

Behavioral Coaching: How to build sustainable personal and organisational strength

Skiffington, S. and Zeus, P. (2003) North Ryde, New South Wales, McGraw Hill.

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This volume comprises an important entry in what will become in coming years a busy field - the production of comprehensive textbooks useful in training coaches. That it has been produced as their third volume in 3 years by the prolific partnership of Dr Suzanne Skiffington and Perry Zeus, leading exponents of coaching in that spiritual home of coaching, Australia, is only fitting.

Its chief strength is that for the first time we have a referenced and historically attuned approach to teaching the theory and core skills of coaching. This gap in the market emerged as courses in the field have bloomed since the turn of the century. Whereas there were one or two Masters level courses in the UK in 2001 there are now a half dozen or more, with additional entries on the way. In the USA, seldom slow to grasp a new trend, recent developments suggest graduate coaching courses in a dozen or more universities. This text should assist course leaders in a wide range of coach training institutions in providing a core overview of the field.

The book is laden with many of the typological and formalizing devices that have been so far absent from coaching books appearing monthly. The explicit focus on validation through evidence-based research, on certification and on coach training and coach practice standards is welcome. There are good links with traditions out of which coaching is emerging, including sports, performance and management development coaching. Useful aspects of professional coach's lives, including their involvement in public education, training and development of professional ethics and professional communities, are positioned within the wider professional responsibilities which new members of an emergent acquire. There is an extended discussion of the various marketplaces in which coaching is becoming one of the preferred methods of performance enhancement.

A number of points occur where future editions may provide improvement. The publication references, while engaging, do not access literatures in all relevant disciplines, e.g., human resources development. Several times in the early pages of this book, while configuring the conceptual universe for a new profession, the authors remind us of their own entrepreneurial coach training institute. This drumbeating stands ironically against inveighing in later chapters against self-appointed professional coaching bodies and commercial coach registration and training organisations.

There is enough of a common framework in this book to springboard a step further academic development of the profession. Trainee coaches will feel they have an overview of their new professional identity by close absorption of this excellent text.