

How could a holistic integrated medical model benefit business coaching, and define a valid and effective Integrative Business Coaching?

1. Background

In parallel with my training in the Business Coach Programme at Meyler Campbell, I completed a post-graduate degree in Bioregulatory Medicine with a focus on complex homeopathy.

This inspired me to establish some connections between both domains.

In particular, I asked myself "how beneficial is it to broaden my business coach questions beyond the strictly professional environment in order to adopt a more holistic approach"?

In other words, how integrating questions related to the coachee in the context of his personal life would help to identify the causes of his professional issues?

This approach would be inspired by the integrated model of complementary medicine, whereby mind, body and spirit are inter-connected. In addition, the investigation of the causes drives the preventative and curative treatments for long-term effect, rather than treating the symptoms for short-term resolution as in classic allopathic medicine.

But if adopting a holistic approach to business coaching would lead towards more effective and sustained results for the coachee, how would I define holistic, or holism, and what would it mean for a business coach?

2. From Holism and Holistic Health to Holistic Coaching

Holistic derives from Holism (from ὅλος *holos*, a Greek word meaning *all, entire, total*) which is well established as a concept in science, sociology, medicine, psychology and philosophy.

The general principle of holism was concisely summarized by Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*: "The whole is more than the sum of its parts", emphasizing the interdependence of its parts and the synergistic result of the whole.

Holistic health is a philosophy of medical care that involves working fully with the whole person's closely interconnected physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of life. Reliance is placed on treatment modalities that foster the self reparatory processes of natural healing. It includes therapeutic disciplines such as Acupuncture, Homeopathy, Hypnotherapy, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Naturopathy and Yoga.

More than just taking care of the various singular components that make up the physical body and treating the symptoms, the goal is a wellness that encompasses the entire person.

However, the concept of holism in economics or business has only recently emerged. Royer¹ suggests that holism is an approach to conducting business that requires the organisation to know its purpose, understand its purpose, and act on its purpose².

By extension, the holistic process offers individuals the opportunity to be the creators of their own business reality, through an understanding of all levels of personal (including physical, emotional, social, mental, health,..), professional issues and lifestyle.

Therefore, Holistic Coaching integrates all these dimensions, empowering the coachee to take the steps necessary to bring back his natural state of wellbeing, develop autonomously, and deploy his professional and personal potentials.

But who are the players in the broader Holistic Coaching market?

¹ Royer, C. M. (1997). Holism in advising: Implications for design

² Holistic Approach to Business: A New Paradigm for Prosperity, Darlene D. Collins, Ph.D

3. Holistic Coaching versus Holistic Business Coaching?

Google generates 70 million answers for “Coaching”, 30 million for “Business Coaching” and 40 million for “Life Coaching”. Further narrowing the search, “Holistic Coaching” generates 2 million answers and “Holistic Business Coaching” only 450,000.

Although a very empirical statistical method, I analysed the first 100 relevant and non redundant answers of the two latter categories, in order to further understand the profiles of such coaches. Here are my observations:

- Holistic Coaching is divided in two groups:
 - (i) 48% Life/Personal Coaches who use a holistic perspective, and
 - (ii) 52% Wellbeing Coaches who offer some kind of “complementary health therapeutics” such as massage, reiki, meditation, yoga, hypnotherapy, in order to serve the whole being.

Geographically, almost 49% are located in North America, 34% in the UK, 6% in Spain and Germany, and 11% Australia/NZ.

- **Holistic Business Coaching** is mainly represented by:

- (i) 80% of Holistic Business/ Coaching (HB/C) who focus on entrepreneurs of Holistic Businesses (eg self-employed practitioners such as hypnotherapists, energy healers..). They help their clients to create their business plan to make their activity viable then successful, design their specific marketing plan etc.

- (ii) The remaining 20% consists of Holistic/ Business Coaches (H/BC) who claim to integrate a holistic approach of the individual in their business coaching.

They are predominantly based in North America (77%), followed by the UK (15%), Australia/NZ (7%) and Rest of Europe (1%).

These coaches are actually focusing on the whole person/individual in his professional context. In other words, it is business coaching following a holistic approach, inspired by the complementary medical model. Holistic/ Business Coaches know that your life is not just limited to your business, and the issues holding you back may actually be something outside your business life.

Beyond my observations, the holistic approach of business coaching has generated interest amongst academics and coaching practitioners:

“The words mind, body and spirit simply symbolize the different aspects of employees' lives that companies are encouraged to take part in caring for--everything from work/life balance and “emotional competence” to the search for meaning in their personal and professional lives³”.

In addition, robust and credible business entities such as Booz Allen⁴ and Westminster Business School⁵ include the holistic concept in their business coaching approaches.

In particular, Professor and business coach Vltka Hlupic from Westminster Business School developed recently “EXCELLENCE”©: a holistic model for executive coaching and leadership development”. The model includes the integration of various aspects including: power of mind, creativity, effective personal development, long term goals and vision, leadership skills, emotional intelligence, law of attraction, communication, evaluation of improved performance. And the model recommends coaching tools at various stages such as: visualisations, life-balances and values profiles, mind mapping, nutrition, EFT, role playing, kinesiology, brainstorming, breathing techniques, meditation, journaling, 360 degree approaches,.. They demonstrate that it initiates and generates long lasting and sustainable positive changes within the coachee.

