

# Managing and maximizing a relationship with a third party sponsor

*Heather Cooper*

## **Purpose**

This is a strategy for ensuring that a relationship with a third party sponsor is managed and works well. Clearly, the relationship is important, but can also be complex, for a number of reasons:

- The sponsor is paying for the coaching programme.
- The coaching may link to the relationship with the sponsor.
- The sponsor may also need coaching.
- The coach needs to maintain confidentiality and boundaries.
- The sponsor wants to be kept up to date with progress: they want a return on their investment.
- The sponsor may or may not provide subsequent work for the coach.

These can be conflicting issues and it is worth taking time to define your engagement with each party who is involved in the coaching to ensure clarity on roles, responsibilities and boundaries.

## **Description**

This strategy is designed to help you cover the different aspects of a contract with a third party sponsor. It requires you to be focused and clear about the boundaries

and the contract that need to exist for good coaching to take place.

## **Process**

### ***Step 1: At the beginning of a coaching assignment***

At the beginning of a coaching assignment, spend time contracting with the different parties:

*Contracting with the sponsor:*

- Discuss the coaching programme objectives. What are the expectations?
- Find out the organizational context – what does the organization want from the coaching programme?
- Find out how the sponsor will support the coaching programme.
- Decide how to keep up to date without breaking any confidentiality agreement.
- Agree terms and conditions.

*Contracting with the coachee:*

- Agree the coaching programme objectives.
- Discuss how coaching works and share highlights of any coaching model.
- Agree confidentiality and the boundaries of the coaching.
- Agree terms and conditions.
- Check that the ‘chemistry’ is good – can you work well together?

Having had these discussions, produce a coaching contract that the coachee and sponsor can approve before the programme starts.

### ***Step 2: During the coaching programme***

Once the programme has started and after each coaching session, ask the coachee to discuss their learning with their sponsor. This ensures that:

- the learning from the coaching is being applied back to work;
- the sponsor is reassured about the coachee's progress;
- the coachee can choose what they wish to share, that is, they determine the confidentiality levels.

Periodically liaise with the sponsor part way through the programme. Agree this with the coachee and do a check on the boundaries. Are they happy that the sponsor and coach talk? Are there any no-go areas in the conversation? The update with the sponsor is helpful in providing an understanding on how the coachee is progressing, and therefore helps to frame any coaching interventions.

### ***Step 3: At the end of the coaching programme***

Review the progress made, with the coachee and sponsor (both individually and as a trio). This may result in re-contracting for additional sessions or provide closure on the work. It can be very rewarding to complete this evaluation of the work in order to assess what has been achieved and to gain feedback on work as a coach. The review is also crucial for reassuring the value of the coaching programme to the individual and the organization and often leads to the securing of additional work through new assignments.

### **Pitfalls**

There are no known pitfalls to following this clear and objective approach. Failure to adhere, however, is likely to lead to many pitfalls.

### **Bibliography**

McMahon, G. (2005) *Behavioural Contracting, Coach the Coach*, London: Fenman.