

What do organisational coaches look like?

March 2013



Introduction

Since coaching will continue to be an important service used by organisations as the business environment continues to grow increasingly complex, this paper takes an exploratory look at the personality of organisational coaches to understand how their characteristics help them in their coaching engagements (Charan, 2009). Given that organisational coaches are often engaged to facilitate the psychological and/or emotional growth of a coachee, this paper also sought to compare their personality preferences with groups that would be their typical client groups.

The first comparison is between organisational coaches and the Australian Norm group, which comprises a representative sample of the adult working population across a range of occupational contexts. In addition to working across industries, many organisational coaches specialise in leadership coaching so further analysis looked for significant differences between varying levels of organisational leadership, namely Managers, Executives and CEOs. Finally, this research also compared organisational coaches and sports coaches since both groups aim to enhance performance through their coaching engagements albeit in different contexts.

Appreciating the breadth of coaching services on offer in the market such as life, health and financial coaching right through to business and leadership coaching, this research primarily focuses on organisational coaches who operate within a business context. For the purposes of this white paper, we are using the definition of an organisational coach as defined in the *Council of Standards Australia Handbook for Coaching in Organizations*. An organisational coach is defined as “a person who is engaged to provide coaching services to a coachee [with the aim of] improving the skills, performance or personal capabilities of the coachee” (Council of Standards Australia, 2011, p. 7). In essence, the coaching engagement is aimed at facilitating the psychological or emotional growth of the coachee in an organisational context and this is distinctly different from therapeutic or counselling engagements aimed at ‘fixing’ or ‘curing’ what are often deemed to be clinical issues. Within this research the term organisational coach is also intended to encompass areas such as executive coaching, leadership coaching, performance coaching, developmental coaching, and business and workplace coaching.

In selecting organisational coaches for inclusion in the research sample it was necessary for certain criteria to be met to ensure only practitioners in this field were included. The sample included individuals who satisfied at least one of the following criteria:

- The individual has or is working towards a recognised professional/formal coaching qualification – e.g., Masters in Coaching Psychology
- The individual is a member of a professional coaching body – e.g., ICF
- The individual markets himself/herself as a practicing organisational coach – e.g., selling services/skills marketed via a personal/business website, personal bios, LinkedIn etc.
- The individual undertakes regular professional/peer supervision regarding coaching related activities

Hogan Assessment Overview

Over 350 Australian organisational coaches were included in the present sample and completed the Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI), the Hogan Development Survey (HDS) and Motives, Values, Preferences Inventory (MVPI). The HPI, which measures day-to-day personality characteristics, is based on the Five Factor Model (FFM) and provides information about their typical preferences and how these may align to

their current role. The HDS measures personality when under stress and pressure. It assesses an individual's strengths which, when overplayed, become their potential relationship and career derailers. The final assessment used in this analysis is the MVPI. This gives an insight into an individual's core motives and drivers as well as potential unconscious biases, which may impact upon client engagements.

The HPI has 7 primary scales and 41 subscales. The HDS assesses derailment with 11 scales and the MVPI assesses 10 scales of motivation and interests. All of these scales and subscales were analysed using two-tailed t-tests to look for statistically significant differences between our samples.

How do organisational coaches compare with the Australian Norm group?

The organisational coaches' data obtained from the three assessments was compared to the Hogan Australian norm sample to ascertain whether any significant differences existed between the two groups across the three Hogan assessments using two-tailed t-tests. Table 1 below outlines the sample size across these two groups for the three Hogan assessments. The mean age of the organisational coaches sample was 45.1, the mean age for the Australian Norm population was 36.5.

Table 1: Organisational Coaches and Australian Normative Sample Sizes

	HPI	HDS	MVPI
Organisational Coaches	366	360	359
Australian Working Population	5384	4375	1108

Figure 1: Organisational coaches compared with the Australian Norm: HPI Percentile Scores

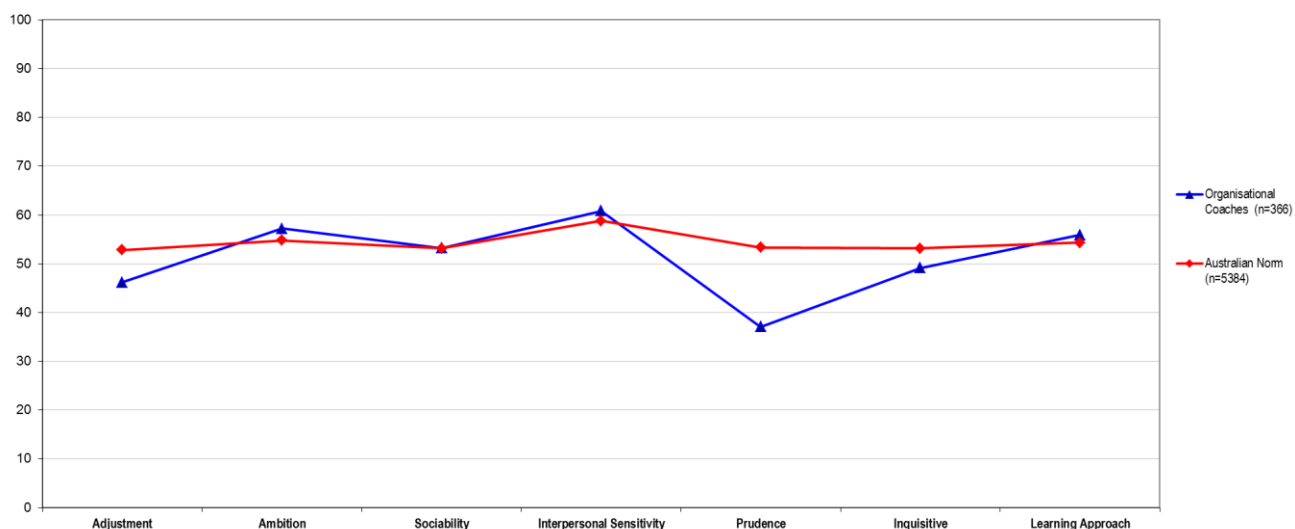


Figure 1 shows some notable differences between the two samples with particular mention to the *Adjustment*, *Prudence* and *Inquisitive* scales where the Australian Norm population has significantly higher scores.

