Coachable Moments: Identifying Factors that Influence Managers to take Advantage of Coachable Moments in Day-to-Day Management

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that influence managers to take advantage of coachable moments in day-to-day management. Interviews with ten managers found that time, skills, and relationships were key factors considered by managers, but that these were considered within the context of potential "risk" to the manager. This paper elaborates on these findings and makes recommendations for further research into how managers consciously assess the risks associated with coaching, in order to decide whether to take advantage of an informal coaching opportunity.

Key Words: coachable moments, internal coach, risk, coaching skills, managerial coaching

Introduction

Line managers are increasingly responsible for coaching (Anderson, Rayner & Schyns, 2009) and coaching by line managers is rated the second most effective learning and development practice and nearly three times as effective as coaching by external practitioners (CIPD, 2012). Managers can coach in structured, prearranged formal sessions or can coach in day to day management activity such as "a chance meeting in the hallway, a telephone session or a coaching interaction that comes about unexpectedly during a casual lunch!" (Macmillan, 2011, p.5). This type of just-in-time feedback (Lindbom, 2007) has been referred to as "coaching moments" (Lennard, 2010) or "coachable moments" (Kaye, 1993; Hart, 2005; Mobley, 2001), the latter term appearing to be similar to the term "teachable moment" which is often used in the education and health disciplines to refer to "an opportunity or a particularly useful time to facilitate some sort of change" (Lawson & Flocke, 2009, p26).

However, despite the recognition that informal coaching is a valuable and effective learning and development practice, generally managers engage infrequently in coaching and often fail to demonstrate the skills associated with coaching (Gilley, Gilley & Kouider, 2010). Unless managers are very experienced coaches, informal coaching conversations or "corridor coaching" does not happen (Green & Grant, 2003). Accordingly, identifying the factors which affect managerial coaching implementation is an area that needs significantly more research (Hagen, 2012). By understanding the barriers and enablers to managers coaching informally, organisations can develop interventions to overcome these barriers.

Much of the peer-reviewed literature relating to internal coaching examines the development of coaching cultures in organisations through the appointment and training of internal managers to conduct formal, structured coaching sessions with employees. There is also reference in peer reviewed

literature to informal coaching, also referred to as coaching on the fly (Johnson, 2011), anytime coaching (Klosters & Swires, 2010), and corridor coaching (Grant, 2010; Green & Grant, 2003). However, the identification and consideration of the factors which need to be present for this type of coaching (coachable moments) to occur is largely confined to anecdotal practitioner literature. There is little evidence of coachable moments being the subject of empirical research in workplace coaching. This study aims to address this area through a qualitative study of ten managers.

The justification for this research lies in the benefits of managerial coaching identified by previous research, such as learning, self-awareness, cost savings and enhanced commitment to the organisation (Ellinger 2003; Ellinger, Beattie & Hamlin, 2010).   Furthermore, using internal coaches within an organisation may cost as little as 10% of the cost of using external coaches but internal coaches can provide the same results as external coaches (Rock & Donde, 2008). Fifty one percent of respondents to the 2012 CIPD Learning and Talent Development Survey said that the most effective learning and talent development practices are coaching by line managers. However, there is little research evidence as to whether managers use that knowledge or indeed their experience when they have a critical choice in day to day management when coachable moments arise.

This study was designed to answer the question: What are the factors that influence managers to take advantage of coachable moments in day-to-day management? The research identified a range of organisational, skill, resource, or cultural barriers that may inhibit or motivate managers to take advantage of coachable moments. This article is structured in three main parts. The first part outlines the relevant literature and particularly focuses on the use and definition of the term 'coachable moment' and how it relates the creation of a coaching culture. The second part outlines the six broad themes that emerged from the interviews with coaching managers. The third section separately discusses the six interview themes so that a distinction can be seen between the themes that were broadly consistent with previous research, and the emerging theme of risk as a potential barrier.

