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## **COACHING AND THE NEW CAREER PARADIGM**

### **Introduction**

Considering the change dynamics on the labor market, researchers increasingly more frequently emphasize the legitimacy of the use of the notion of *new career* in the literature on the subject. The concept appears with reference to the high volatility of expectations on the market. This is related to the period of employment by the same employer and the shortage of sufficiently qualified and available employees on the market. The development of modern technologies and the automation of an increasing number of processes force employees and employers to develop new competencies and professions. As more and more companies compete on international markets, geographic distances are not an obstacle. Present-day labor market expects employees to continuously develop, increase their qualifications and change the profile of their current jobs. As a result flexibility is required as regards the forms of employment that is offered by employers. The times of a whole period of professional activity with the same employer have gone forever. The changes on the labor market are accompanied by several social and cultural changes. There is an increasing number of women who are professionally active and have high qualifications. Families are started later than before and many women give priority to their educational and professional objectives and not maternity. At present, the increasingly more commonly model of development is to build professional career, achieve material stability and only then start a family.

While considering the change dynamics, it is worth paying attention to the tools that are possessed by individuals and companies and can be applied to follow the changes on the labor market and in social life. Coaching may be one of the development forms that supports employees and companies in their search for and achievement of satisfaction with their professional lives or business activities. An average employee that enters the labor market now is going to change his/her employer a dozen or so times. The same refers to the character and type of the job<sup>1</sup>. The work with a professional coach will enable employees and employers to

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<sup>1</sup> M. Sidor-Rządkowska, *Profesjonalny coaching. Zasady i dylematy etyczne w pracy coacha*, Wolters Kluwer, Warszawa 2012, p. 23.

analyze their strengths and the experience gained. Consequently, the process of their adaptation to the constantly changing conditions will be conducted in a planned and purposeful way.

The aim of the article is to present the characteristics of professional coaching and its benefits for the development of individuals and whole companies in the context of the new career paradigm.

## 1. Explanation of the notion of *coaching*

It is extremely difficult to point at a single and common definition of coaching in the literature on the subject. Moreover, the way it is defined in business is not helpful. Managers use the term without the understanding of this development tool. They identify it with giving commands, advising or suggesting readymade solutions. The lack of understanding of the term may result from the fact that it is applied with reference to other development activities such as training, consulting or mentoring<sup>2</sup>. The English word *coach* may be translated into Polish as *trener*.

Due to numerous conceptualizations of the term coaching, the article presents some selected approaches to the concept. According to Jenny Rogers *coaching is the art of facilitating another person's learning, development, performance and reaching the state of wellbeing*<sup>3</sup>. Another definition presented in the literature on the subject states that it is a conversation based on respect and empathy<sup>4</sup>. John Whitmore emphasized that coaching is *unlocking a person's potential to maximize their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them*<sup>5</sup>.

One of the objectives of coaching is the development of self-awareness. Clients look for their own solutions, widen their perspectives and develop abilities. They take responsibility for the achievement of the designated goal. Coaching is optional and lacks authoritarianism. It is based on questions and supports individual's development<sup>6</sup>. When talking about coaching, one should mention the issue of the professionalism of coach's services. In the Author's opinion the crucial features of a coach are:

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<sup>2</sup> D. Clutterbuck, *Każdy potrzebuje mentora. Jak kierować talentami*, Wydawnictwo Petit, Warszawa 2002, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> J. Rogers, *Coaching*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Sopot 2017, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> I. Whitworth, K. Kimsey-House, H. Kimsey-House, P. Sandahl, *Coaching koaktywny. Umiejętności wspierające sukces klienta*, Wolters Kluwer, Warszawa 2014, pp. 23-24.

<sup>5</sup> J. Whitmore, *Coaching for Performance: A Practical Guide to Growing Your Own Skills*, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, London 1996, p.8.

<sup>6</sup> J. Żukowska, *Naukowe ujęcie coachingu* [in:] P. Wachowiak (ed.), *Człowiek w organizacji. Teoria i praktyka*, Wydawnictwo SGH, Warszawa 2012.