Mean comparisons across the 41 HPI subscales yielded 34 significant differences between organisational coaches and the Australian working population. Table 2 below presents a visual depiction of these findings. Subscales shaded in red indicate where the organisational coaches scored lower than the Australian working population. Subscales shaded in green indicate the subscales where the organisational coaches scored higher than the Australian working population whilst the non-shaded subscales indicate no significant difference.

Table 2: HPI subscales differences between organisational coaches and the Australian working population samples

Adjustment	Ambition	Sociability	Interpersonal Sensibility	Prudence	Inquisitive	Learning Approach
Empathy	Competitive	Likes Parties	Easy to Live With	Moralistic	Science Ability	Education
Not Anxious	Self Confidence	Likes Crowds	Sensitive	Mastery	Curiosity	Math Ability
No Guilt	Accomplishment	Experience Seeking	Caring	Virtuous	Thrill Seeking	Good Memory
Calmness	Leadership	Exhibitionistic	Likes People	Not Autonomous	Intellectual Games	Reading
Even Tempered	Identity	Entertaining	No Hostility	Not Spontaneous	Generates Ideas	
No Complaints	No Social Anxiety			Impulse Control	Culture	
Trusting				Avoids Trouble		
Good Adjustment						

More granular analysis revealed the strongest significant difference ($p < .01$) on the following scales and subscales where organisational coaches scored higher:

- *Trusting* – this reveals that organisational coaches are much more willing to engage in an open dialogue and build trust with others which is paramount for the client relationship
- *Caring* – this suggests that coaches are far more perceptive and responsive to others' needs and feelings which is critical to their effectiveness
- *Not Autonomous* – this relates to coaches being very open and receptive to feedback on themselves which is paramount for reflective practice
- *Leadership* and *Exhibitionistic* – this suggests that coaches are more confident assuming positions of authority and having the attention focused on them. Perhaps this is not surprising given that many organisational coaches' bios reported experience having been a business leader previously
- *Culture*, *Education* and *Reading* – organisational coaches profile with a greater regard for educational and cultural pursuits and are likely to enjoy being well read and current on a variety of topics including their area of expertise

Other positive and significant findings ($p < .05$) revealed that organisational coaches were more likely to enjoy variety and stretching assignments (*Experience Seeking*), however, work-life alignment must be maintained (*Mastery*). Having high *Generates Ideas* coupled with high *Avoids Trouble* reveals that organisational coaches are also comfortable responding to ambiguity by thinking on their feet to generate ideas that are well thought through in terms potential outcomes. Their communication style is also likely to be careful and constructive, diplomatic and supportive (*Sensitive*). Given that many conversations are client

led requiring coaches to carefully, and without bias, construct an interpretation of the events presented and respond with insightful questions to help the coachee to move towards their desired outcome, the need to be flexible, open, perceptive, constructive and comfortable responding to events as they unfold seems paramount for a successful client engagement.

Interestingly, the working population norm group profiled with a higher level of resilience overall with less internal (i.e. *Empathy* and *Not Anxious*) and external (i.e. *Calmness*, *Even Tempered* and *No Complaints*) churn compared with the organisational coaches sample (*Adjustment*). The data reveals that the working population sample is less worried by the shortcomings of others and perhaps this is why organisational coaches first notice such shortcomings and are then subsequently driven to support change in others (*Empathy*). Furthermore, a lower overall *Adjustment* score shows that organisational coaches are more concerned with performing well and take feedback seriously. They are also likely to be full of nervous energy, attentive and quick to respond as their client conversations unfold.

Many of the personality characteristics discussed show strong alignment with necessary and important components of organisational coaching. Coaching competencies outlined in the *Standards Australia Handbook for Coaching in Organisations* depict four foundational knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) required of coaches:

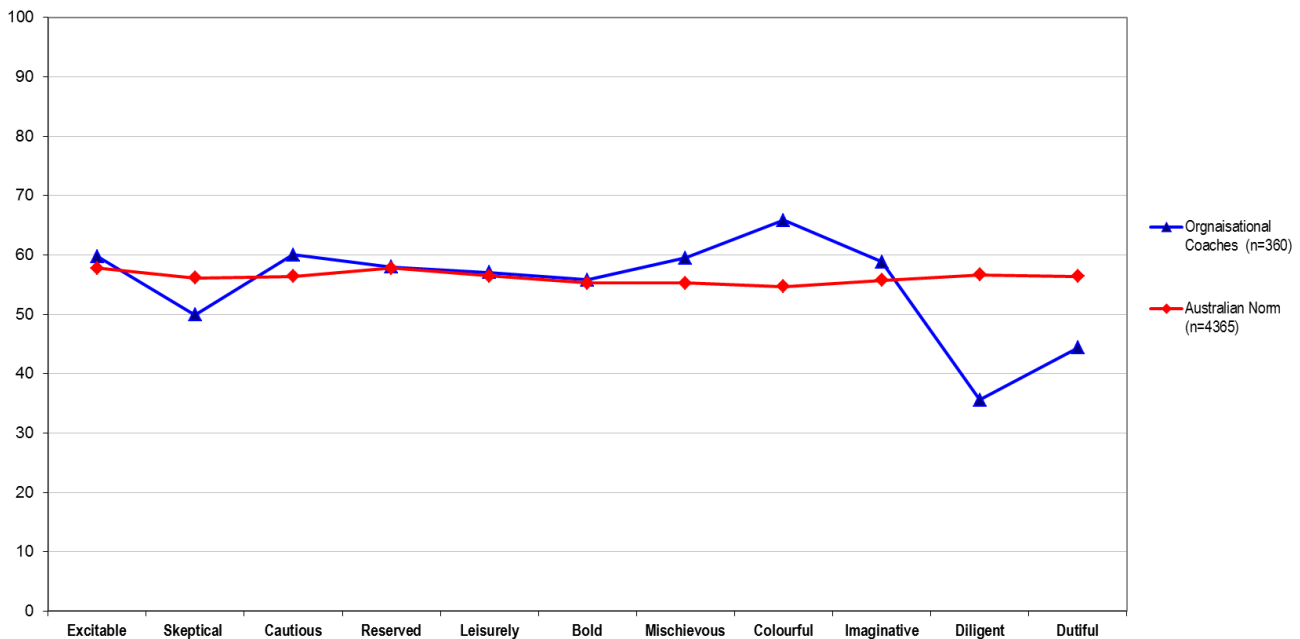
- 1) Foundational micro skills, which encompass communication and relationship skills such as building rapport, eliciting and sharing information, goal setting and giving feedback
- 2) Conceptual and technical skills, which entail a broad understanding of coaching theory and practice to identify the most suitable course of action and subsequently structure the engagement through to a satisfactory outcome
- 3) Self-management and development skills, demonstrated through a range of practices such as reflective practice, ongoing professional development, supervision and evaluation
- 4) Boundary management skills, which concern operating around a clear code of ethics and clearly outlining the contractual arrangement and pre-agreeing expectations and desired outcomes, and then evaluating progress against these.