Literature

There are many different terms and references in the literature to describe these unstructured coaching conversations that occur sporadically or on an ad-hoc basis as the need arises. The characteristics attributed to these types of coaching conversations are outlined in Table 1.

In summary, the features that are common to all the definitions in Table 1, regardless of the terminology, are that they are short, informal, unexpected, unscheduled, and focused and targeted on an immediate or just occurring incident or issue. Such conversations are key to managerial coaching and to the development of a coaching culture.

A coaching culture is where "coaching is the predominant style of managing and working together" (Clutterbuck & Megginson, 2005, p.19), and it is a critical factor in ensuring the long-term success of an organisation (Lindbom, 2007). In the 2006 CIPD annual learning and development survey, 80% of organisations surveyed stated that they aspired to develop a coaching culture. A coaching culture can be characterised by coaching being "woven into the fabric of the business" (Eglin, 2006 in Connor & Pokora, 2012), has underlying principles of responsibility, self-belief and of being blame free (Wilson, 2007), and of being "embedded in meetings, reviews, one-to-one working relationships and team and workgroup processes" (Clutterbuck & Megginson, 2006).

A coaching culture can be created through coaching delivered by people external to an organisation or by an organisation's employees. In the early days of coaching, coaches to organisations were mostly external (Tyler, 2000) but progressively, "quietly and without fanfare" internal coaches have become popular in organisations (Frisch, 2001, p.241), and coaching has

become one of the most important functions of a manager (Mujtaba, 2007). The majority of business coaching is done internally in organisations although it is not always explicitly labelled coaching; it is just managers using their coaching skills to improve their job (Scoular, 2011). An internal coach is more likely than an external coach to decrease the chance of losing a "derailment risk" employee (Rock & Donde, 2008). Other advantages of internal coaching are that an internal coach is on-the-spot, and can accordingly often observe the behaviours and learnings of the coachee and relay those observations to the coachee in a timely manner (Frisch, 2001).

Author	Terminology	Characteristics
Grant (2010) **Grant and Green (2003)**	**"Corridor coaching"**	• *"impromptu"* • *"on-the-job'* • *"few minutes snatched in the corridor in the midst of a busy project"* • *"on-the-run"*
Bennett (2003)	**"Off-line coaching"**	• *"opportunistic"* • *"short and timely conversations"*
Johnson (2011)	**"Coaching on the fly"** **"On-the-job coaching"** **"Ad-hoc coaching"**	• *"brief unexpected day-to-day conversations"* • *"spontaneous ad-hoc'*
Kloster and Swires (2010)	**"Anytime Coaching"**	• *"short, targeted conversations when they are needed"* • *"open and available to capture a coachable moment"* • *"anytime the situation demands"* • *"quick and Focused"*
Hart (2005)	**"Informal Coaching"**	• *"cultivating collaborative moments"*

Table 1: A comparison and explanation of terms used to describe informal coaching conversations.

Although coaching cultures are desirable, and corridor or informal coaching is integral to creating these cultures, in practice, many managers do not apply their coaching skills in this way, although they may conduct formal coaching with their employees. Without understanding the factors which influence a manager to put into play what they have learnt in coaching training, or conversely what barriers prevent putting skills into play, then it could be argued that investment in coaching training of internal managers is not an effective use of resources. Yet there has been little empirical research as to the specific barriers which cause this infrequency in informal coaching. The literature discusses at a strategic level why coaching cultures may not develop, identifying reasons such as competing business pressures, a lack of expertise, lack of investment, and poor senior management commitment (CIPD, 2006). In addition, organisational commitment, upheaval and politics, whether coaching programs are mandated, and the sponsor-coachee relationship have been identified as reasons why a coaching culture may not develop (Frisch, 2005). However these factors are largely at an organisational level and there is little evidence as to whether these are the same factors which influence individual managers in day to day decisions as to whether to take advantage of a coachable moment.