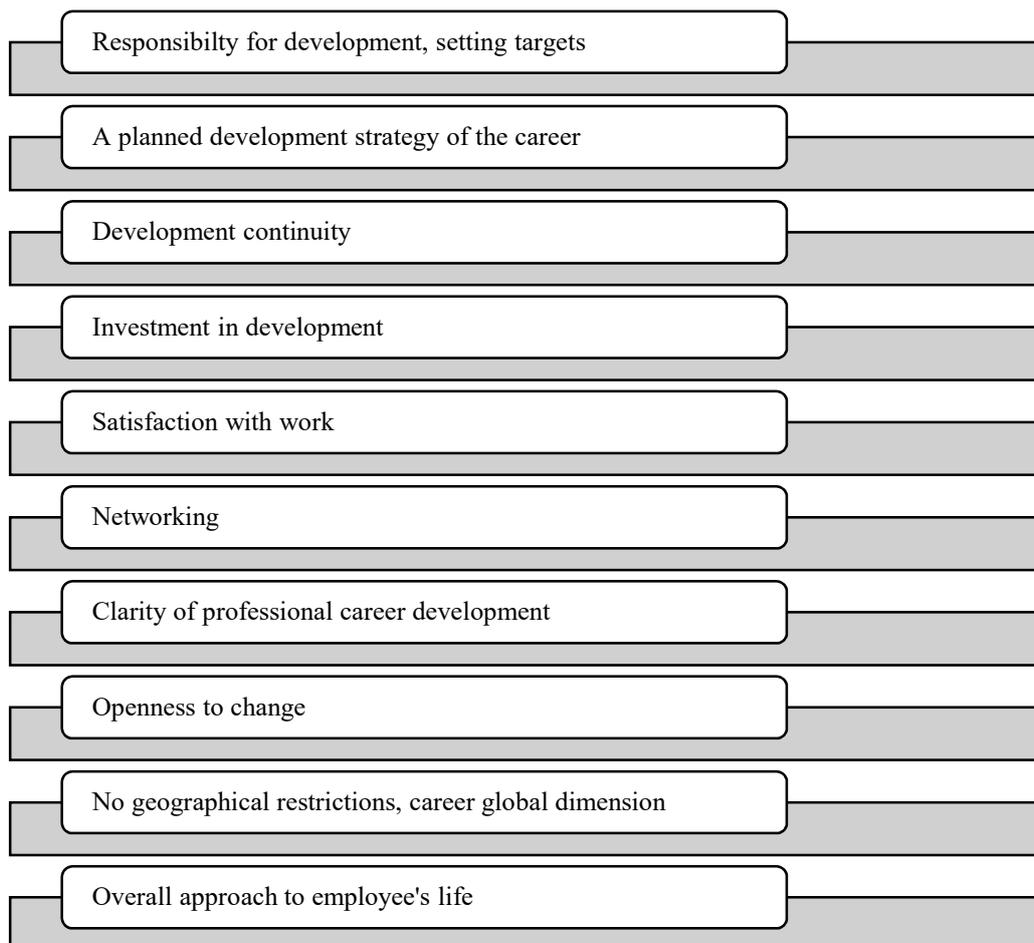
- his/her thorough education,
- experience,
- ethical norms that are applied in the course of the coaching process.

The above three elements enable the development of skills that are necessary in the work of a coach. They are the response to social needs and refer to the challenges that are faced by individuals who enter the labor market and the ones who are already professionally active.

## 2. New career paradigm

The new career paradigm assumes several changes in the career approach. The paradigm makes it possible to present factors that should be considered by employees when they analyze their professional lives.

Figure 1. New career paradigm



Source: Author's research based on M. Sidor-Rządkowska, *Coaching kariery*, Wolters Kluwer, Warszawa 2018, pp. 26-29<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> M. Sidor-Rządkowska, *Coaching kariery*, Wolters Kluwer, Warszawa 2018, pp. 26-29.

Presents trends in professional careers indicate the necessity of continuous improvement. Knowledge and skills that employees gained in previous stages of their education often become insufficient. In many areas the knowledge they have is either outdated or criticized. It is happening increasingly frequently that employees take the responsibility for their career paths. The development of professional careers is increasingly more dependent on relationships with the others. Already at the stage of the recruitment process, the recommendations obtained from previous employers play a crucial role. Employees decide increasingly more often on the model of *boundaryless career*, which assumes mobility in various areas of their professional lives<sup>8</sup>. Stella Molitor defines the new career paradigm in a similar way and points to the transformation process and the necessity of having the change competency<sup>9</sup>.

The presented above approach to professional career differs significantly from the traditional vision of work. The previous approach was dominated by hierarchy, rigid division of responsibilities and a linear character of work<sup>10</sup>. Employees worked in one company for the whole time of their professional activity. This was the result of the lack of mobility of individuals, a restricted access to the information about other workplaces and a socially accepted model of work. Professional life was in a way divided into 3 crucial periods. Firstly, an individual received education and entered the labor market. Then, between 25 and 40 years of age, he/she developed his/her professional status in the course of work. After that, the individual benefited from the status achieved before<sup>11</sup>. The present-day labor market has changed significantly the career paths of individuals. It is impossible to mark clear boundaries between the periods of education and work; development and learning accompany employees in their entire lives.

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<sup>8</sup> M.B. Arthur, D.M. Rousseau, *The boundaryless career. A new employment principle for a new organizational era*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1996.