Whilst this is just a high level summary of the necessary KSAs listed in the handbook, it is useful to evaluate the alignment of organisational coaches' personality preferences and tendencies to their role. Our sample shows significant scores in the ability to proactively build and engage relationships based on trust with others with a strong focus on perceptiveness to quickly respond to the emerging situation. Moreover, this sample of organisational coaches is likely to enjoy spending time reading around their area of expertise to reflect on the best approach to use and, whilst they are not devout rule followers, they will act with a sense of propriety with a full appreciation of consequences. Meanwhile, the lower *Adjustment* score points to individuals who regularly practice self-reflection and are keen to use feedback to continually develop.

HDS Findings

The Hogan Development Survey scales relate to people's distorted beliefs about how others will treat them such that the associated behaviours tend to be more prominent when individuals are under stress, pressure and are not self-regulating. Eleven scales make up the HDS assessment. When looking at Figure 2 below, which outlines the differences between the organisational coaches and the Australian working population on the 11 HDS scales, it is apparent that a number of significant differences exist.

Figure 2: Organisational coaches compared with the Australian Working population: HDS Percentiles



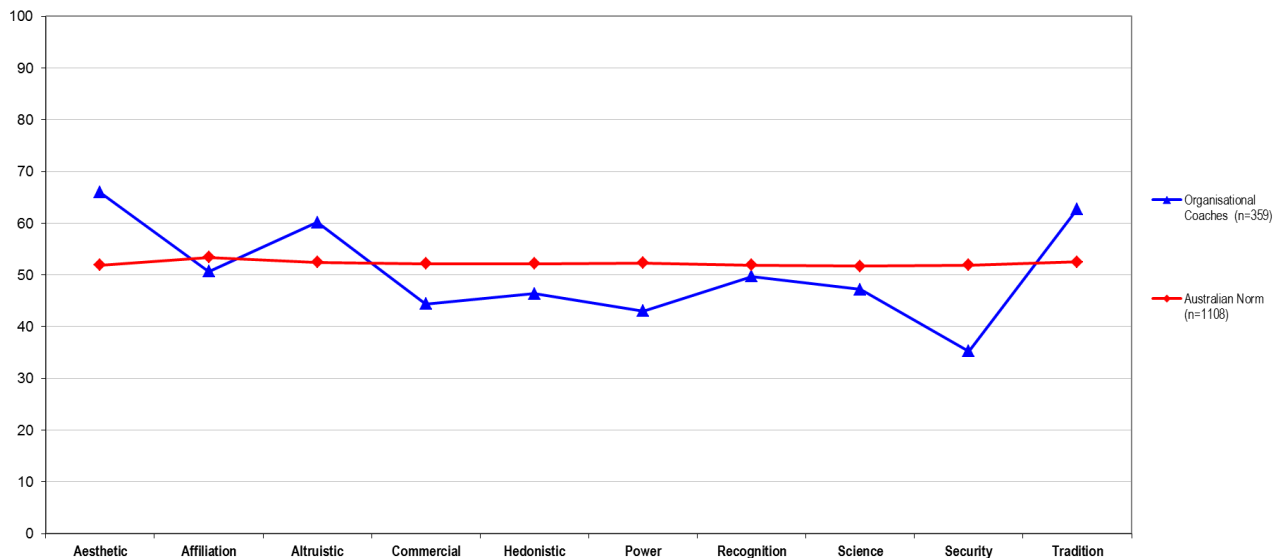
Compared to the working population norm, organisational coaches are significantly higher on *Mischievous* and *Colourful*. These two scales tend to be more prominent in individuals who are outgoing and relationship oriented. Higher *Mischievous* individuals are reported to be charming and interesting however; may make more intuitive rather than fact-based decisions. Meanwhile, higher *Colourful* individuals are described as socially skilled, engaging and energetic at their best however; under stress and pressure, they may exhibit a tendency to overcommit themselves, risk not following through on commitments and may seek attention. Whilst not statistically significant, the *Cautious* score echoes the finding in the high *Avoids Trouble* in the HPI suggesting that while coaches may be more comfortable pushing boundaries and trying new things, they tend to make suggestions and decisions with a degree of careful consideration. Using psychometric tools in their coaching engagements is one way of ensuring that any intuitive observations and decisions can be substantiated with a scientifically rigorous tool and everyone in this sample has been Hogan accredited.

Other interesting points to note are that their lower *Skeptical* score consolidates their more trusting disposition and the lower *Diligent* and *Dutiful* scores point to a preference not to get bogged down in the detail or feel the need to acquiesce.

