

Australian Coaches' Views on Coaching Supervision and Implications for Australian Coach Education, Training and Practice

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Overview

- Background Thinking
 - There is a clear need for reflective practice of some kind
 - But is supervision necessarily a good thing?
 - What do Australian coaches think about supervision?
- Ensuing Actions
 - Run a study
 - First Australian research into attitudes to coach supervision
 - "Positive" and "negative" experiences
 - Implications for education, training and practice



2



Supervision ?



Super-vision?

When we stop developing ourselves, we stop being effective at developing others; and when we are most alive to our own learning is often when we are of most value to others
 Hawkins & Smith, 2006

3



What kind of reflective learning is needed?

- Many forms of reflective practice
 - Journaling – written reflection
 - Self-assessed practice activities
 - Professional Development activities
 - Peer consultation
- All good – but may not deliver solid feedback on our work as coaches

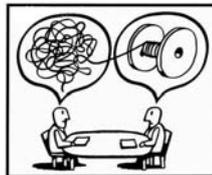


4



Australia Research on Supervision

- Background to current research
 - Supervision emerging topic in Australia
 - Development of Australian Standards Handbook
 - Lack of clarity about who's doing what, with who, how, why
- Concerns about role of supervision in coaching
 - Untrained supervisors
 - Therapy "supervision"
 - Over-expectant coaches
 - Unsustained claims about supervision
 - Is supervision the new "black"?



5



Couch or Coach as Supervisor?

- Coach or Couch: A controversial view ?
 - One of the possible dangers of a coach using a counsellor or counselling psychologist is that the supervisor's professional focus may tend towards understanding the psychology of the coachee – and many focus more on pathology than well-being or goal attainment (Hawkins, 2010)



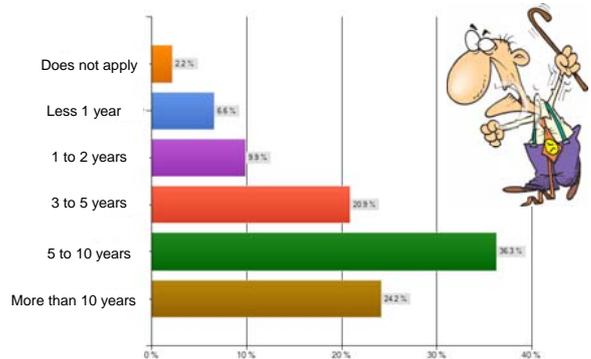
6

Australian Research on Supervision

- 187 participants – online survey
 - External Coaches = 152
 - Internal Coaches = 24
 - Manager Coaches = 16
 - “Does not apply” = 5
- NB: Some respondents checked more than one category
- Are you a registered psychologist or fully trained counsellor?
 - 32.3% - Yes; 67.8% - No



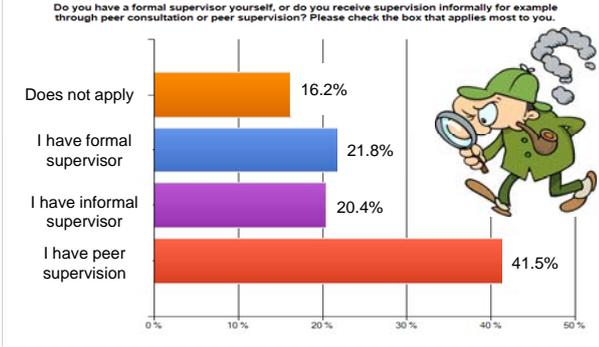
How long have you been coaching for?



Duration	Percentage
Does not apply	22%
Less than 1 year	6.6%
1 to 2 years	9.9%
3 to 5 years	26.9%
5 to 10 years	36.3%
More than 10 years	24.3%

Do you have a formal supervisor?

