

Theme 4 explored the link between passion and deliberate practice and found that there does seem to be a link between the two. Passion drives self-regulation, and deliberate practice requires motivation, which comes from the need for achievement and a love for what one does. Some of the executive coaches claimed they saw coaching more as a vocation than a career, some claiming they would coach irrespective of whether they were getting paid. Vallerand, Salvy, et al. (2003) found passion made a major contribution to the capacity for deliberate practice.

Theme 5 reflected consensus that executive coaches need to have a coaching qualification and be accredited or affiliated with a coaching body and thereby adhering to ethics and codes of conduct. Arguments were an executive coach could have a Master's Degree in Coaching and not be considered an expert coach. In other instances executive coaches with no qualifications but rather extensive experience were considered expert coaches. There is no consensus in the data and the literature about the specific expertise required. The outcome here shows perhaps what is required is context or situation specific expertise.

Theme 6 explored the relationship between the executive coach's ability and producing the desired results. The literature and the views of respondents show coaching is considered to be about results. This theme really questions the kind of results produced. There were several respondents who claimed they did not get the results, they would not pay for the coaching had the company not paid, and they did not experience value from the process. On one hand, the executive coach is not responsible for 'causing' the results. The coachee needs to take full responsibility for the outcomes they achieve, and yet, still some coachees are able to walk away with powerful results that create sustainable change, whilst others do not. This theme reflects a link between the executive coach's level of experience and degree to which they have done their own personal development work and the results the coachee receives. Experienced executive coaches have capacity and maturity to ask the right questions and work with coachees ingrained patterns of behaviour which ultimately create long term sustainable transformation. For the executive coach to achieve this, they need to have done their own work. Key in this theme is the level of personal development work the executive coach has done on their own ingrained patterns and beliefs.

Theme 7 explores the impact of mindfulness in the coaching session. Passmore and Marianetti (2007) claim that a state of mind that is present and non-judgmental allows one to see the world as it actually is. This perspective changes the way the coachee relates to the

challenge and increases their belief in their resources, which opens up a path to growth and development. Mindfulness directly sways one's ability to evaluate the events and to see them for what they are, which in turn allows one to gain a more objective view of the events and maintain higher control of one's response.

Theme 8 looks into self-awareness (also referred to as intrapersonal intelligence) and how it enables self-regulation and self-management. A criterion for expert executive coaching was relationship skills, which embodies self-awareness and social intelligence. A perspective of one of the respondents was that the heart of all significant transformation is self-awareness, raising the consciousness of the coach and the coachee. Without self-awareness, no change is possible. Respondents said that self-awareness is mandatory as an executive coach as it enables emotional intelligence, a major and crucial criteria for coaching. Intrapersonal intelligence is a result of self-awareness, which is the basis for self-management; and empathy is the foundation for relationship effectiveness (Goleman, 2013).

Theme 9 considers the executive coaches social intelligence. Given the nature of the coaching relationship, a high level of social intelligence (interpersonal ability) is mandatory. A coach needs to have relationship skills. Coaching will not be effective without the right relationship rapport between the coach and the coachee and it works on the foundation of trust and respect and the ability to connect. Social intelligence gives the executive coach a natural ability to create rapport, and to show empathy. Executive coaches need to have a high level of awareness of human dynamics, how people function optimally, and what is dysfunctional behaviour in a business context.

Chapter 6 answers the research questions as a response from the research and the literature review. It also recommends areas for future research.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The purpose of this research was to explore expert performance in business and executive coaching and to establish how expert performance in this context might be recognised. There appears to be a discrepancy between the theory and what is occurring practically. The findings show that, while executive coaching in South Africa seems to be widely recognised and implemented in organisations, the selection criteria and means through which it is brought to executives leaves considerable room for improvement, if the potential of coaching is to be fully realised.

### 6.1 Research Questions

Included here is a list of the research questions used to guide this study. The primary research question was: “What is expert performance in business and executive coaching?” This was further broken down into secondary research questions, the answers of which formed the basis for this research.

- What is expert performance?
- How is expert performance recognised?
- How are people in the industry recognising expert performance in business and executive coaches in South Africa today?

### 6.2 Conclusions to Research question 1

What is Expert Performance?