<sup>9</sup> S.U. Molitor, *Strategia planowania kariery*, BC Edukacja, Warszawa 2008, pp. 49-50.

<sup>10</sup> A. Smolbik-Jęczmień, A. Żarczyńska-Dobiesz, *Zróżnicowane podejście do rozwoju zawodowego wśród przedstawicieli pokoleń koegzystujących na rynku pracy*, „Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi” 2017, No. 3-4, pp. 169-184.

<sup>11</sup> M. Sidor-Rządkowska, *Coaching kariery*, op. cit., p. 27.

### 3. Application of coaching in developing a new career

The expectations of the labor market from employees are frequently a big challenge. According to numerous researchers, the today's business world can be referred to as the *VUCA world*<sup>12</sup>. VUCA is an acronym that stands for:

- *Volatile*
- *Uncertain*
- *Complex*
- *Ambiguous.*

Due to the change dynamics of the labor market, employees have to be ready for change. The solution that used to be effective in their professional lives may appear to be inadequate in the future. Individuals must change their professional profiles and search their own career paths. When there is a need to change profession, the work with a professional coach can be an inspiration source and may create space for considerations about further professional career. The uncertainty that will accompany employees on the labor market may also be the reason why employees will look for coaching services. Because of the complexity of the problems that they will encounter, they may need professional support. The ambiguity of procedures and the global expansion of companies may favor the development of coaching in business. Coaching may be addressed both to individuals and whole teams and it may take different forms, e.g.

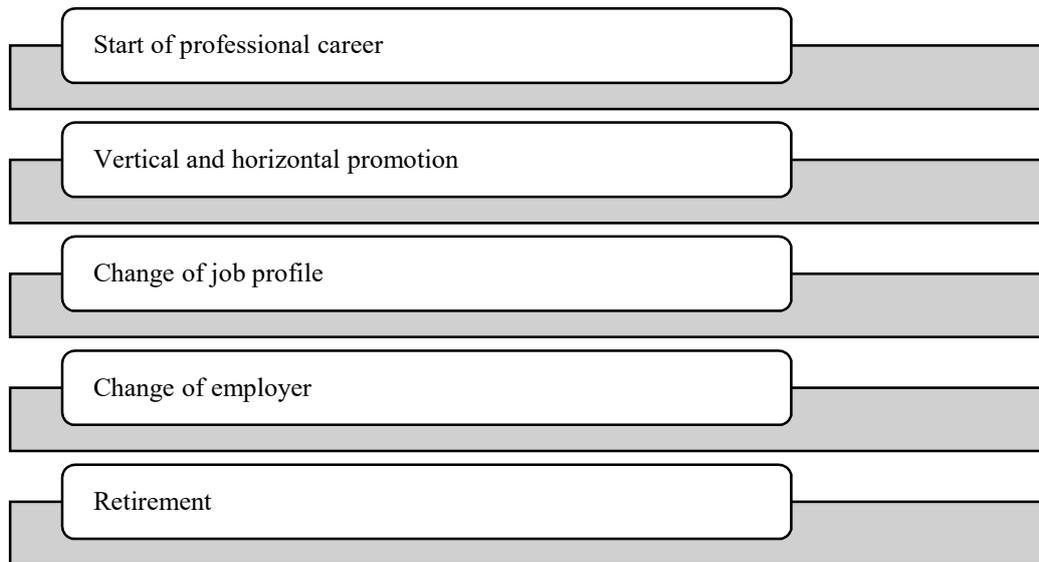
- career coaching
- business coaching
- management coaching
- executive coaching<sup>13</sup>.

Coaching may be useful at different stages of professional career development of individuals and companies. The stages during which a coach can support employees and companies are given in Figure 2.

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<sup>12</sup> O. Mack, A. Khare, A. Krämer, T. Burgartz, *Managing in a VUCA World*, Springer International Publishing, Switzerland 2016, p. 3-20.

<sup>13</sup> M. Wilczyńska, M. Nowak, J. Kućka, J. Sawicka, K. Sztajerwald, *Moc coachingu*, Onepress.pl Helion SA, Gliwice 2013, p. 20.

**Figure 2. Stages of professional career development**

Source: Author's research based on the literature on the subject and her own professional experience

The work with a professional coach - already at the stage of decision-making on starting professional career – can support individuals in choosing adequate paths of professional development. Coaching may be widely applied by candidates in recruitment, selection and employment processes. It may show how their strengths can be used at best and contribute to a successful career. Individual work with a professional coach may help discover new opportunities that previously have not been taken into consideration by a candidate. It widens the perspective. The coaching approach assumes development. Thanks to skillfully asked questions, candidates have a chance to look at themselves and to find answers to such fundamental questions as *what is crucial in life and work* and how the elements that are crucial to individuals are reflected in their choices regarding professional career<sup>14</sup>. The coaching approach can extend self-awareness. Candidates can look at their plans, objectives and possible decisions from different points of view. They can analyze if their dreams are beneficial for them and their convictions do not restrict their potentials and discourage them from certain decisions or push to activities that slow down their professional development. Coaching provides also the opportunity to look at the resources that candidates possess. It is important that in the selection process of vacancies candidates should look for the ones that will value their strengths.

