



Reflecting pathways to  
learning and change



#### F. Campone, Inc. Newsletter

What does the literature of coaching and coaching research have to offer? In this bi-monthly column, we look at a research article or articles with a single focus and explore how the study and findings may help coaches be better coaches (the practitioners eye) and how coaching researchers may use the information (the researchers eye). This months focus is on coaching high achievers ( Jones, Graham & Kristy Spooner. Coaching High Achievers. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*. Winter 2006, v. 58 #1, pp 40-50).

## Currents in Coaching Research: Coaching High Achievers

### Currents in Coaching Research

Vol. 1, #3 June 2006

Bridging Coaching Research and Coaching Practice

### Coaching High Achievers

#### *The Study in a Nutshell*

The authors of the article noted that while coaching has often been considered a means of improving the performance of underachieving personnel, many business coaching clients are, in fact, high achievers. The study seeks to close a perceived gap in the literature by exploring the needs of such clients and identifying best strategies from both coach and client perspectives. The article offers a summary of the literature on high achievers, identifying behavioral characteristics, values, motivators and emotional needs likely to manifest in the workplace as developmental pathways. Looking to the literature of sports coaching, the authors also summarize the characteristics of successful coach-athlete relationships.

Semi-structured interviews with high achievers from both sports and business, and with their coaches, yielded a specific set of characteristics which the authors encourage coaches to consider in working with this population. These include: (a) self-focus (i.e. constantly seeking opportunities to improve themselves); (b) driven by challenging goals; (c) total commitment to high performance; (d) demanding of themselves and others-including their coaches; (e) highly confident; (f) frequently experience isolation and loneliness.

Particular needs from coaching include a relationship in which high achievers can have complete confidence and trust, cutting edge information and rapid results. Of special interest is a priority which respondents placed on having a coach who is confident yet lacks ego. A clear focus for the coaching process is equally valued, as is honest and direct feedback.

### *The Research Eye*

Conclusions were drawn from a modest sample size (14 high achievers and 7 coaches) using a purposive sampling process. Five of the coaches worked with clients from both athletic and business sectors; one coached athletes only; one coached business people only. The literature review provided a reasonable basis for the connection between the two types of coaching niches.

The semi-structured interviews were both taped and transcribed. Content analysis yielded themes which were grouped in successive iterations and researchers sought to achieve consensus. Participants were asked to comment on themes with additional discussion to resolve conflict. The resulting themes were presented in the article with representative quotes.

### *The Practitioners Eye*

The results highlight some of the client characteristics and developmental needs of high achievers. The authors advise practitioners who work with this population to make sure they have both the requisite skills and personal orientation to work with demanding, fast-paced, self-directed clients; to maintain and be able to share their own cutting edge knowledge base and to walk the balance beam of self-confidence and lack of ego.

High achievers expect their coaches to understand their demanding world and to be able to supply relevant and stimulating information to promote the clients further development. Coaches working with this population are also expected to be able to provide critical feedback in a way that is motivating and confidence-building with a constant focus on progression.

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