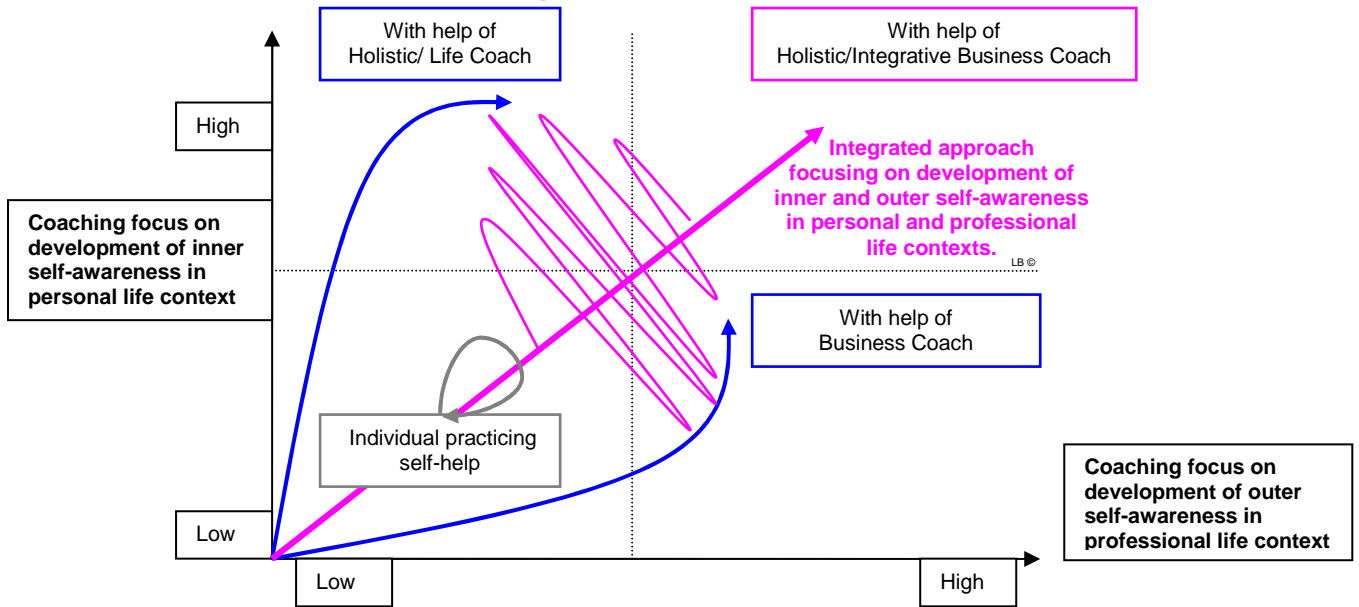
³ Comeau-Kirschner & Wah, 1999

⁴ The Development Framework: Booz Allen Hamilton's holistic method of employee development gives them a roadmap to success—both professionally and personally.

⁵ The Centre for Business Information, Organisation and Process Management (BIOPoM) is an interdisciplinary international research network of academics and practitioners researching and disseminating best practice in management of business information, organisation and processes. These activities are carried out through collaborative research projects, workshops, publications and consultancy. The Centre is housed within the Department of Business Information Management and Operations at Westminster Business School (University of Westminster). It was established in June 2005 and it is directed by Professor Vlatka Hlupic.

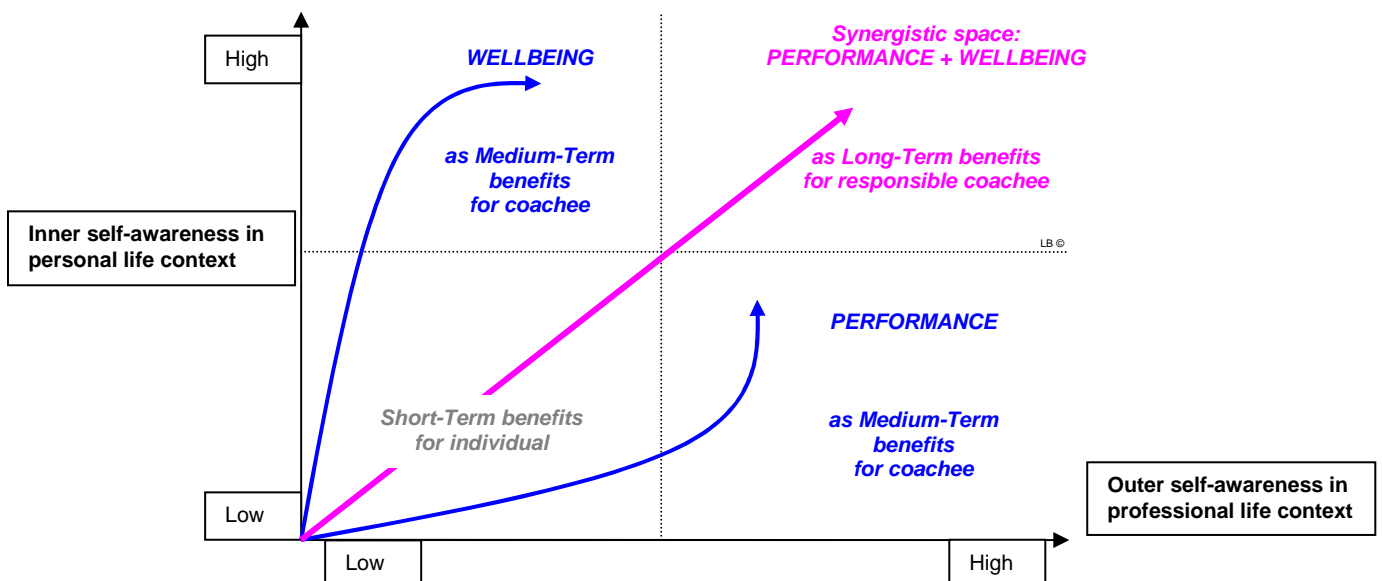
4. My vision on Holistic/Integrative Business Coaching, and my own approach