Anders Ericsson has written extensively on expert performance across a variety of fields to validate what specifically it is that leads to excellent expert performance in any field. Ericsson and Charness (1994) state that expert performance is demonstrated by consistent superior performance on a specified set of tasks for the domain that can be administered to any subject. Their findings are that a crucial ingredient that directly contributes to expert performance is what they call *deliberate practice*.



According to Ericsson et al. (2006); and Colvin (2008) deliberate practice involves the following key features: high levels of focus and concentration, being able to identify weaknesses and applying strenuous efforts to improve these, and ten years of continued, vigorous effort (Ericsson, 2006). Deliberate practice must continue and be repeated many times, with continuous feedback on results. Pre-performance preparation is essential, setting appropriate goals, ones that are specific and relate to the skills being practiced and acquired. Self-observation and self-reflection and lastly assessment on performance after practice sessions are completed. Thus, those who embody expert performance consistently perform better and operate in a continuous cycle of deliberate practice.

Anderson, 1982; Newell & Rosenbloom, (1981) claim an individual's performance improves insignificantly relative to the amount of practice and that with a lack of adequate feedback, efficient learning is impossible and improvement only negligible even for highly motivated individuals. Sheer repetition of an activity will not inevitably lead to improvement in, specifically, accuracy of performance (Trowbridge & Cason, 1932).

Ericsson (2007) also confirms that the benefits do not come from mechanical repetition but by adjusting one's execution over and over to get closer to the goal. He confirms that one needs to continuously increase the complexity of the area of development which allows errors to arise, and in turn enabling one to increase their limits.

In executive coaching, respondents claimed expert performance was demonstrated by those who had been in the industry for ten years or more and therefore had a vast amount of experience. Experience was noted as one of the most important criteria for choosing an executive coach. In the coaching industry, there are ways to stay in consistent deliberate practice by means of supervision, mentoring sessions and continuous coach-specific training. Many of the executives known for expert performance were themselves supervisors and mentors to other executive coaches, or trained at a business school.

In comparing the literature and the findings from the research, executive coaches in SA are not practicing deliberate practice. The theory links expert performance to deliberate practice which in a coaching context would entail continuous and consistent professional and personal development and regular supervision by a professional supervision coach. In the responses from the respondents they believed expert performance was more to do with the amount of experience and the executive coaches' level of qualifications. The amount of

coaching experience of the executive coach was seen as one of the most important determinants of expert performance in executive coaching. As mentioned above, sheer repetition of a task is not grounds for expert performance, it requires deliberate practice to have the desired effects.

It was also shared by a number of respondents that coaches (as a generalisation), avoid supervision, and are less inclined to invest in their own coach as a means of staying in a developmental context.

From the data it appears that qualities required for deliberate practice were either not made conscious in the interview, or there is a lack of awareness of the construct expert performance and therefore the motivation to pursue it in the way it is defined is not there. This is an opportunity for further research

### **6.2.1 Conclusions to Research question 2**

What are the recognisable qualities of expert performance?

Baron and Henry (2010) claim that to be an expert requires one to have the capacity to engage in deliberate practice, which requires involvement in intense, prolonged, and highly focused efforts to improve performance and for this, key factors that drive a person's ability are required. These factors include achievement motivation, self-efficacy and self-regulatory mechanisms like self-control and conscientiousness which all play a vital role in the achievement of expert performance (Ericsson et al., 1993); (Ericsson, 2006); (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997); (Winne, 1997); (Baumeister et al., 2007); (Yates & Tschirhart, 2006); (Mount & Barrick, 1995).

A key attribute of high-achieving individuals is the quality of grit. Duckworth et al. (2007) claim that grit is the best predictor of success. In Ericsson's 1993 work, he claims what was previously seen as innate talent is now recognised as intense practice on the desired outcome for a minimum of ten years.

Passion is another key attribute that makes a major contribution to such persistent involvement (Vallerand, Salvy, et al., 2003). It is passion for an activity that leads individuals to dedicate themselves fully to their activity, enabling them to persist, in the face of obstacles, and to eventually reach excellence.

Focus is also an essential precondition for practice. Practice without attentiveness and focus is even harmful or disadvantageous to improvement of performance (Auer, 1980).

Expert performance is therefore recognised by individuals that display achievement motivation, belief in their ability to cause results (self-efficacy), and strong self-regulation, which enables individuals to be organised, persistent, capable of hard work, and motivated to pursue goal accomplishment. Expert performers are passionate and demonstrate grit, maintaining focus and commitment in the face of obstacles or adversity.