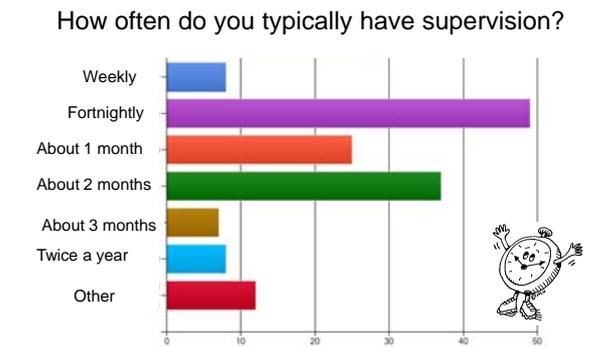
Do you have a formal supervisor yourself, or do you receive supervision informally for example through peer consultation or peer supervision? Please check the box that applies most to you.



Supervision Type	Percentage
Does not apply	16.2%
I have formal supervisor	21.8%
I have informal supervisor	20.4%
I have peer supervision	41.5%

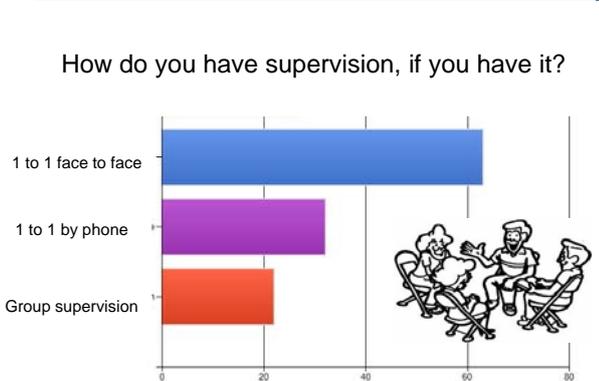
How often?

How often do you typically have supervision?



Frequency	Percentage
Weekly	8%
Fortnightly	48%
About 1 month	24%
About 2 months	36%
About 3 months	6%
Twice a year	8%
Other	12%

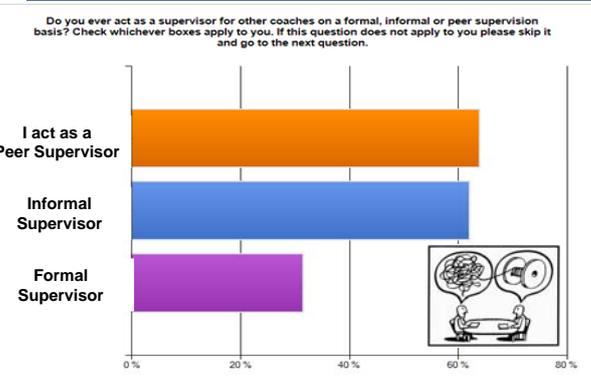
How do you have supervision, if you have it?