How I see the **various coaching approaches**:



The Holistic/Integrative Business Coach and the Coachee do co-create a clear/fluid space for trust, safety and confidentiality. The key is the fit between the coach and the coachee, the skills and ability of the coach, and the coachee motivation in order for the significant journey to start⁶. The Integrative Business Coach will guide the coachee throughout a meaningful, dynamic and focused **navigation journey**, exploring professional and personal life contexts. As a consequence, they will co-highlight the personal causes that are at the origin of certain symptomatic behaviours in the coachee's professional context, such as the causes of stress in a business context, a lack of performance or motivation, or difficulties in adapting to a new position/ responsibilities. Reciprocally, some symptomatic behaviours impacting the coachee's personal life could be generated by a business context, such as change in nutrition and sleeping patterns, lifestyle. This is why, I believe that in my practice, it is essential to encompass the whole individual and explore in-depth with him areas beyond the business context, during 2 hour long sessions. Holistic business coaching, then, is almost a combined form of life and business coaching.

How I see the **results** from the various coaching approaches:



⁶ The Coaching Scorecard: a holistic approach to evaluating the benefits of business coaching, Mel Leedham, Intern'al Journ of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring, 2005

I consider that the results of a pure business coaching approach are limited to medium-term benefits, because if the coachee has personal life issues that are unknown to the coach, there may be some consequent negative influence on his professional side given that all is inter-related. Likewise for the results of a pure life coaching approach, which are limited to medium-term results, because if the coachee has professional life issues that are unknown to the coach, there may be some consequent negative influence on his personal side given that all is inter-connected.

However, I consider that a holistic/integrative business coaching approach will result in long-term benefits for the coachee. Through this approach, he would develop an **increased inner and outer self-awareness of his personal and professional life contexts**, therefore would become more responsible and autonomous to master sustainable **performance and wellbeing**.

When the coachee is recognised in his wholeness, it creates a “**synergistic space**” (the ‘more’ in the phrase “the whole is more than the sum of the parts”), resulting from the interaction and integration of the personal and professional dimensions.

Indeed, if the coachee is able to realise inner benefits, he is in a much better position to be able to achieve more visible outer benefits (enhanced skills, knowledge, understanding and improved behaviours associated with relationships with his boss, team, peers or customers).

It is widely accepted that adopting a positive mental attitude improves organic functions, health, creativity, efficiency, behaviour and energy level. Furthermore, a better nutrition improves biological functions, hence mental functions. Therefore, a coachee can better adapt and manage his issues, therefore increasing his performance, efficiency and wellbeing.

With my practice clients, I progressively introduced a holistic/integrative business coaching approach, asking personal questions when appropriate related to a variety of factors, including emotions, feelings, relationships, nutrition, fitness, physiology, sleeping patterns, medication intake, health state, level of stress and its impact on behaviour.

The objective was to co-identify the causes of professional issues, and co-establish connections in order to work on them. Indeed, if stress is not managed properly, the hormonal balance will shift resulting in a weakening of the immune system, in parallel with a decline in the intellectual/mental and physical capabilities. As the level of energy lowers, it impacts negatively on the vitality, creativity and efficiency at work.

5. Conclusion

Holistic Business Coaching is a proactive integrated approach, and in the context of professional and personal issues of executives, it may be both curative and preventative.

The Holistic/ Business Coach acts as an independent sounding board to the open-minded coachee who is willing to create positive change. The Holistic/ Business Coach is aware of the possible inter-dependence of personal and professional life issues, and his invigorating role is the mirror effect of the resulting synergistic space, mirroring the “more” in “the whole is more than the sum of the parts”.

Finally, I have chosen to designate this approach as Integrative Business Coaching.

Mrs Laurence Bridot⁷

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⁷ Note: In this essay, I have used the masculine gender when referring to both the coach and the coachee. No offence is attended to the female population, and you should read systematically: she or he, her or his!