MVPI Findings

There are three key areas where organisational coaches are significantly ($p < .01$) higher than the Australian working population: *Aesthetics*, *Altruistic* and *Tradition* as seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Organisational coaches compared with the Australian Working population: MVPI Percentiles



Unsurprisingly, organisational coaches are motivated to help others through their skills (*Altruistic*). They will prioritise client welfare over the need to make a profit and they are principled in their approach, caring about doing the right thing by their client (*Tradition*). The highest driver is *Aesthetics*, which may initially seem surprising. A higher *Aesthetics* score points to an interest in exploration, creativity, an appreciation for the look, feel and quality of work output as well as environmental surroundings. It also confirms a preference to make decisions intuitively which echoes some of the findings from the HDS.

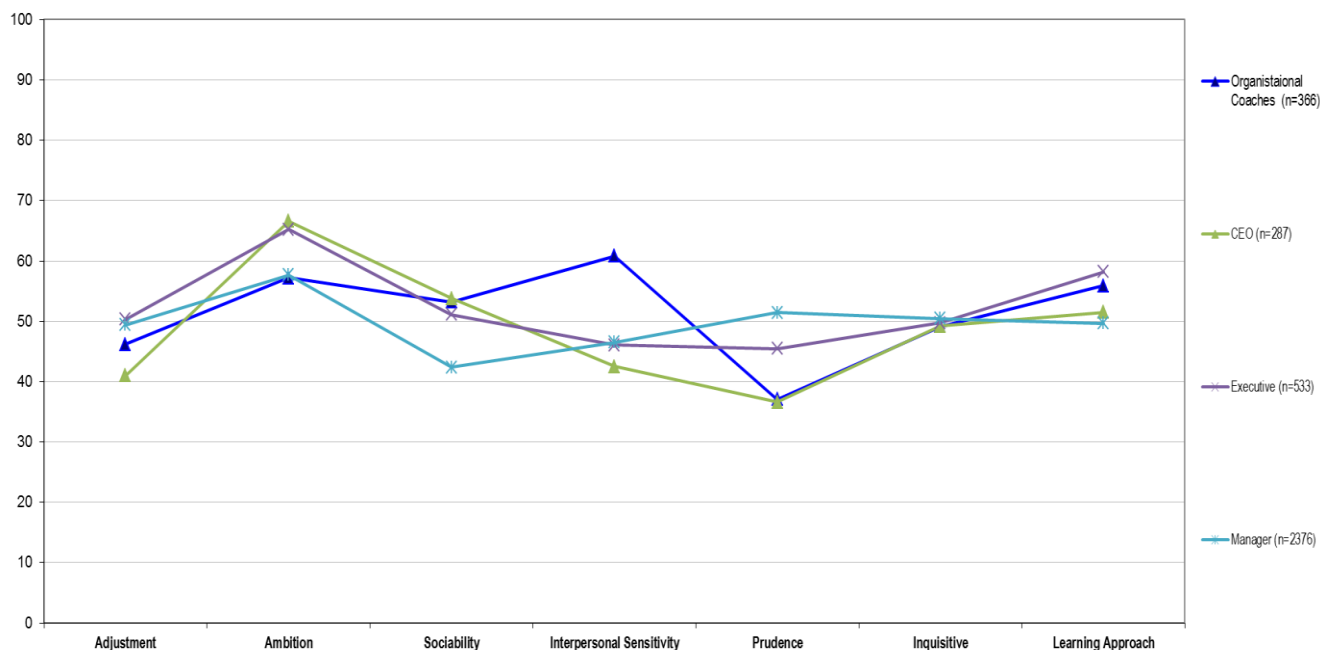
Summary

Compared to the Australian working population norm, organisational coaches profile as more relationship oriented individuals who build the foundations of their client relationships on trust, openness, perceptiveness, intuitive responsiveness, knowledge and propriety, all of which are shaped with an innate desire to want to help others through their skills.

How do organisational coaches compare with the Australian CEOs, Executives and Managers?

Given that many of the organisational coaches used in this study engage in Leadership coaching, the next phase of analysis looked to compare their data with Australian CEOs, Executives and Managers. Figure 4 below shows a comparison of the groups on the HPI.

Figure 4: Organisational coaches compared with the Australian CEOs, Executives and Managers: HPI Percentiles



When compared to all three leadership groups, organisational coaches were found to be significantly higher on *Interpersonal Sensitivity* and all the subscales that this scale subsumes. Together with being much higher on *Trusting*, this should help coaches focus on building their client relationships based on open, positive and careful communication and to come across as warm, authentic and considerate in their approach. These skills will be particularly important when working with CEOs as they appear to be the toughest self-critics of all the groups.

Organisational coaches compared with Australian CEOs

In addition to being harder on themselves, CEOs had higher scores on *Ambition* confirming their drive, determination and confidence leading organisations through ambiguity towards successful outcomes. This should mean that CEOs are open to self-improvement and determined to get positive results. They are less likely to be tolerant of the shortcomings of others (*Empathy*) and may have a tendency to let this show in their interactions with others (*Even Tempered*), and are more likely to give direct feedback (*Interpersonal Sensitivity*). CEOs profile with a high degree of curiosity in the 'how' leading them to search for the underlying reasons for things. This drive for information is something that organisational coaches with their higher *Learning Approach* should be able to support. Through explaining human behaviour, they can help CEOs better respond to those that they see falling short of expectation. However, one particular challenge that coaches may face is that CEOs tend to be somewhat resistant to feedback, preferring to be independent and listen only to respected and informed sources (*Not Autonomous*). Thus, it will be

particularly important to build the coaching relationship on authenticity and the value of experience and knowledge that the coach brings to the relationship.