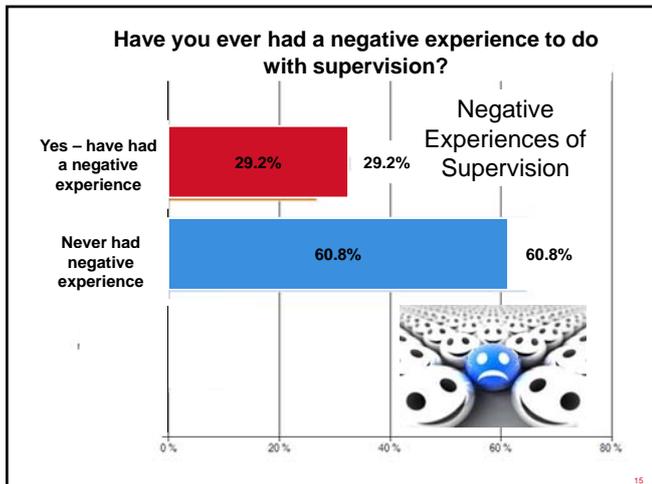
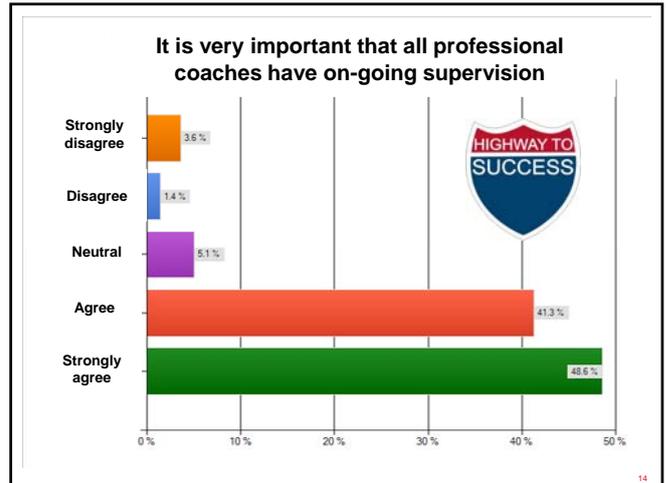
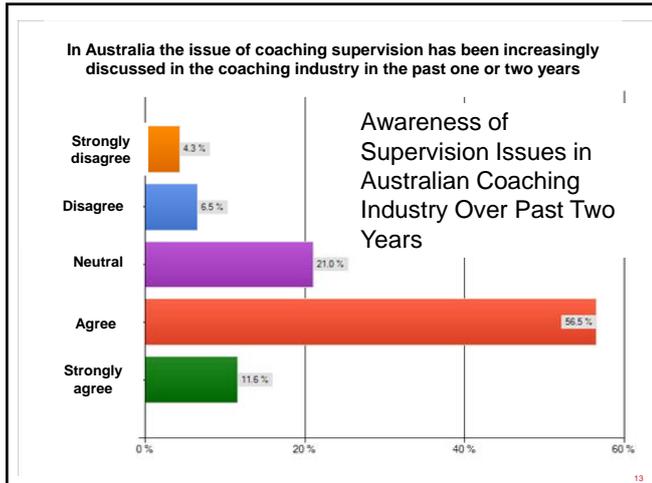
Method	Percentage
1 to 1 face to face	65%
1 to 1 by phone	32%
Group supervision	22%

Do you act as supervisor? If so how?

Do you ever act as a supervisor for other coaches on a formal, informal or peer supervision basis? Check whichever boxes apply to you. If this question does not apply to you please skip it and go to the next question.



Role	Percentage
I act as a Peer Supervisor	65%
Informal Supervisor	62%
Formal Supervisor	32%



Examples of Some Reported Negative Experiences of Supervision

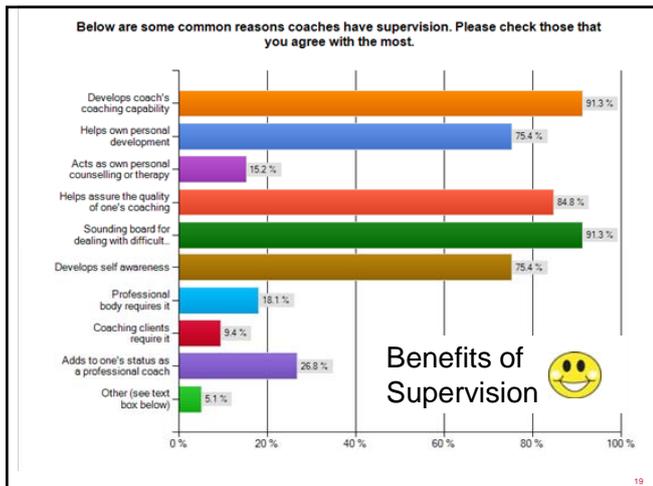
- Coach was **ego driven** and quoted lots of theory without evidence base!
- **Lack of chemistry. Clash of beliefs**, approaches, values, experiences, etc.
- When I felt the supervisor **wasn't skilled enough** in both coaching me around an issue, and/or wasn't able to create an agenda free space.
- Supervisor did not **demonstrate coaching competencies** during the supervision session. Also session was **clearly not prepared** or structured in any way.
- Sought a supervisor who was a psychologist that I really admired - **they really didn't know how to supervise me**. They focused on the tools and processes I was using rather than the meta level. I also had much more experience in leadership coaching and they felt they couldn't add much. It was quite 'low level' and unfulfilling. Mind you **my supervisor of now 2 years is not a coach but comes from the counselling profession but did thesis on supervision, has enormous experience being a supervisor** - this makes the difference!
- **Broken confidentiality**