In executive coaching, the recognisable qualities for expert performance were self-awareness, achievement motivation, self-efficacy, self-regulation, grit, passion and focus. Behaviourally this manifests as engagement (an ability to have deeper conversations) and flexibility in the executive coaches coaching approach and range. In demonstrating this ability Dagley (2010) claimed exceptional executive coaches symbolize credibility, empathy, respect and have excellent diagnostic skill and insight.

Respondents claimed executive coaches show expert performance by demonstrating powerful relationship skills like emotional intelligence, ability to build rapport, showing empathy and an ability to communicate powerfully. To reach expert performance respondents felt executive coaches needed to be self-aware and to be continuously developing themselves. They believed it was important for the coach to be a walking example of the values they espouse, which they linked to authenticity. Respondents stated executive coaches were expert when they were able to create significant and sustainable change in the coachee in a relatively short time frame.

The theory reflected more strongly the requirements to fulfil deliberate practice. There was no reference to the coaches' self-control or self-regulatory mechanisms in the data. Respondents did not refer to qualities like grit, focus or conscientiousness in the coach. Both the literature and the data showed passion was an important criteria in the coach. More research needs to be done to ascertain what is happening practically.

### **6.2.2 Conclusions to Research question 3**

How is expert performance recognised in business and executive coaches?

Nine themes emerged in the current study that reflected what respondents recognise as expert performance in business and executive coaching. In no order of priority they are:

#### **1. Theme 1 - The perception of authenticity and the consequence of trust**

Expert executive coaches, according to respondents, are seen to be authentic and able to build trust. They do this by being a living example of the qualities and beliefs they espouse, giving people around them the sense that they are genuine and real. Expert executive coaches act with integrity and in alignment with their true self by verbalising what they genuinely think and believe. This combination generates trust and safety that allows the coachee to open up and be honest with the coach about their thoughts and feelings.

#### **2. Theme 2 – Expert executive coaches have clearly defined roles and identities**

Expert executive coaches, according to the respondents, seek to embody professionalism. One way of demonstrating this is by membership of a professional coaching body like the ICF and by getting accredited on a professional level (for example, PCC) as an individual coach. They hold a coaching qualification and have the relevant coaching experience to perform on a professional level. They have either business or psychological acumen, by qualification or experience (Stober & Grant, 2006). This theme reflects a lack of clarity or consensus on the specific role requirements executive coaches need to fulfil to be seen as an expert executive coach. This is an area for future research.

From the findings the lack of clarity or consensus in this area of executive coaching may well be contributing to the less than desirable effects described briefly in the findings chapter where some executives had a very poor experience of executive coaching and would not pay for the coaching if the company was not paying for it. Consensus here would help enable organisations to choose the right executive coaches who can fulfil the role.

### **3. Theme 3 - Self efficacy communicates presence which communicates credibility**

Expert executive coaches, according to the respondents, have a level of knowledge and experience which gives them maturity enabling a more complex way of thinking. Coaches with extensive experience are self-assured and confident, reflecting high self-efficacy. This contributes to coaches' presence and their ability to create results. Executive coaches who are experienced and are in constant professional development are seen to project presence and build credibility.

### **4. Theme 4 - The relationship between passion and deliberate practice**

Expert executive coaches, according to the respondents, have passion, a strong motivation towards what they do that they love and see as important and where they invest time and energy (Vallerand, Salvy, et al., 2003). Expert executive coaches are drawn to coaching for reasons more so than just a career; they identify it as a calling or vocation. This gives them the motivation necessary for self-regulation and control, which is a precursor for deliberate practice. In this sense, there appears to be a link between deliberate practice and a passion for what someone does.

### **5. Theme 5 – Expert executive coaches use context and situation specific expertise**

Expert executive coaches, according to the respondents, have context-specific expertise. Typically, they hold a coaching qualification and are registered with one of the professional coaching bodies, and are accredited on a professional level. Their level of experience and previous qualifications determine where they operate. Many have had prior business experience and the relevant qualification to match. These executive coaches tend to focus more on the performance side of coaching. Executive coaches trained in psychology and who have prior experience in the psychology field tend to focus more on the learning and development aspect to coaching. Both are relevant to organisations. There is currently no consensus on the qualifications required to meet expert executive coaching standards. What might be most relevant is to have situational or context-specific expertise. This theme reflects a

lack of clarity or consensus on the specific qualification requirements executive coaches need to fulfil to be seen as an expert executive coach. This is an area for future research.