Organisational coaches compared with Australian Executives

This sample of Executives shows a solid level of personal resilience together with a strong degree of determination to get results through others. They profile as more concerned with following established procedures and working hard to get the desired outcomes. Similar to CEOs, they profile with a strong interest in the underlying reasons for things and problem solving. With similar scores on *Learning Approach*, Executives should enjoy opportunities to grow and can benefit from the knowledge that organisational coaches can bring to the engagement through their higher *Reading* preference.

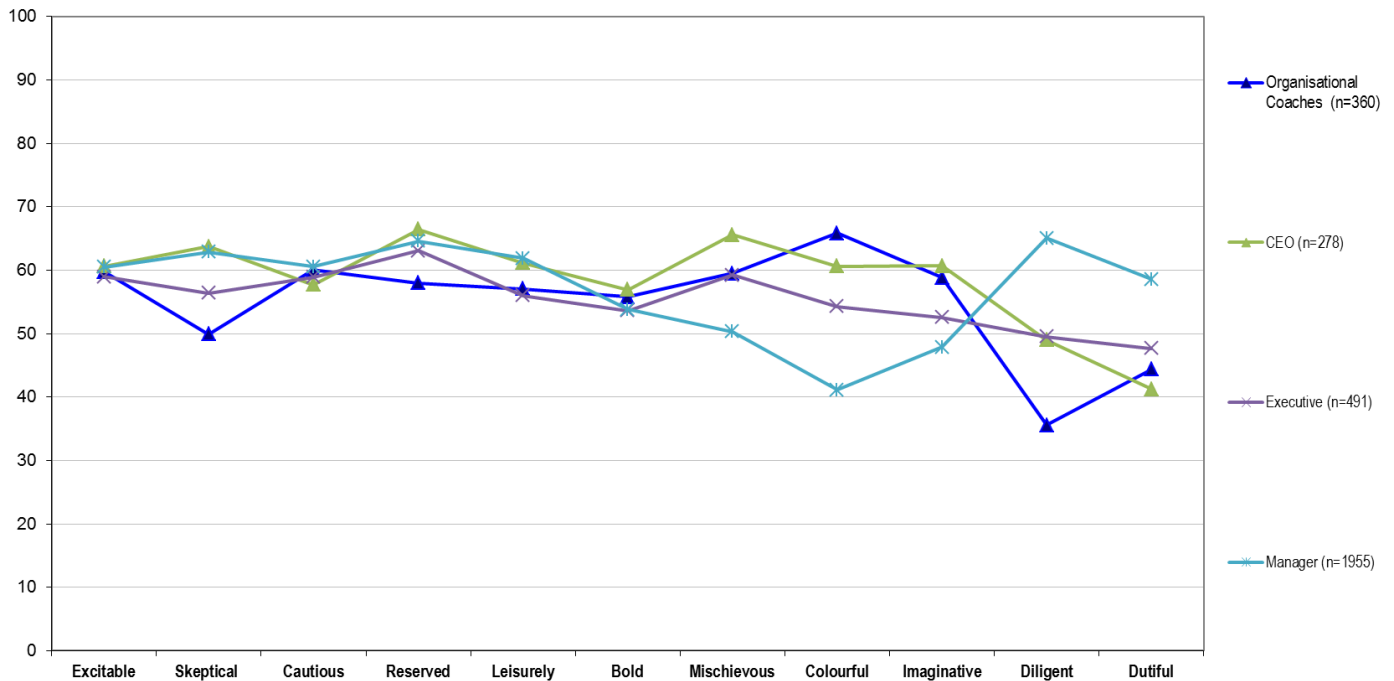
Organisational coaches compared with Australian Managers

This sample of Australian Managers shows that they are more reserved socially, preferring less interaction and limelight to focus on operational success where they are unafraid to confront poor outcomes and behaviours. They are less likely to be comfortable with ambiguity, preferring to work with those that they know well and trust. They also expect high levels of quality output which probably directly links to their KPIs. Similar to CEOs, they profile as independent thinkers who can be somewhat resistant to feedback and therefore challenging to coach. They are also the lowest of the three leadership tiers on *Trusting* which means that they may find it even more difficult to engage in open relationships. This may have implications not only for their relationships at work but also the coaching relationship. Thus, careful consideration may need to be given to the initial set-up of the coaching engagement, as some Managers are assigned a coach by their organisation and may not willingly enter the process.

Before examining the HDS and MVPI of these samples, it may also be worth noting one final area where organisational coaches scored lowest compared to all three levels of leadership. Organisational coaches were found to be lower on *Good Attachment*, which suggests that they may not have seen eye-to-eye with authority figures when growing up and their own personal resilience may be compromised when faced with a style that is overly authoritarian or dogmatic. This may be an area for self-reflection when working with certain clients to ensure that their own subjective experiences do not compromise their response in a coaching situation. This score may also explain why they may prefer to work as their own boss.

HDS Findings

Figure 5: Organisational coaches compared with the Australian CEOs, Executives and Managers: HDS Percentiles

