

# FORD CONSULTING

## Getting Best Value from Supervision

- **Prepare carefully,**
  - Set time aside to think through, reflect and sift through your recent work
  - Be honest with yourself
  - Construct an agenda in the same way you expect your coachees to do
  - Use a prompt sheet or mind map if it helps
  - Try keeping a supervision journal – jotting down ideas, successes, concerns, feelings and so on as they arise during your practice
  - Consider the questions below when preparing:
    - Which clients am I finding it most enjoyable to work with? What does this say about me?
    - What clients am I finding it most difficult to work with? What does this say about me?
    - What is the best / worst coaching moment that has occurred since we last met?
    - What ethical issues am I troubled about?
    - What dilemmas am I facing? (with particular clients or in general)
    - What issues do I find recurring with my clients?
    - What might this suggest I am noticing or ignoring?
    - What does this say about my practice?
    - Which skills and techniques do I find easy?
    - Which skills and techniques do I avoid because I find them difficult?
    - What concerns do I have about my coaching practice?
    - What feedback have I had from my clients?
    - How should I be addressing the themes arising from this feedback
    - How is the relationship between us going?
    - What does the answer to this suggest about my coaching style?
    - How am I growing as a coach?
    - What else is going on in my life that could spread light on the above issues?
- **Notice your own reactions to the sessions**
  - You may feel apprehension combined with excitement, pleasurable anticipation and interest.
  - This reminds us that how our coachees might feel as they make themselves vulnerable in their work with us.
  - In order to get value out of a supervision session we make ourselves vulnerable by being willing to own up to doubts and mistakes and to receiving feedback.
- **Offer your supervisor feedback**
  - Build the relationship on candour, trust just as you would with your coachees.
- **Expect to get non-judgmental comment**
  - Your supervisor was not with you when you made those quick decisions and there is literally an infinite number of ways a coaching session could go.
- **Concentrate on you and your coaching style**
  - Don't get into a intellectual analysis of your coachee's issues
  - Just as your coachee may lure you into discussing people who are not present in your coaching sessions, so might you with your supervisor.
- **Consider using evidence**
  - In coaching the value of the process is increased when it is based on observation and external data rather than just story telling from the coachee. The same is true for supervision.

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- Possible ways of using evidence include:
  - Ask a willing coachee if you can record a session, using it as basis for your own reflection and then as a basis for supervision
  - Ask a willing coachee to write some reflective notes after each session considering what went well, what did not, useful and less useful coaching behaviours, thoughts and feelings that were difficult to express in the session itself. Match this with reflections of your own and swap the diaries towards the end of the programme. This is a humbling and challenging experience for any coach and often reveals widely differing perceptions of what has happened.
  - Ask a trusted third party to run a simple email or telephone questionnaire with clients who have completed their coaching. Ask them for feedback as to how useful the coaching has been, what changes they have made in their lives as a result of the coaching and any suggestions they might have as to how you could improve your effectiveness. When a third party does this you get more truthful answers that go beyond conventional politeness. This could be done as a mutual exchange with another coach.
- **Be realistic**
  - Supervision can not *guarantee* quality of the coaching process or the *complete* protection of coachees
  - A supervisor is often assumed to have access to greater wisdom and experience but supervisor and supervisee could well share the same blind spots, especially if they trained in the establishment and / or have worked exclusively together for a long time.
  - Whether supervision succeeds or fails depends largely on the self-awareness and honesty of the supervisee

## Sources:

**Carrroll M & Gilbert M (2005)** *On Being a Supervisee: Creating Learning Partnerships*, Vukani Publishing

**Rogers J (2004)** *Coaching Skills: A Handbook*, Open University Press, Maidenhead.