<sup>14</sup> M. Sidor-Rządkowska, *Coaching kariery*, op. cit., pp. 22-24.

According to the Gallup Institute, the possibility to adjust employee's potential to work tasks is one of the twelve factors that develop employee engagement. The research shows that employees with high levels of engagement are eager to look for innovative solutions and the companies they work for have a chance for sustainable development<sup>15</sup>. It is a frequent case that newly promoted managers or employees who are being prepared for vertical promotion can take advantage of the work with a coach. Such individuals have to get acquainted with the new range of responsibilities that are assigned to leader's tasks. They find themselves in a new situation in which they should work out a new way of functioning and operating. The presence of a coach may accelerate the adaptation process to new duties. Employees, accompanied by a coach, can define the priorities of development activities and built up their confidence in the resources they have. Coaching may also be useful at the stage of the change of career path. Thanks to the coach, employees have a chance to consider whether the workplace is right for them and their work suits them, meets their needs and is the source of satisfaction.

Coaching may also be useful at the stage of leaving a full-time job, starting one's own business or retiring<sup>16</sup>. Several companies hire coaches to assist their outstanding employees, the so called *high potentials*. The objective of such a solution is to develop the potentials of such individuals so that they could protect company's future. Coaching is frequently a part of the promotion and succession plan for such individuals. Companies also use coaching to increase the effectiveness and productivity both of particular employees and the whole teams. It may also be used to support HR processes in organizations. Moreover, it may be useful in the prevention of job burnout and in outplacement projects. According to Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe, dismissal from work is a source of stress<sup>17</sup>. Numerous companies hire external consultants whose job is to offer tools adequate for the needs of employees to be dismissed – coaching may be one of such instruments.

## Conclusions

The dynamic of labor market creates new patterns of professional lives of employees and employers. Coaching – as one of development tools – may offer support to individuals and

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<sup>15</sup>[www.news.gallup.com/businessjournal/163130/employee-engagement-drives-growth.aspx](http://www.news.gallup.com/businessjournal/163130/employee-engagement-drives-growth.aspx) (Accessed: 25 July 2018).

<sup>16</sup> B. Garvey, *Coaching people through life transitions* [in:] J. Passmore, *Diversity in Coaching: Working with Gender, Culture, Race and Age*, Kogan Page, London 2009, pp. 255-272.

<sup>17</sup> W. Łosiak, *Psychologia stresu*, Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, Warszawa 2008, p. 48.

whole companies in the process of professional career development. Work blends with private lives of employees and the coaching approach gives the opportunity to adapt the needs of employers to the endeavors of employees. Considering current discrepancies on the market between the attempts to conceptualize the notion of coaching, one should once again remind its core idea. It is a process and a partnership-like relationship that aims at strengthening individual's potential. Thus, if this is how it is perceived, it may be widely applied in the development of individuals and companies in the context of the new career paradigm. With regard to individuals, it can be applied as professional coaching dedicated to individuals in various stages of their professional development. It can also support companies in HR processes to:

- develop employee engagement,
- increase the effectiveness and productivity of teams,
- create development programs,
- create employee and managerial competencies,
- arrange periodic conversations,
- develop organizational culture.

It should be pointed out that coaching is not the only and always effective tool for the development of individuals and companies. It is one of the available options that should be adapted to the needs of individuals and companies. For example, the coaching approach is not an optimum form of development support if there is no atmosphere of trust in the company. Trust is the basis for coaching. When the company lacks organizational culture that favors open communication, the benefits from coaching tools may not be fully used. The time, energy and financial means that are involved will not meet the expectations. Moreover, if coaching is dedicated to an individual without competencies or to an employee who starts learning about his/her duties and position, it may turn out that training, constant feedback or directive management style will be a much better development tool.

Due to the fact that there are no legal regulations on coaching services in Poland, it is worth spreading the concept of coaching on scientific grounds. There are several benefits resulting from its application in the context of the new career paradigm. The social perception of professional life is subject to change, which generates the need to support employees and employers in the efforts to achieve effective career management.

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## Abstract

The article presents theoretical and practical issues of coaching in the context of the new career paradigm. The change dynamics on the present-day labor market results in several requirements that are faced by employees and whole companies. The article concerns various issues related to the definition of the concept of *coaching* and its application in different stages of professional career development. The considerations are presented in the context of the idea of new career paradigm which has also been defined in more detail in the article .