The lack of clarity or consensus is potentially having a damaging effect on the reputation and credibility of the executive coaching industry. Consensus here would help prevent organisations from employing executive coaches who do not meet the requirements to coach at an executive level.

**6. Theme 6 – Expert executive coaches have an ability to perform and produce outcomes envisaged.**

Expert executive coaches, according to the respondents, have extensive experience in the executive coaching field and are most able to affect sustainable change by unlocking potential and accessing levels of depth in the coaching process. These executive coaches had a greater capacity to challenge coachees. They are clearer on where they can coach and where they cannot. Having extensive experience enables executive coaches to stay in the present moment and to be uncertain about a coaching session's endpoint. This is the ideal reference point for a coach to come from as it supports a non- directional approach or the executive coaches' agenda from entering the session. Executive coaches with extensive experience are also less inclined to follow a specific methodology. These are the executive coaches who have been in the industry for ten years or more who do not need to market themselves. They get regular referrals and return-coachees.

**7. Theme 7 – Expert executive coaches employ mindfulness in the coaching process**

Expert executive coaches, according to respondents, are mindful and endeavour to practice mindfulness in their sessions. This brings with it a heightened sensitivity to their environment, more openness to new information, the creation of new categories for structuring perception and enhanced awareness of multiple perspectives in problem solving. Executive coaches with mindfulness are self-aware, have presence, enabling them to go to depths that might not have been possible without this. These

executive coaches demonstrate that they can monitor and moderate their own thoughts and behaviours both in themselves in their own right and also whilst in a coaching session with the coachee. Mindfulness plus the required level of expertise and experience shows up in executive coaches as maturity, humility, and confidence and the ability to be fully in the moment with the coachee, enabling them to respond as authentically as possible to the coachee's needs.

#### **8. Theme 8 – Expert executive coaches demonstrate self-awareness**

Expert executive coaches, according to respondents, engage in continuous personal and professional development and are therefore self-aware. Self-awareness gives them the ability to recognise projection and transference and to take responsibility for them. Executive coaches who are self-aware have clarity about their own range of competencies, enabling them to accept opportunities for impact where they know they can bring about the desired result. Expert executive coaches have a high level of self-regulation, self-management, and self-control, which are crucial for performing deliberate practice. These executive coaches are conscious of their present realities, can name their perceptions, feelings, and recognise nuances of behaviour.

#### **9. Theme 9 - Expert executive coaches have a developed social intelligence**

Expert executive coaches, according to respondents, have social intelligence. They can notice and make distinctions among other individuals and among their own moods, temperaments, motivations, and intentions (Gardener, 1983). As said by (Goleman, 2006), these executive coaches are intelligent not just about their relationships but also in them.

Expert executive coaches have a high level of self-awareness so they can manage themselves and with this ability they can influence others. At the heart of social intelligence lies self-awareness, self-management, empathy, and emotional intelligence, qualities which expert executive coaches display consistently.

### **6.3 Summary to research questions**

In conclusion, this research showed expert performance in executive coaching was demonstrated by executive coaches who had been in the industry for ten years or more and had vast experience. They had been directly or indirectly applying deliberate practice in the form of continuous professional and personal development, involving supervision, mentoring, and additional coach-specific training. On a personal level they had continued to develop self-awareness by attending consciousness development seminars or retreats or by engaging in their own coaching process with a professional coach.

Key qualities displayed by executive coaches demonstrating expert performance included high self-awareness, social intelligence, achievement motivation, self-efficacy, grit, passion, and focus. They are seen to conduct themselves professionally by associating with various coaching bodies, which aligned them to ethical codes of conduct. They are also qualified, holding a professional coaching qualification, and have either business or psychological acumen and context-specific expertise.

Executive coaches demonstrating expert performance are seen as authentic by being a living example of the qualities and beliefs they espouse and as a consequence have a natural ability to build trust and safety which enables the coachees to open up and to share with honesty.

### **6.4 Recommendations for future research**

To test these findings a quantitative study on the incidence of expert performance in executive coaches needs to be done. This might increase the validity of this study or provide grounds for future research.