Whilst there is reference to 'coachable moments' in the popular, practitioner literature, there is little empirical evidence from coaching managers as to when they choose to coach and when they do not. Hunt and Weintraub (2011) explore the area of coachable moments through the 'coaching mindset' of the coaching manager and submit that an 'attitude of helpfulness', being vigilant about employee learning, considering how much interest an employee has in learning, assessing whether the time is right, and having regard to the employee's state of mind, are key factors in motivating a manager to coach. They also argue a barrier to manager coaching could be a perception that they are micro-managing. However, these submissions are anecdotal from their work within organisations and have not been the subject of any empirical study. Trust between the manager as coach and the potential coachee is a common factor identified in the literature as being crucial to the decision to coach (Ladyshewsky, 2010; McCarthy & Ahrens, 2011; Rock & Donde, 2008). The coachee's receptiveness to feedback is also crucial to the outcome (Joo, 2005). Ferrar (2006) concludes that it is likely that the roles of manager and coach are non-compatible, citing fragile psychological contract, management mind-set and two way perception disorder as being impediments to effective managerial coaching, even where a prior relationship between manager and coachee have been excellent.

There is also some limited literature which identifies factors that may cause managers <u>not</u> to coach, such as conflicts of interest (Wilson, 2011; Rock & Donde, 2008), time constraints (Goleman, 2000; Wilson, 2007; CIPD, 2012), a preference for "command and control" (Daniel, 2011), and a lack of skill about how to effectively turn a moment into a coachable moment (de Jong et al, 1999; CIPD, 2012). A previous study found that managers felt comfortable in formal coaching situations for which they could prepare but less comfortable in informal coaching (Baker-Finch, 2011).

There is considerably more research into the link between perceived coaching skills and coaching behaviours with studies by Graham, Wedman, and Garvin-Kester (1994) and Peterson and Hicks (1996) demonstrating a link between being trained in coaching skills and managers being observed to increase their coaching behaviours. However, the barriers and enablers to managers demonstrating coaching behaviours are not explored in any detail by the authors and do not appear to have been identified through case studies examining the views of actual coaching managers. For example, Gilley et al,'s (2010) study of 485 employees was undertaken by interviews with potential and actual coachees about their perceptions of their managers' coaching behaviours, but not with the managers themselves, so we do not have empirical data relating to why the coaching managers choose to leverage a potential coaching moment or not.

McCarthy and Ahrens (2011) suggest that some of the unique issues that a coaching manager (as opposed to an external coach or a formally appointed internal coach) might encounter in the context of coaching subordinates relate to issues of confidentiality, power, and role conflict due to role switching, but there is no evidence in the literature of whether these issues are factors which are considered by the coaching manager when deciding to take advantage of a coachable moment.

Whitmore (2009) suggests that the answer as to when managers should coach is simple, and that it should involve an assessment of whether time, quality or maximising the employee's learning is the most important factor. However, whilst on the surface it appears likely that managers would consider these factors, there is no evidence that these are considered by managers, whether they are the only factors which would be considered, or indeed whether they would be the key or priority factors.

In summary, the literature in the area of coachable moments is limited because it is either not empirically research based (Hunt & Weintraub, 2011), is focused at an organisational rather than individual coaching manager level (CIPD, 2006; Frisch, 2005), is focused solely on barriers rather than enablers (Wilson, 2011; Rock & Donde, 2008; Goleman, 2000; Daniel, 2011; de Jong, Leenders,

&Thijssen, 1999; McCarthy & Ahrens, 2011), or is based on the views of coachees and not the coaching managers (Graham et al, 1994; Gilley et al, 2010).

Methodology

This research aimed to identify the factors that influence managers to take advantage of coachable moments in day-to-day management. As the research required contextual data, a qualitative methodology was selected (Quinlan, 2011, p 106). The methodology involved conducting face-to-face interviews with ten managers from a regional university who were part of a pool of twenty four managers who had attended coaching awareness training within the preceding six months. At the time of the interviews, neither of the authors was employed by, or was studying at, the university in which the research was conducted.