Some Reported Negative Experiences of Peer and Group Supervision

- A **group** supervision session I attended (9 people) was railroaded by a couple of **individuals running their own agenda**.
- I attended a number of **group** supervision sessions for a about 1 1/2 years at XXX and got very little from them. **I found that I had as much if not more experience than** most of the people attending.
- Strong negative experience 2x in separate **peer** supervision discussions where the supervisor - **does not listen well** - wanted to us the time to **talk about their work/experiences/contacts** rather than hear me and provide supervision - **being told what approach to take** with a client when actual advice was not sought, merely a sounding board. Only 2 negatives though amidst many positives.

Some Reported Negative Experiences of Peer and Group Supervision

- I have observed supervision being done by **people who don't really know what they are doing** - in a **group** setting. The result is group and individual confusion and if anything a diminution of coaching effectiveness for those involved.
- Sometimes, in **peer or group** supervision, you come across coaches with **strong ideological views** or whom interpret the groups shared experiences or research you are looking at, in a strange and irrelevant way. I find exposure to such people can do more harm than good sometimes for those who are less educated in the science and theory that informs coaching.
- **Q: What can we learn from these "negative" experiences?**



Reported Benefits of Supervision from the Literature
were supported by this survey
e.g., Michael Carroll, 2007 in Handbook of Coaching

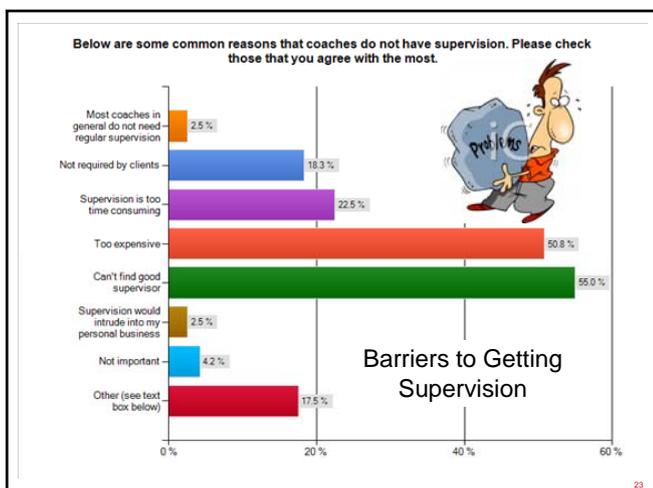
- Offers protection to clients (cases are reviewed)
- Offers a reflective space for practitioners (and so potential for insights for improvement)
- It helps practitioners identify their strengths and weaknesses
- Helps learning from peers
- Helps keep current with professional development
- Raises awareness of ethical issues
- Helps assess impact/affect of coaching
- Forum of accountability for coach

A View from a Supervisor

- “The feedback I receive weekly from the coaches I supervise / mentor is how valuable it is because it **helps raise the bar** on who they are being as coaches and helps them to develop their skills, their confidence and to think in new ways. They find it very helpful to have a more senior experienced colleague as a **sounding board for challenging situations** and to **bounce ideas and brainstorm**. Most of them are also comfortable in sharing with their clients that they have a supervisor/mentor coach. Having a supervisor/mentor also **keeps them connected to the coaching world** so they don't feel they are out there on their own.”

A View from the Market

- “I think encouraging coaching supervision is a necessary next step in the journey of "professionalising" coaching. As a buyer of coaching services I would like to see more coaches who can talk about their coaching supervision arrangements.”



