Psychometrics in coaching: a stock take of best practice
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Objectives for today

- Discussing the core value of psychometrics in coaching contexts
- Decision factors for choosing psychometrics in coaching
- Mapping assessment to contexts: starting with the context
- Understanding how to combine assessments
- Turning data into action
- Frequent challenges and how to address them
Q: Why do we need to reflect on best practice for coaches in particular?
1. Psychometrics and standards for practice

- Current standards (e.g. EFPA guidelines) for evaluating tests
  - Reliability, validity, norms
- What is missing?
  - Training
  - Practical application in specific contexts
  - Availability of best practice guides
  - CPD opportunities
  - Being clearer about role/ level of psychological knowledge in interpretation
2. Psychometrics and coaching

- Not all psychologists are trained in the practical use of psychometrics
- Not all coaches are psychologists
- Possibility of a skills gap when deciding to use psychometric assessments
- Existing best practice frameworks emphasize practice in occupational and educational psychology contexts
- Not all assessments sold in the UK require training
- Assessment not a ‘one off’, but part of a wider process
  - You can’t just ‘walk away from it’!
3. Recent trends

- Developmental use of assessments a growth area
- Generation of special profiles for developmental use, (e.g. more finely grained breakdown of behavioural indicators relating to traits)
- Self-supporting reports
- Bespoke mapping to frameworks (e.g. competencies)
- Testing to identify and retain talent and high potential (rather than deselect), engagement firmly on the agenda
- Focus on feedback for specific purposes: increasing self awareness but in organizational context, restructuring common backdrop
- A focus on Derailment risks, maladaptive behaviours
Q: Your experience of using psychometrics in coaching?
Why use Psychometrics?

- Facilitate insight and self-awareness
- Discussion can be used as prompts for behaviour change
- Can pin-point or reflect a challenge or development need
- Assessments bring together self-concept and behavioural evidence
- Reports can graphically or structurally represent self-concept in an accessible way
- Feedback can help coachees understand personality and how it relates to behaviour
Feedback from coaches

- Good psychometrics can streamline the initial diagnostic stage, and significantly shorten this from two sessions to one.
- Psychometrics can provide both parties with an accessible and agreed lexicon for thought, behaviour and attitudes.
- Psychometric assessment can lend credibility to coaching activities, when aligned with the result of the assessment.
Q: How do you choose a psychometric instrument for use in coaching contexts?
Decision factors?

Coachee: prior experience, knowledge

Organisation: Keeping up with the Joneses

Coach: evangelical about instruments?

Relationship

Suitability for Context: norms, outputs, content validity

Logistics: cost, training, availability

Poor cousin?
When / How to use Psychometrics

**Beginning**
- Insight into compatibility
- Structure data, provides context
- Opportunity to formulate hypotheses

**During**
- Increase understanding
- Address impasse

**End**
- Measure behaviour change
- Evaluate coaching process
Psychometrics in Coaching - “Utility validity”

- Value of any tools goes beyond characteristics that can be easily measured
- Importance of context
- Fit for purpose
  - Coach-tool fit
  - Coachee-tool fit

What determines ‘fit’?
Q: How could data from different assessments be combined to good effect?
Combining assessments in coaching

• Bartram (2005)
  – Criterion centric approach
  – Start with criterion domain
  – Then select predictors to understand drivers

  – You can translate the overall approach into a coaching context!
Useful about Bartram Paper:

- **Drivers:**
  - Ability
  - Personality
  - Values

- **Competencies:** are 8 great?

- **Performance Outcomes:**
  - Overall Job Performance or more Finely Grained Measures = competence

Working backwards
Translated to coaching context

Drivers:
- Ability
- Personality
- Values

Behaviours?

What are the outcomes we want to benchmark?
- Goals?
- Well Being?
- What else?

Working backwards
Senior technical manager referred for coaching as follows:

Stop bullying others in the organisation

Build better customer relationships

Talent pipeline: future board member?

What would you want to assess and how would you do it?
Which assessments would you combine?

- Jane, 38, partner in law firm; returning to work after maternity leave, ‘struggling to get back in’, loss of confidence, “am I still in the right job?”

- John reports shying away from providing performance feedback to his direct reports, and tends to procrastinate to avoid the issue altogether.
Available Questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait-based</th>
<th>Type-based</th>
<th>Maladaptive behaviours</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>360-degree</td>
<td>Coping Styles</td>
<td>Values / Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career / Interest</td>
<td>Locus of Control, Type A/B etc.</td>
<td>Wellbeing / Health</td>
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Reflective questions to ask

- Is this the right tool to use for this coachee, at this stage in the coaching process?
- What assessments can the coach use given their expertise and training?
- Is the coach the best person to use and interpret this assessment information?
- How can the coach best interpret and discuss the assessment information with the coachee, keeping a balance between objectivity and insight?
- How can the coach ensure that any assessment is not interpreted in an inappropriately subjective way depending on the coach’s own preconceptions?
- How do all of the above impact on relationships in coaching?
Providing feedback using a psychometric:

• Discuss assessment/psychometric output openly, and go through dimensions/scales narratives together,
  – “Point by point open book”

• Discuss assessment together, but concentrate on certain aspects looking for linkages
  – “Open book linked approach”

• Get coachee to self rate themselves first, then compare with profile
  – “Self referenced comparative approach”

• Ask coachee to talk about pertinent general issues first, then link this to profile
  – “Narrative approach”
Reflections and close

• Learning from today?

• Stay in touch!
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References and bibliography


Useful web-links

- Buros online reviews (not free…): https://marketplace.unl.edu/buros/
- www.psychtesting.org
- Talent Q guidance on assessment: https://www.talentqgroup.com/resource-library/