Interviews were semi-structured (Kvale, 1996) and utilised a critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954) because the researcher wanted participants to relate actual experiences. The decision to use face-to-face interviews was largely predicated on the assumption that there may be an immaturity of understanding of some coaching terminology to be used (such as a 'coachable moment') and also because being able to probe answers with participants would allow the researcher to gain richer depth, and more highly contextual data than would be possible with a survey or quantitative method (Hill et al, 1997). The interview schedule was initially piloted with one of the managers from the pool of twenty four managers to test the quality of the questions and to identify suitable probing questions depending on the variation of responses to the initial questions (Quinlan, 2011, p273).

Interviewees who participated in the research responded to an invitation to participate issued by the university's human resources department. A definition of 'a coachable moment' developed from the descriptions of coachable or coaching moments in the literature (Kaye, 1993; Hart, 2005; Mobley, 2001; Lennard, 2010; Schachter, 2008; Hart, 2005) was given to each participant before the interview. The definition provided to participants was:

> *A coachable moment is an informal, usually unplanned or unexpected opportunity for a manager to have a conversation with an employee aimed at facilitating the employee to problem solve or learn from a work experience. It is aimed at helping them to learn rather than instructing, directing or teaching them.*

The majority of interviews were of approximately one hour duration. During the interview, participants were asked to identify specific examples of times they had encountered a coachable moment, and either used it to coach an employee, or made the decision not to coach the employee. They were asked to describe the circumstances relating to the example they provided and to specifically consider the specific factors that influenced their decision to coach or not to coach. A secondary area of questioning was asking participants to identify a time when a coachable moment existed for their own manager to coach them and whether that coaching occurred or not. They were asked to describe the circumstances relating to that opportunity. Responses were recorded by the researcher by hand.

As there is little theory relating to coachable moments, an inductive approach to thematic analysis was utilised (Braun & Clark, 2008), and Flanagan's (1954) three step method for analysing data collected through critical incident technique interviewing was followed. The researcher identified some broad categories as a frame of reference, then refined them into logical themes, and then classified the individual responses into themes. The researcher looked for recurring patterns of meaning, and unexpected words used (such as 'risk') were coded to ascertain the commonality of use among interviewees.

Findings

In considering critical moments when coachable moments occurred or did not occur, participants recounted a diverse range of workplace incidents that related to opportunities to give coachees feedback about constraining or negatively viewed behaviours, issues related to learning about technical aspects of their role, issues of conflict between employees, broad career or personal development, and conflicts of interest that were not recognised as such by the coachee.

Six broad themes emerged from the factors that participants identified as influencing them to take advantage of coachable moments: the consciousness or awareness of the coach to identify a coachable moment, the type of employee that was a prospective coachee, the relationship between the manager and the coachee, the type of situation that was presenting the potential coaching opportunity, the physical environment or location in which the manager and coach found themselves, and the manager's coaching skills. These are discussed in detail below.

Coach's awareness
All participants interviewed reflected that their decision to coach or not coach was a conscious and deliberate process of weighing up a number of factors which are explained in more detail below. Key to their deliberations in weighing these factors was the concept of risk, that is, what might be the consequences to the manager if the employee did not welcome the coaching approach, or if the environment was not right, or if indeed the coach/manager had over-estimated the relationship with the potential coachee and the level of trust that they had between them? A key quote from one participant which illustrates this risk assessment was: "*It's triage – critical decision-making about whether to coach*". Some participants recounted incidents in which the coaching approach was not at all appreciated by the coachee, and they reflected that they had miscalculated the risks associated with their approach despite them deliberately assessing the risks initially. This conscious awareness of a coaching opportunity and the deliberation around the risks associated with taking advantage of the opportunity underpinned many of the responses in the interviews.