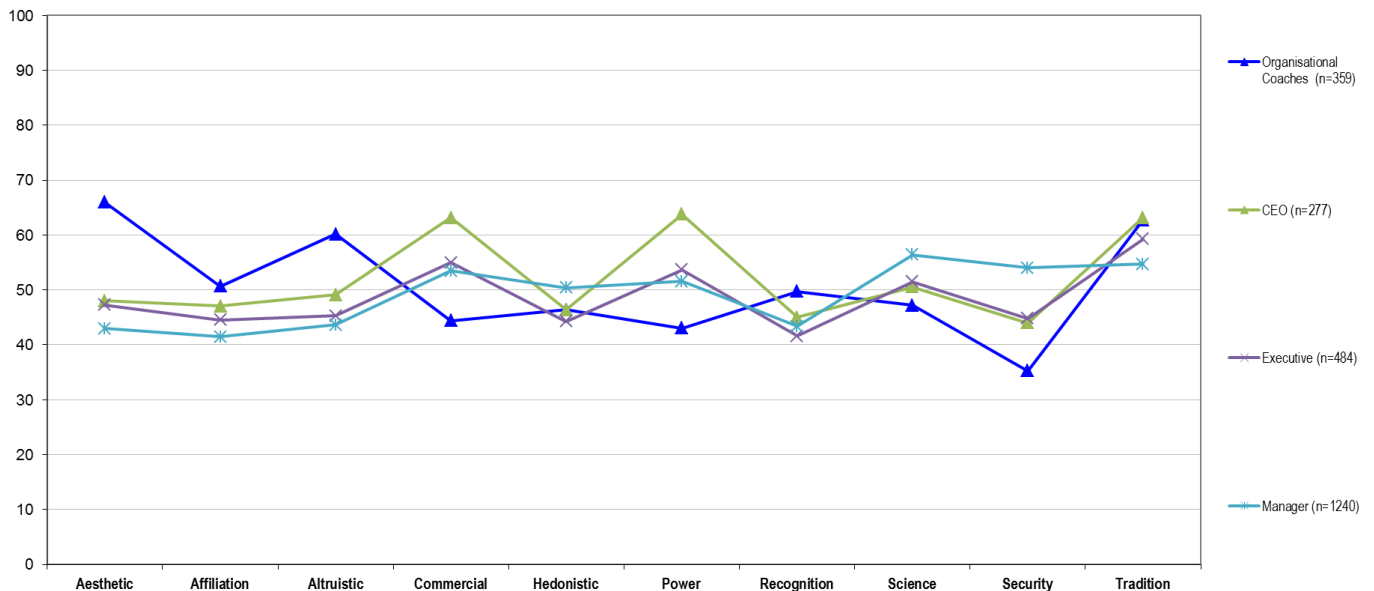


As seen in Figure 5, Organisational coaches are significantly higher on *Colourful* than the leadership groups. Given that many organisational coaches work independently, they may need to spend time building their network and client base through an element of self-promotion, which *Colourful* tendencies, in moderate doses, may help facilitate. This may also be a necessary 'skill' to help authenticate the coach at the beginning of their coaching engagements, particularly as CEOs, Managers and Executives are higher on *Sceptical* suggesting a more mistrusting, suspicious and defensive disposition. Coaches may also need to be highly proactive in engaging trust and openness with CEOs and Managers, particularly as these groups tend to become more self-reliant, uncommunicative and distant when stressed (*Reserved*). Furthermore, organisational coaches show more of an inclination towards innovative and creative approaches to problem solving (*Imaginative*); however, Managers may find it challenging to let go and be open to such alternatives (*Diligent*).

MVPI Findings

There are two key areas where organisational coaches are significantly ($p < .01$) higher than Australian CEOs, Executives and Managers: Aesthetics and Altruistic as seen in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Organisational coaches compared with Australian CEOs, Executives and Managers: MVPI Percentiles



As with the Australian Norm group sample, Figure 6 depicts organisational coaches with strong drivers in the *Aesthetic* and *Altruistic* scales when compared to the Leadership groups. Open to innovation, creativity and more intuitive thinking to help others develop, coaches may need to substantiate their approach with more discussion and focus on evidence-based approaches, particularly for Managers (*Science*). They may also feel the pressure to provide evidence of a return on investment (ROI), particularly to CEOs who often provide the final sign off for coaching programs within the organisation and pay close attention to initial investments and the expected financial benefits from those investments (*Commerce*). However, organisational coaches are more concerned and motivated by improving client welfare and morale rather than pure financial gains for the organisation (*Altruistic*). This is the very tension explained in a recent paper by Grant (2012) where he argues on a number of levels that financial ROI is a poor measure of coaching success and instead our attention should be more on measuring well-being and workplace engagement where the focus is on the extent to which the individual is flourishing and is feeling engaged and operating in the sweet spot of the performance zone. Furthermore, given Managers' need for *Security*, feeling engaged in a role which offers security and structure is much more likely to produce favourable results so the focus on the human element of engagement and well-being seems more apt.

Organisational coaches are also motivated by *Affiliation* which at one level consolidates their enjoyment of connecting with others regularly, but also points to a deeper desire to collaborate which stands them in good stead for a positive coaching engagement. In particular, collaborative coaching is a core skill where the coach adopts a less directive style and instead encourages the coachee to surface thoughts, insights and ideas to help them move towards their end goal (Starr, 2008).

Other notable differences concern *Power* where coaches are less motivated in comparison to the three levels of leadership. CEOs, Executives and Managers are all personally driven to get ahead and care deeply about being successful (*Power*). A coach's role is to help them evaluate what they consider as meaningful success and how to reach these goals so working with this driver as an underpinning theme in the coaching session should help leaders achieve their goals.

How do organisational coaches compare with the Australian sports coaches?

The final part of this exploratory study is to compare organisational coaches with sports coaches. Although the sample of sports coaches is much smaller than organisational coaches, SPSS takes into account the difference in sample sizes. Of our sample of 84 sports coaches, the mean age was around 40 years of age whereas the mean age of organisational coaches was around 45 years of age. The sports coaches sample was predominately male whereas the organisational coaches sample comprised 205 females and 141 males (some individuals did not disclose).

Given the previous discussion around organisational coaches adopting a more collaborative approach, this study is interested in exploring differences with sports coaches since they are known to teach, supervise and give directions and training of the on-the-field operations of athletes. Figure 7 below shows a comparison of their scores for the HPI.

