

EMCC

European Mentoring &
Coaching Council



20th Annual Mentoring and Coaching Conference

21-23 November 2013 – Athens, Greece

Mentoring/Coaching: The Next Decade

Is Everything Confidential in a Coaching Relationship?

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www.emccconference.org

Warm up – what would you do?

- A. I'm bartering some coaching sessions for social media help for my business. Do I need a contract for that? Yes or No
- B. I recently attended a very useful workshop and the facilitators spoke about how great it would be if everyone knew about their coaching method. I took some of their printed material and decided to give a mini presentation at my local chapter. Yes or No
- C. In one of my coaching sessions I find out that my client is interested in the same religious organization that I'm active in. Our church is having an informational/recruiting dinner soon, and I'd like to invite him to attend. Yes or No
- D. It is OK to let my existing clients know that I have raised my rates and expect additional payment from the next month forward? Yes or No
- E. I refer my clients to my accountant and she sends me a referral commission fee for each one. Do I need to let my clients know? Yes or No

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What about **ETHICS** in coaching?

It's legal ∴ it's ethical

It's ethical when it's part of the job.

It's ethical if it's for a good cause.

That's the way that business is done here!

No one is getting hurt, so it's ok.

It's ethical because it fits my personal beliefs.

Where to seek direction: Coaching Competencies

ICF:

Meeting Ethical Guidelines and Professional Standards

Understanding of coaching ethics and standards and ability to apply them appropriately in all coaching situations.

- Understands and exhibits in own behaviors the ICF Standards of Conduct
- Understands and follows all ICF Ethical Guidelines

EMCC:

Covered in the guidelines for EIA

Confidentiality – perhaps the most tricky of the ethical standards

A set of rules or a promise that limits access or places restrictions on certain types of information.

CONFIDENTIAL:

- private and secret: carried out or revealed in the expectation that anything done or revealed will be kept private
- for select group: not available to the public, e.g. because it is commercially or industrially sensitive or concerns matters of national security
- dealing with private affairs: entrusted with somebody's personal or private matters

Confidentiality and Professional Coaching Bodies

ICF Code of Ethics; Section 4: Confidentiality/Privacy

As a coach:

- I will maintain the strictest levels of confidentiality with all client and sponsor information. I will have a clear agreement or contract before releasing information to another person, unless required by law.
- I will have a clear agreement upon how coaching information will be exchanged among coach, client and sponsor.
- When acting as a trainer of student coaches, I will clarify confidentiality policies with the students.
- I will have associated coaches and other persons whom I manage in service of my clients and their sponsors in a paid or volunteer capacity make clear agreements or contracts to adhere to the ICF Code of Ethics Part 2, Section 4: Confidentiality/Privacy standards and the entire ICF Code of Ethics to the extent applicable.

Confidentiality

EMCC Code of Ethics: Integrity:

The coach/mentor will:

- Maintain throughout the level of **confidentiality** which is appropriate and is agreed at the start of the relationship.
- Disclose information only where explicitly agreed with the client and sponsor (where one exists), unless the coach/mentor believes that there is convincing evidence of serious danger to the client or others if the information is withheld.
- Act within applicable law and not encourage, assist or collude with others engaged in conduct which is dishonest, unlawful, unprofessional or discriminatory.

Confidentiality

- Maintain strict levels of confidentiality with all client information, unless required by law to disclose certain information
(THE PROFESSIONAL CHARTER FOR COACHING AND MENTORING June 2011)
- Signed by EMCC, ICF, AC

Feedback from Coaches – what do you think?

- 'Confidentiality in Organizational Coaching' Survey hosted by ICF (January-February 2013)
- Participants recruited through ICF Communities of Practice and various LinkedIn discussion groups
- Open-ended comments gathered from nearly 40 Internal/External Coaches
- Ridler Report 2013 –Trends in the use of Executive Coaching (In collaboration with EMCC UK)

Confidentiality

- Confidentiality was mentioned spontaneously by most respondents and is a **key factor** in every coaching engagement.
- An assurance of confidentiality is of utmost importance in both internal and external coaching engagements.
- Almost all respondents mentioned that the confidentiality arrangements are set out at the start of the engagement, and many required both coach and coachee to sign up to a confidentiality agreement.

About the Survey Findings

- Respondents were not required to reveal their identities/provide the names of their organizations
- Analysis provided by context (e.g. Internal/External)
- Questions surrounded three primary areas:
 - Process for establishing confidentiality agreement
 - Conversation areas that are free to disclose
 - Organizational dilemmas surrounding confidentiality

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Establishing the Agreement

Survey Question One:

*"Please describe the **process for establishing agreement** between you, the client/coachee, and the organizational sponsor regarding the issue of confidentiality."*

Establishing the Agreement

- External Coaches appeared more likely to engage the Sponsor in specific dialogue about confidentiality *when creating* the coaching agreement
- Internal Coaches appeared content with *informing* the Sponsor about confidentiality safeguards, rather than co-creating the agreement
- Coach mentoring and supervision requirements can add layers of complexity to the coaching agreement between the coach, coachee, and sponsor



Establishing the Agreement

- Ridler Report conducted in 2009 indicated that only 36% of sponsors had corporate policy regarding confidentiality and arrangements were left to coach and coachee
- In 2013, 86% of sponsor organizations “always” or “often” included agreement of confidentiality

Client Confidentiality

Survey Question Two:

*"Have you ever considered information obtained during a coaching conversation to be crucially important to the supervisor/sponsor/HR department; however, you were uncertain if disclosing this information **might violate client confidentiality?**"*

Client Confidentiality: Legal Standpoint

Respondents felt that Coach may share information with the Sponsor if the Coachee:

- Commits/plans to commit a felony
- Divulges sensitive information that they are precluded to disclose by law, organizational policies or procedures
- Endangers/plans to endanger themselves or their co-workers
- Endangers/plans to endanger the welfare of a child

Client Confidentiality: Practical Standpoint

Respondents felt that Coach also may notify the Sponsor when the Coachee:

- Begins receiving the coaching
- Plans coaching discussion topics/identifies general goals
- Demonstrates progress toward identified goals
- Fails to attend coaching sessions
- Lacks motivation or engagement in coaching process
- Provides final feedback on coaching sessions

Ethics Case Studies

Survey Question Three:

"If possible, can you please share your unique 'dilemma' that you experienced as a coach?"

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Sample Case Study:

An Internal Coach completes several coaching sessions with multiple employees, and an obvious 'pattern of behavior' emerges that seems to point to a larger systemic issue for the company.

Because the coach is an employee of the company, they feel compelled to share this information with the sponsor; but, doing so will require the coach to reveal specifics about the coaching conversations.

Your Turn!

- Consider how a coach working in your organization would respond to this ethical dilemma
- Use the note cards provided to capture solutions that would help the coach working in your organization

Final Questions or Comments?

- WHAT SHALL WE DO TO PROMOTE ETHICAL CONDUCT OF PROFESSIONAL COACHES?

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Available Resources

ICF Code of Ethics:

<http://www.coachfederation.org/about-icf/ethics/icf-code-of-ethics/>

Ethics FAQs:

<http://www.coachfederation.org/about-icf/ethics/faq/>

ICF Ethics Community of Practice:

<http://www.coachfederation.org/icf-members/special-interest-groups/>



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