Type of employee
Another theme which emerged from the interviews was the perception by participants that not all employees are perceived to be coachable. What constituted 'coachability' varied among participants from whether a coachee might be 'too junior', whether they were aggressive or difficult to relate to, to whether the inherent makeup of the employee was such that they did not want to learn. One participant remarked, "*Some employees just don't want to be coached – they just want direction*". Three participants recounted situations in which the responses by employees they tried to coach was a specific stated response that they did not have time to engage in the questioning process and just wanted the answers and/or directions. Many participants stated that their coachable moments arose from specific approaches by coachees who indicated through the nature of their approach and questions that they wanted feedback and actively encouraged it. This was broadly seen as a situation without risk and welcomed by the coach/manager.

The concept of risk to the coaching manager around coachability was again demonstrated in the comments, "*Some employees are just too high risk – I need to feel safe too*" and "*I coach when there are no risks in it for me*".

Relationship
The relationship between the coach/manager and the potential coachee was a critical issue in managers deciding to take advantage of a coachable moment. Underpinning this was the concept of mutual trust and respect which participants related was crucial – if it was not apparent, then they would not attempt to coach at that moment. In relating incidents in which coachable moments were

actualised, all participants referred to incidents in which they had an established relationship with the coachee. The relationship needed to be one of mutuality of trust and respect, that is, both parties needed to respect and trust the other. Comments illustrating this concept include: *"There must be a trusting relationship"*, *"There must be mutual trust and respect"*, *"Confidentiality and trust are crucial"*, *"They must respect and trust me"*, and *"If there's no rapport it won't work."*

The situation presenting

Time to coach was considered by all participants as being an important factor that was weighed up when deciding to take advantage of coachable moments. Participants submitted that coaching when there were pressures of time such as when a deadline loomed for a tender or the manager had competing priorities was not an optimum time to explore learning opportunities with an employee. Again, most participants reported that they consciously assessed coaching opportunities by considering the time investment against the learning opportunity. Most participants considered that in some circumstances, it was appropriate to take a directive stance rather than capitalising on a learning opportunity. The key factors in that decision were time to coach, the level of difficulty or ambiguity around the learning opportunity, and again, the level of risk both to them as a coach/manager and the risk to the activity being undertaken.

Physical environment or location

The majority of participants volunteered that the physical environment was a key enabler to taking advantage of a coachable moment, with the majority of scenarios that they recounted having taken place outside of the coach/manager's office or formal workspace. Most participants described coaching moments which arose because they happened to be with the coachee in a non-formal situation rather than having deliberately created a moment outside their formal workspace in order to coach. Managers described what they identified at the time as being ideal coachable moments as being in a vehicle travelling from a work function, walking across campus, and having coffee at the campus cafe. The key theme in this was equalising the relationship between the manager and the coachee, and the view that informality gave rise to coachable moments is illustrated by the following participant comments: *"it needs to be an intimate moment"*, and *"the office reminds you of status"*, and *"ambience is important – they don't see you as their boss"*.

Coach's skills

How competent the coach/manager felt about their coaching skills was another factor that participants reported they weighed up when decided whether to take advantage of a coachable moment. Some participants reported that since attending the coaching awareness training in the preceding six months, they felt more competent to coach in difficult situations and that this training had increased their awareness of potential coachable moments. A common factor that was cited by many participants as being a test of their skills was dealing with a 'difficult' employee, that is, one whose interpersonal skills were either abrasive or aggressive. Again the concept of the level of risk in taking advantage of a coaching opportunity appeared to be of high importance to participants and it was consciously assessed against their perception of their coaching capability – *"There are some issues and some people, I just don't feel competent enough to tackle by coaching"*

Discussion

Overall, participants in this study placed more emphasis on identifying positive factors or enablers, rather than factors that inhibited them from coaching. This may have been influenced by the question being posed to them being framed in the positive term of 'taking advantage' but nevertheless, in free form conversation during the interviews, participants freely chose to initially identify enablers in preference to barriers.

The key themes of coachability, relationship and trust, time to coach, and the manager's coaching expertise which arose from this study are factors which needed to be in place for managers to coach and are largely consistent with the findings of previous literature (Whitmore, 2009; McCarthy & Ahrens, 2011; Graham et al, 1994; Peterson & Hicks, 1996).

