

# Birgit Ramon:

“A commitment to coaching would do the whole trade good.”

## **01** Has the time come for an end of the debate on demarcation between supervision and coaching?

No. We do need the discussion. It implies an enormous chance for DGSv to distinguish itself in the whole German working world as the expert trade organisation that it has already been for so many years in the so-called non-profit sector, for supervision.

Coaching already is an established discipline in industry and commerce. More critical, supervisory competence is required here, in order to promote in-depth processes of reflection. The core of supervision – to reflect professional relationships, with an in-depth focus on oneself and the others against the background of specific organisational dynamics – should enter industry and commerce. The value of good, healthy relations on the job and a healthy organisational culture would thus be increased. At the same time, the format of coaching with its target and result orientation, particularly in the social sector, can make a contribution for more efficiency in the organisation.

## **02** What is coaching as you understand it primarily about? What is the objective, what exactly does it strive to stimulate or produce?

Coaching is always about development and change, with a view to one or several goals of the coachee as well as their organisation – the company placing the coaching order.

Coaching starts directly with the coachees (individuals or teams), who want to achieve goals they have defined with regard to their professional role and against the background of their current life situation.

When clarifying the order, it is the coach’s task to elaborate these goals of the coachee or the team and the other involved parties, usually the manager and/or the HR department, and to explain how and in which way and for which goal coaching can be beneficial and effective. The coach and the coachee are expected to assess how much time they will need for which goal. “How much investment will yield which and how much benefit?” In this context, coaching strives to promote the coachees’ initiative and responsibility, define their resources and give encouraging and inspiring impulses. Coaching should be clarifying, motivating and result-oriented. Coaching can also lead to a decision on the coachee’s part which is not within the immediate interest of the employer, e.g. to take on a leadership role. Understood in this way,

coaching is always beneficial to the company since it prevents or diminishes conflicts and can even contribute to an increased performance. Also, due to the in-depth reflection of the coachee’s overall situation in the coaching process, it is possible to achieve an extended (self-)understanding as well as a recognition of dynamics within and outside the respective organisation. This promotes a process of insight and learning on the part of the coachee, which can go beyond the immediate, agreed coaching topics and targets. The fact that coaching – like supervision – can have an emancipatory effect is a component of the process which increases its value – a very particular coaching effect, which in most cases, nevertheless, is not in the limelight as the intention of the coaching process. In comparison, supervision is much more clearly positioned here.

## **03** Do you think there is a core basic attitude in coaching? Which?

I think this is the same as in supervision.

## **04** Why do customers in industry and commerce and increasingly also in social organisations ask for coaching more than for supervision?

### **Why is coaching so attractive “in the marketplace”?**

Coaching serves an increasingly perceivable need for orientation and safety as well as acknowledgement of good performance. In my view, this is due to the growing complexity and performance requirements in the working world, which asks more and more of the individual. The ‘human resource

entrepreneur' (Pongratz/Voß), unclear job descriptions, differentiated, insecure (partial) work contracts, new and denser performance requirements, in particular directed at managers in the non-profit sector, are catchwords here. For example, particularly in organisations working in social and health fields it can be observed that middle managers have to lead an increasing number of employees, at the same time being constantly busy managing changes in the organisation, so that individual contacts and recognition of individual staff achievements often fall by the wayside. Both sides perceive a feeling of lack (of performance) and emptiness. The coach is placed into this perceived – and real – vacuum and assigned attributes of a “rescuer”, someone who can do it, who says how it is done and how it is done right.

Everybody knows coaches in sport, after all, who support their players in maintaining and increasing their achievements by the right training. Also in the working world, a coach is perceived as a sparring partner who supports you in doing your job well, to just be good or become better – without questioning many things or raising problems.

This is a phenomenon which we as coaches should have a critical eye on. If we succeed in raising this issue, the coachee's process of insight and learning will be promoted – like in supervision.

## **05 What will (the mostly highly qualified) supervisors need to learn and do in future in order to become more attractive in the marketplace?**

- Coaching!
- They will need to learn to adapt their offers and services to the (aspired) target groups in a more differentiated way and to communicate the respective benefit more clearly – using the language and media used by the target group. This is a fixed part of our further training in coaching and should also be contained in the training in supervision. Supervisors are a tremendously qualified occupational group. When it comes to consulting in the working world, they are the experts for “healthy working”. The benefit of this service for individuals, organisations, companies and society should be better defined and communicated – without being pocketed by the principle of considering everything and everyone from the perspective of profit maximisation.

## **06 When and in which context do you work as or call yourself a coach (as opposed to: a supervisor)?**

I always mention both roles since offering both means to offer an additional qualification in each of the formats, which makes my services even more attractive. In doing so, I describe the respective focus of each format: coaching (sports) = target achievement, performance increase, result achievement; supervision = personal and professional development, learning by reflecting on professional conduct. In the focus: oneself, others, the relationships, the organisation. My clients receive both.

## **07 How is coaching quality produced and assured?**

- With training certificates issued by expert and trade associations;
- By training business coaches with supervisory concepts, too;
- By working together with others in associations, developing and defining shared quality standards. This is currently done with a high degree of commitment at the “Round Table of German-Language Coaching Associations” (RTC);
- By making a contribution to the occupational policy in society, taking up a stance as the trade association that represents coaching and supervision and thus further establishes the association(s) as a brand and quality seal;
- By continuing to do research, extending the comprehensive research in supervision to coaching.

## **08 What characterises a competent coach today? And which do you think will be the key competencies for coaches in future?**

The following focal points, divided into three categories:

- a) Self- and personality competence (self-experience, biographical work, personality, developmental and learning psychology, competencies in self-organisation and self-management, psychodynamics, sense and values, view of human beings);
- b) Competencies of relationships, communication and consulting, also for working with and in groups (bonding theory, communication knowledge, skills in person-oriented consulting and in creating a work alliance; psychodynamics,

transference / counter-transference, leadership concepts, competency in group-dynamics, team development and others);

c) Entrepreneurial thinking, conduct and knowledge (organisational and management knowledge, systemic thinking, network competency, knowledge management, self-marketing and others).

## **09 Should DGSv make a clearer commitment to coaching?**

Yes, absolutely! This would do the whole trade good. DGSv has been extremely successful in positioning itself in the German non-profit market as an association for supervision.

The high credibility, the thought-through, explored concepts, the high degree of professionalism of the association: all this would be – and is – a benefit for the “coaching landscape”!

In all this, the association should maintain and intensify the cooperation with other associations with similar interests. I can imagine, for example, that the good contacts between DGSv and EASC may continue to bear fruit. There is exchange and participation at various different levels. Shared coaching projects can be developed, which also take the opening of DGSv towards Europe into account; also by way of continuing the intensive cooperation and collaboration at the Round Table of German-Language Coaching Associations (RTC), which have some other highly professional coaching associations as members, too, which show their interest in cooperation by being members.

All in all, double memberships should be supported much more, in particular when the quality standards for supervision are nearly the same, as is the case with EASC. On the whole, it is advisable to develop new models of memberships, to think laterally, so that an opening becomes possible also for “mere” coaches.

It would be an enormous push for the profession if DGSv – together with others – became even more active in the working world, took a clear position in business associations, too, and oriented their public-relations work towards reaching the target groups (and contracting parties) of coaching even more.

## **10 What is your new umbrella term for “specific, personal, working world consulting”?**

Business coaching and supervision.

Both terms.

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