Key Barriers to Getting Supervision

- **Barriers to Getting Supervision**
- “In this order: **difficulty in finding a good coaching supervisor** and then **cost**. I'm **happy to pay for supervision** / mentor coaching when I believe it's really helping me, however I do believe that the cost is what encourages coaches to delay addressing supervision. I would imagine that if most coaches had a taste of formal/qualified supervision they would then understand the value and pay for it accordingly. To me, and to many others I believe, **formal, qualified supervision is still a concept, not an experience...**”
- “**Difficulty in finding a trusted supervisor** who has the time to work with me.”
- “**Also, few people in the industry really understand what coaching supervision is about.**”

 A good supervisor is hard to find

- **Hard to find supervisors who know their stuff**
 - "Quality of supervision. Finding a great supervisor **Getting a COACH supervisor (not a psychologist that thinks they know about coaching)** Being willing to be supervised Cost and time are not downsides - it is too important to skimp on."
 - "The major drawback in supervision is the difficulty in finding a good supervisor - **for me a good supervisor is one who has had experience in business and a behavioural science background. I do not see clinical psychologists as being good supervisors** as they do not understand the language of business and conversely I do not see that "business only" supervisors have enough behavioural science training."

• Clinicians and psychologists not necessarily seen as best" 

25

 A good supervisor is hard to find

- **Inappropriate Expectations** 
 - "I don't see any downsides to the use of supervision per se, but I do see potential downsides to setting **inappropriate market expectations around** what are the current supervision practices in the market - specifically, that if a coach is not supervised then he or she is not a good coach. The aspiration for all coaches to use supervision has merit, but there is **no evidence as yet that all good coaches, or even the majority of good coaches, use regular (and appropriate) supervision.** There is also an issue regarding what practices actually occur that are currently being labelled supervision. **I am aware of a number of claims of supervised practice that would probably not stand up to scrutiny** - again an issue between what happens and what is claimed in the market."

• Beware supervision as the new "black"

26

 A good supervisor is hard to find

- **Other Market-related Issues** 
 - "Finding a quality impartial supervisor who's not also a competitor!"
 - "In a small market in Australia, sometimes I have wondered about the use of international supervisors - for the benefit of having a truly independent supervisor."



27

 A balanced view

- **But:**
 - "Cost and time can sometimes be felt as a "down side" - as can being deeply challenged at the core of your being - but I see it more as an investment than a cost. So none of the above are in reality a "down side". They are all essential really."

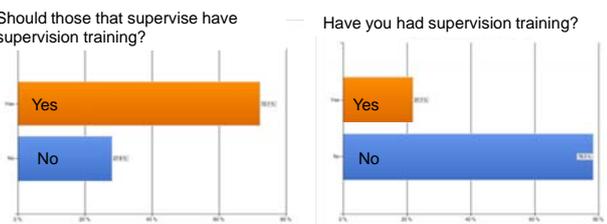


28

 Supervision and Training

Should those that supervise have supervision training?

Have you had supervision training?



29

 Implications for Education, Training and Practice

- **Supervision in Australia is:**
 - Relatively new aspect of professional coaching
 - Perceived to be important (but not vital)
 - Experienced as important by coaches
 - Valued by the market
- **But**
 - No formal supervision training as yet (opportunity?)
 - Some disillusionment in supervision
 - Real need for supervisors who can draw on *both* behavioural science *and* business experience

30

 Implications for Education, Training and Practice

- Opportunities galore! 
- Further Australian / comparative research?
- Implications for training?
- Development of supervision practices in Australia?
- Supervisor accreditation in Australia?



31

 Acknowledgement

- Acknowledgements: I would like to thank the members of the Australian coaching industry who took part in this study and who, by doing so, are helping foster the links between academic research and professional coaching practice. If you are an Australian coach who would like to contribute to future developments in Australian coaching research please consider joining the Australian Coaching Industry Research Advisory Board www.coachingresearch.com.au

32

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33