The notion of the coachability of an employee is characterised as future looking lacking core limiting beliefs (Guttman, 2007) curiosity, self-reflection, and a desire to improve and learn (Hunt & Weintraub, 2011). Participants in this study recounted that employees who not only were receptive to feedback but actively sought it out were considered by them to be extremely coachable and that this influenced their decision to coach. This is consistent with the overall findings of this study which found that a coaching manager is less likely to attempt to coach an employee whom they perceive as reluctant to learn and improve.

Also consistent with previous literature was the notion that the relationship between the coaching manager and the potential coachee is crucial to whether the manager chooses to coach (Scoular, 2011, p6; Rogers, 2008, p54). Trust was a key theme that emerged from participants in this study as being crucial to the decision to coach or not coach.

Although time to coach was identified by participants in this study as being a factor in deciding whether to coach, participants did not place as much emphasis on time to coach as being an enabler or barrier to them as is perhaps emphasised in previous studies such as CIPD (2012). This may be due to two reasons: firstly that the question in interviews focused on coachable moments, that is, short and timely (Bennett, 2003), quick, focused, targeted conversations (Klosters and Swires, 2010), as opposed to longer planned coaching conversations where time is a considerable issue. It may also be due to a level of social desirability bias (Fisher, 1993) in which participants having attended training in coaching have assumed a message from the organisation that informal coaching by line managers is a key aspect of the line manager's role and accordingly issues such as time should not be considered an acceptable barrier to coaching taking place.

The perception of their coaching skills or expertise was also a key factor that influenced the participant managers to coach and this is consistent with the findings of the CIPD (2012) study that found this to be one of the top three reasons cited by managers as being a barrier to coaching. It is interesting that when probed around the perception of a lack of coaching skills, participants in this study largely cited dealing with difficult people as being the key example. This is wholly consistent with the CIPD (2012) study which also linked the two areas. Further, participants in this study also identified difficult employees as lacking coachability.

Another factor identified by managers in this study which was influential on their decision to take advantage of a coachable moment was the physical environment in which the coaching manager and potential coachee founds themselves. Participants found that more informal environments were more conducive to conducting a coaching conversation. Whilst there is significant literature around feedback seeking environments (Whitaker, 2001; Bogle, 2010) there is little literature around examining physical environments for coaching conversations. This is an area for further research.

The most interesting and original theme that emerged from this study was the concept of managers assessing 'risk' when considering whether or not to coach. This assessment was relayed to the researcher by the participants as conscious and deliberate when considering the coachable moment, although this may have been because participants were asked to identify a specific potential coaching moment and analyse it for triggering factors. Thus what was recounted was seen by participants as a conscious assessment in retrospect but at the time may not have been a conscious assessment. Nevertheless, the concept of seeing risk as a potential barrier was an interesting theme that had not

been anticipated by the researcher and the interviews provided an opportunity to explore what coaching managers saw as 'risk'. Risk from the perspective of the interviewees, related to the risk of an adverse reaction by the potential coachee, perhaps resenting the feedback, and therefore the potential for open conflict between them that might have consequences for the long term relationship. One manager recounted they would assess risk and proceed with coaching "*when there are no risks in it for me*".   The risks for an external coach if a coaching intervention does not succeed are primarily financial and reputational, with the potential loss of further contracts with the sponsoring organisation. The risk to a coaching manager is having to manage a disgruntled employee on an on-going basis if the employee reacts negatively to the manager's attempt to coach.

The concept of psychological risk in coaching has been explored in the literature but largely from the perspective of teams and learning, and also the impact on the person initiating or requesting feedback rather than the coaching manager (van der Rijt, 2012). Van de Rijt's (2012) study highlighted the importance of psychologically safe work environments for the giving and the receiving of feedback, but did not focus on identifying the nature of the risks for the coaching manager.