This study involved 6 organisational representatives, 6 executives and 6 executive coaches. Recommendations for future research are to increase the population size, which would increase reliability and validity. This study was done with respondents primarily based in Johannesburg. Other provinces in South Africa need to be explored. It would be of value to repeat this study with other cultures and in other countries across the globe.



The focus of this study was executive coaching, a broader study could include other styles of coaching. For example, business coaching, group coaching, and management coaching.

There is a lack of clarity or consensus on the specific role requirements executive coaches need to fulfil to be seen as an expert executive coach. The same is true for the specific qualification requirements executive coaches need to fulfil to be seen as an expert executive coach. These are key areas for future research.

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# APPENDIX A

## Appendix A – Research Instrument

Overview of project: Interview protocol for exploring expert performance in executive coaches interview

- Introduce self
- Describe project and goals
- Describe eventual outcome: a report that provides answers or clarity to how South African executives and HR see expert performance in executive coaches, and what differentiates them from the colleagues who do not perform at the same consistent superior performance.
- Describe eventual benefits: improved understanding of what constitutes expert performance in executive coaching, how South African executives recognise this, and the possibility to increase coach training requirements to meet the current demands of the society today.

Explain consent form and have them sign

Interviews will be audio or video taped. Interviews will be semi structured around a questionnaire. The questions listed below are representative of the ones the researcher will ask, and it is expected that other questions will emerge during the course of the interviews.

### Pre-Observation Interview Questions

- What is your job history? Could you tell us about the sorts of jobs you have held beyond this one?
- What is your academic background? Could you tell us a bit about your educational experience?
- How would you describe your current job? What are your most important duties or activities?
- What team or teams do you work in? Can you describe your current role?

- Have you received any training in coaching or leadership development?
- How has executive coaching changed in your organization?
- Have you personally had executive coaching? What was your experience?
- What in executive coaches do you deem to reflect expert performance?
- In your experience what has had the highest impact on achieving the agreed upon coaching outcomes and why?
- What would you say distinguishes expert coaches defined as having consistent superior performance from their coaching colleagues?
- What, in your opinion, can expert coaches do that less effective coaches cannot do?
- Do you feel the executive coach's approach adequately meets the current business challenges of today?
- Do you believe the executive coach has enough business knowledge and psychological theory to address psychological pathologies and business demands?
- If you have had experience where the executive goes into both coaching psychology and goal orientated coaching:
- Which one did you feel had the biggest impact?
- How did each method leave you end of the session?
- Which one did you prefer?
- Do you feel coaching psychology has a place in the business world – and if yes, why?

### **HR Interview Questions**

- How do people in your organization respond to the idea of executive coaching?
- What current problems do you see with executive coaching in your organization?
- What are your plans for addressing them?

- What problems does executive coaching currently address in your organisation?
- Do you receive feedback or get assessments about the impact of each executive coach you have once their cycle is complete? If yes, what in your opinion makes certain executive coaches stand out miles ahead of their coaching colleagues?
- What do you feel are the requirements to be an expert coach?
- How has executive coaching impacted your organization over the last few years?
- How do you expect it to change in the near term?
- Do you feel executive coaching and the current executive coaches adequately meet the demands your organization faces at present?

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Appendix B - Example of Email to individual Executive Coaches**

Dear Executive Coach,

My name is Savannah Steinberg and I am a student at Wits Business School, studying for a Masters in Management of Business and Executive Coaching (MMBEC). My research topic is, to explore expert performance in executive coaches. The aim is to explore what differentiates executive coaches who show consistent superior performance from their colleagues, and if they adequately meet the current challenges of the business world today

Your organisation has expressed an interest in participating in the study and I would like to invite you to take part from an executive coach perspective.

The research will use a number of techniques; interviews, diaries and observations. The timescale of the study is over approximately 8 months, therefore the time commitment will be minimal when divided over this timeframe (further details below). I can also guarantee full anonymity for all participants that take part in the research.

#### ***Parties involved***

- Researcher Savannah Steinberg
- Research participant Executive
- Research participant HR / head of coaching and training

#### ***Your time commitment***

- An initial interview (approximately 1.5 - 2 hours).
- Review transcript (approximately 1 hour).
- A follow up interview will take place approximately 4 months from your initial interview (approximately 1.5 – 2 hours).