Figure 7: Organisational coaches compared with sports coaches: HPI Percentiles

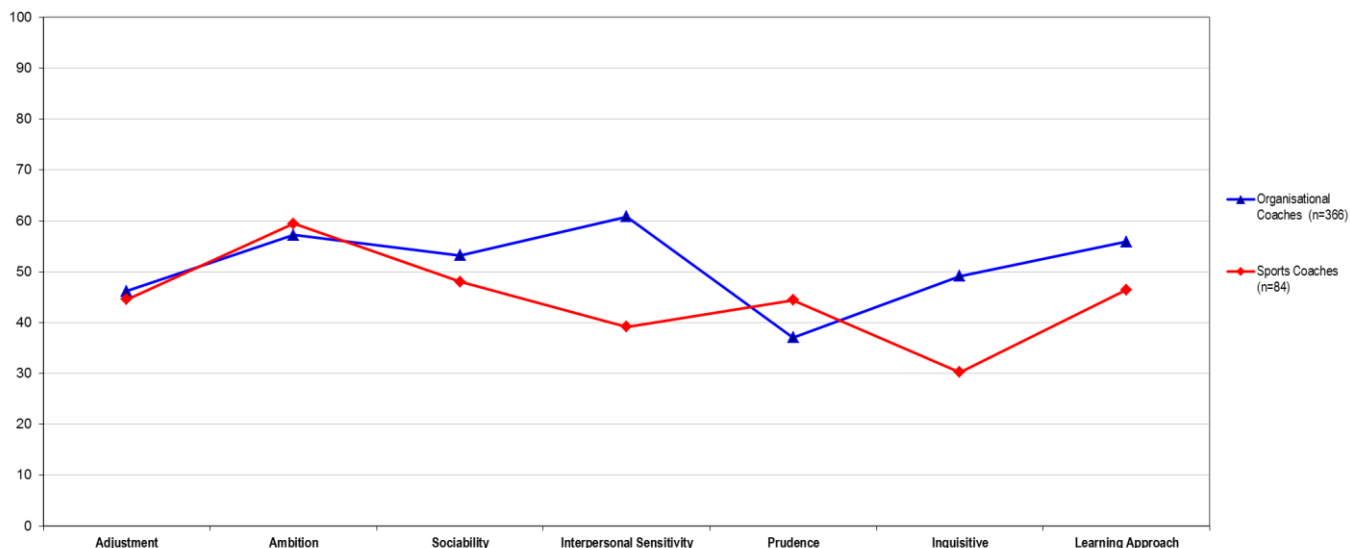
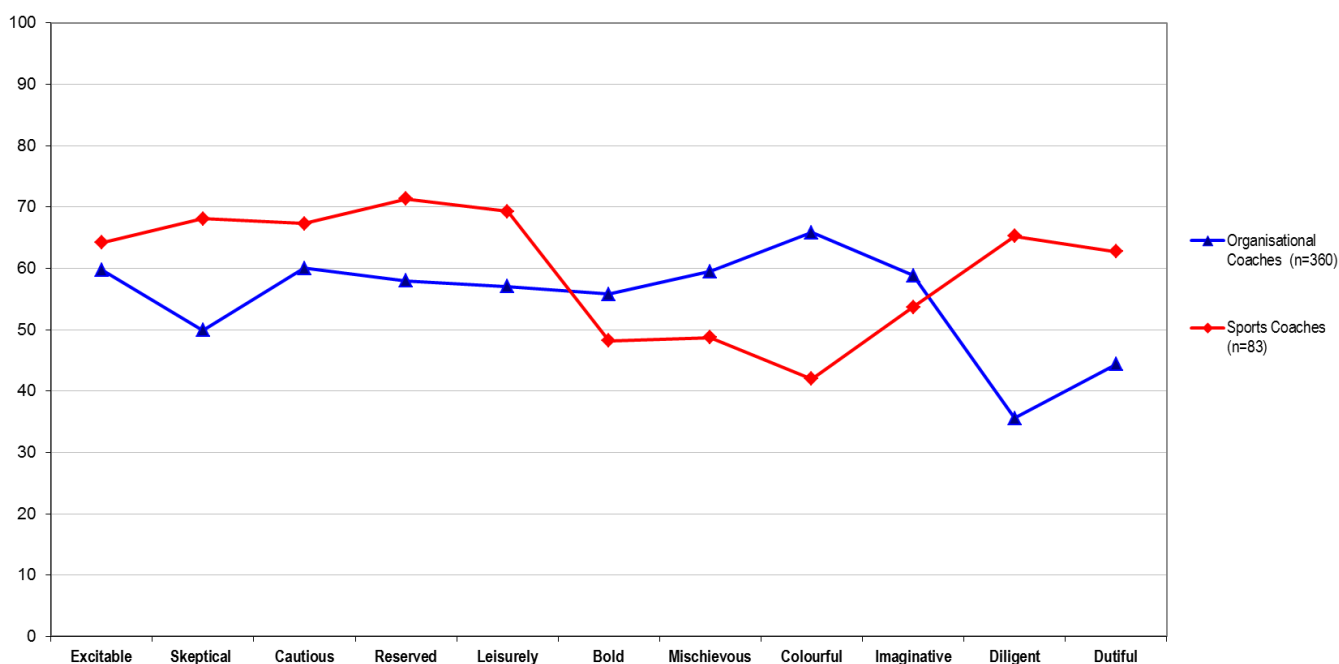


Figure 7 shows that organisational coaches come out as significantly higher on *Interpersonal Sensitivity* and all the subscales that it subsumes. Table 3 overleaf depicts 29 significant differences. It would seem that organisational coaches look to deliver results through building trust and developing the relationship based on openness and supportive communication whereas sports coaches profiled with a higher focus on being driven to work hard within one core area and set out a methodical plan to deliver results. As speculated before, sports coaches do appear to adopt a more direct style to deliver their message. Sports coaches also prefer to focus well within their area of expertise (*Inquisitive*) and are marginally more likely to drill down and directly hold coachees accountable to the plan of action (*Interpersonal Sensitivity and Prudence*). However, organisational coaches score marginally significantly higher on *Leadership*, which suggests that they are more comfortable than sports coaches in assuming a position of authority.