Conclusions and implications for practice

The stated purpose of this research was to identify the factors that influence coaching managers to take advantage of a coachable moment. The themes explored in the literature review of this paper that were confirmed by this research related to time, skills and relationships (trust). The research confirmed that these were critical enablers to managers in deciding whether or not to coach. We also conclude that taking advantage of a coachable moment is largely situational and whether they are conscious of it or not, managers assess whether a number of factors are in place before they coach. When assessing these factors, managers also have regard to the risk to them in having the coaching conversation.

The findings can be utilised in designing future training programs, equipping managers to take advantage of coachable moments, not only for formal coaching sessions, but also for the times when a coachable moment occurs. If, when managers recognise a coachable moment, they are already familiar with some of the perceived risks in having an informal coaching conversation, then these risks may be able to be somewhat mitigated. Designing training content around the awareness of a coachable moment, as well as rehearsing coaching difficult employees and/or those perceived not to be coachable, may enable managers to feel more comfortable about capitalising upon informal coaching opportunities.

The findings can also provide an impetus for informed organisational conversations about developing a coaching culture and the importance of informal coaching conversations, especially 'coachable moments' to the creation of a coaching culture. If managers are supported to take advantage of coachable moments, then it is likely that they will do so more frequently and develop skills in this area without being prompted to do so only in formal scheduled coaching forums.

Limitations and further research

However, there are some limitations of this research which should be noted. Firstly, the sample size comprised ten managers who all work within the same university, all have managed staff at some stage in their careers, all are in non-academic roles, and all had attended coaching awareness training within the preceding six months. Whilst the first three factors are not considered to have any significant bearing on this research, the latter factor, that of having attended coaching awareness training may have had some impact on responses. Managers were highly encouraged to attend this

training and thus in responses to questions there may have been a social desirability bias (Fisher, 1993) with managers presenting themselves as being diligent coaches and exaggerating the level of informal coaching they undertook.

A second possible limitation of this study was the use of the critical incident technique which is contingent upon interviewees recalling specific incidents. Using this technique there is always the possibility that embellishments might occur (Sharoff, 2008) and that participants may overlook routine incidents because they are focussing on 'critical' incidents (Quinlan, 2011, p230). It became apparent to the researcher during some interviews that the latter limitation may have impacted on the research participants as many found it difficult initially to recall examples of coachable moments but as conversation ensued in the interview, understood that these moments may well be day to day unremarkable incidents. Efforts were made by the researcher to overcome this by probing for detail and encouraging behaviourally based descriptions, and also by explaining the nature of 'critical' in more detail to interviewees.

Future research could use alternative methodologies with a larger cross-sectional design, and explore the perceptions of employees as well as managers including how to develop a coaching culture .

It is worth investigating to what extent the manager's risk threshold is linked to their perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 2012), in other words, if managers are more confident in their ability to deploy their skills, are they more likely to take a risk and coach a difficult employee than a manager with less confidence in their skills? Furthermore, it is worth investigating to what extent managers' perceptions of risk change over time. Grant (2010) suggests that managers need support during the first few months after a coaching training program if they are to persevere in applying their skills. Grant and Hartley (2013) suggest that coaching supervision sessions build self-efficacy and help transform insights and actions into habits.

An additional theme from this research which warrants further research is the extent to which the physical environment not only influences a coaching manager to take advantage of a coachable moment, but whether the physical environment also affects the likelihood of feedback seeking by the employees, whether positively or negatively. An increase in feedback seeking would increase the perception of coachability of an employee (Hunt & Weintraub, 2011) and according to the results of this study, could increase the likelihood of a manager taking advantage of a coachable moment.

Despite the small sample size, this research is significant because it has contributed to the body of knowledge relating to why managers choose to coach or not to coach in informal situations. The finding relating to managers assessing risk is considered to be an original outcome of the research and it is recommended that this be further researched to better explore and understand the impact that risk may have on informal coaching conversations, as well as how to manage such risks. This in turn will contribute to developing coaching cultures in organisations.

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