- Review transcript (approximately 1 hour).
- Complete a diary recording key or significant thoughts and feelings between the initial interview and the follow up interview (approximately 5-15 hours).
- Any other meetings deemed necessary upon negotiation with your employee.

***Where will the research take place?***

- The interviews will take place at a location of your choice.

If you would like to participate please send an expression of interest via email to [savannah@savannahsteinberg.com](mailto:savannah@savannahsteinberg.com)

I have attached an Individual Informed Consent Form to provide you with further details, however, should you have any further queries relating to the research please do not hesitate to contact me on  
082 879 3046

Thank you for time and considering my request.

Kind regards

*Savannah Steinberg*

Savannah Steinberg

Wits Business School  
2 St David's Place, Parktown,  
Johannesburg, 2193,  
South Africa

PO Box 98, WITS, 2050

## **APPENDIX C - Research Organisation Informed Consent Form**

The researcher will supply an explanation to inform the organisation of the purpose of the study, who is carrying out the study, and who will eventually have access to the results. In particular issues of anonymity and avenues of dissemination and publications of the findings will be brought to the organisations' attention.

Anonymity will be offered to the organisation if it does not wish to be identified in the research report. Confidentiality is more complex and cannot extend to the markers of student work or the reviewers of staff work, but can apply to the published outcomes. If confidentiality is required, the researcher will clarify which form applies.

No confidentiality required

Masking of organisation name in research report

No publication of the research report

This form might be signed via email if the accompanying email is attached with the signer's personal email address included. If email is not an option will rather be handled via post.

*The Graduate School of Business Administration*

2 St David's Place, Parktown,

Johannesburg, 2193,

South Africa

PO Box 98, WITS, 2050



**WBS** Wits  
Business  
School  
*Sculpting global leaders*

## **MMBEC RESEARCH CONSENT FORM**

### **Exploring expert performance in business and executive coaches**

#### INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM

##### **Who I am**

Hello, I am Savannah Steinberg. I am conducting research for the purpose of completing my Masters of Management in Business and Executive Coaching at Wits Business School

##### **What I am doing**

I am conducting research on expert performance in business and executive coaches. I am conducting a qualitative study with executive coaches, executives and HR executives to establish *what each deem expert executive coaches are and what they believe contributes to this*.

##### **Your participation**

I am asking you whether you will allow me to conduct one interview with you. If you agree, I will ask you to participate in one interview for approximately one hour. I am also asking you to give us permission to tape record the interview. I tape record interviews so that I can accurately record what is said.

Please understand that **your participation is voluntary** and you are not being forced to take part in this study. The choice of whether to participate or not, is yours alone. If you choose not take part, you will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If you agree to participate, you might stop participating in the research at any time and tell

me that you don't want to go continue. If you do this there will also be no penalties and you will NOT be prejudiced in ANY way.

### **Confidentiality**

Any study records that identify you will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records from your participation might be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including my academic supervisor/s. (All of these people are required to keep your identity confidential.)

All study records will be destroyed after the completion and marking of my thesis. I will refer to you by a code number or pseudonym (another name) in the thesis and any further publication.

### **Risks/discomforts**

At the present time, I do not see any risks in your participation. The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life.

### **Benefits**

There are no immediate benefits to you from participating in this study. However, this study will be extremely helpful to us in understanding expert performance in executive coaching.

If you would like to receive feedback on the study, I can send you the results of the study when it is completed sometime after November 2014.

### **Who to contact if you have been harmed or have any concerns**

This research has been approved by the Wits Business School. If you have any complaints about ethical aspects of the research or feel that you have been harmed in any way by participating in this study, please contact the Research Office Manager at the Wits Business School, Mmabatho Leeuw. [Mmabatho.leeuw@wits.ac.za](mailto:Mmabatho.leeuw@wits.ac.za)

If you have concerns or questions about the research you might call my academic research supervisor Kerrin Myres on +27 83 263-4175



**CONSENT**

I hereby agree to participate in research on exploring expert performance in executive coaching. I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop participating at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively.

I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally in the immediate or short term.

I understand that my participation will remain confidential.

.....

**Signature of participant**

**Date:**.....

I hereby agree to the tape-recording of my participation in the study.

.....

**Signature of participant**

**Date:**.....