Table 3: HPI Subscales Differences between Organisational coaches and the Sports Coaches Samples

Adjustment	Ambition	Sociability	Interpersonal Sensibility	Prudence	Inquisitive	Learning Approach
Empathy	Competitive	Likes Parties	Easy to Live With	Moralistic	Science Ability	Education
Not Anxious	Self Confidence	Likes Crowds	Sensitive	Mastery	Curiosity	Math Ability
No Guilt	Accomplishment	Experience Seeking	Caring	Virtuous	Thrill Seeking	Good Memory
Calmness	Leadership	Exhibitionistic	Likes People	Not Autonomous	Intellectual Games	Reading
Even Tempered	Identity	Entertaining	No Hostility	Not Spontaneous	Generates Ideas	
No Complaints	No Social Anxiety			Impulse Control	Culture	
Trusting				Avoids Trouble		
Good Attachment						

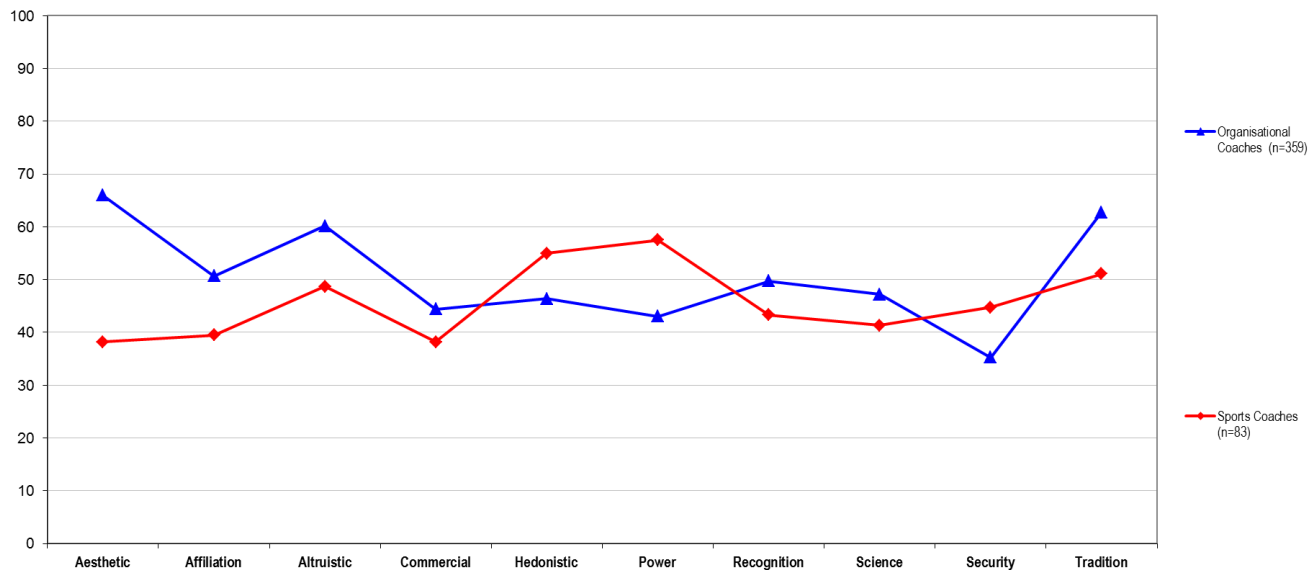
Figure 7: Organisational coaches compared with sports coaches: HDS Percentiles



A cluster of four or more elevations in the first five scales depicts a tendency to 'move away' from the source of pressure as a means to cope. Figure 7 reveals that sports coaches show more of this tendency and will try to resolve stress, pressure and tension by distancing themselves from the issue, quietly being passive-resistant and potentially masking a fear of being criticised by trying to work harder to deliver the expected results. Where sports coaches take a more individual and private approach to dealing with stress and pressure, organisational coaches appear to be more outgoing and expressive with less concern for detail (*Colourful* and *Diligent*).

Further differences were also found at the motives and drivers level. Figure 8 overleaf displays some of these differences.

Figure 8: Organisational coaches compared with sports coaches: MVPI Percentiles



Less driven by innovation or a need to develop others through collaborative coaching, sports coaches enjoy a less formal and more technical context where they can lead and drive results to beat the competition through more of a ‘tough love’ approach (*Aesthetics, Affiliation, Altruistic, Hedonistic and Power*). By contrast, organisational coaches are driven more by intuition, collaboration, innovation and helping others be the best they can be through a supportive yet more formal approach (*Aesthetic, Affiliation, Altruistic and Tradition*).

In sum, there are clear differences across all three personality assessments between sports coaches and organisational coaches even though both are engaged to improve performance.

Overall Summary

Clearly, organisational coaches set themselves apart from their client base and other distinct coaching disciplines through their interpersonal style and focus on building open and trusting relationships. They are likely to be highly reflective, open to feedback and constantly reading around their discipline to inform their intuitive and fluid style. Principled and professional in their approach, their primary *raison d’être* is to use their skills to help others by adopting a collaborative style to raise insights to the fore. In working with different client groups, they may need to prioritise different foci, since some may take longer to open up and accept support whilst others just find feedback difficult to accept unless they value the source. These are likely to be well observed challenges for organisational coaches and, given their energy and drive to help others, they are likely to be motivated to gently, and perhaps creatively, chip away at even the most resistant of clients.

References

Charan, R. (2009). The Coaching Industry: A work in Progress. *Harvard Business Review*

Council of Standards Australia. (2011). Coaching in Organizations. *HB 332-2011*

Grant, A.M. (2012). ROI is a poor measure of coaching success: towards a more holistic approach using a well-being and engagement framework. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory. Research and Practice*, 1,1 -12

Starr, J. (2008). The Coaching Manual. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited

Author

Fiona Klat-Smith, PBC, Level 5, 221 Miller Street, North Sydney, NSW 2060

www.peterberry.com.au

02 8918 0888

Fklat-smith@peterberry.com.au

Confidential Information

Copyright Peter Berry Consultancy © 2012 and Hogan Assessment Systems Inc. 2011

Level 5 221 Miller Street North Sydney NSW 2060 | T +61 2 8918 0888 F +61 2 9929 5582 |

www.peterberry.com.au