

# Executive Digest

From the Executive Coaching Centre



## What is the impact of personality on coaching outcomes?

Personality is regarded by many psychologists as having five major dimensions: 1. **Openness to experience:** (*inventive/curious vs. consistent/cautious*) 2. **Conscientiousness:** (*efficient/organised vs. easy-going/careless*) 3. **Extraversion:** (*outgoing/energetic vs. solitary/reserved*) 4. **Agreeableness:** (*friendly/compassionate vs. analytical/detached*) and 5. **Emotional stability:** (*sensitive/nervous vs. secure/confident*).

Client personality has a significant influence on the effectiveness of coaching. Stewart et al. explored how client personality and self-efficacy (belief in one's own ability to complete tasks and reach goals) influenced coaching outcome. They found that clients who did best in coaching were higher in Conscientiousness, Openness, Emotional Stability and general self-efficacy. In practical terms, that suggests people who are organised, curious, confident and have a stronger belief in their own ability will do the best at coaching.

How does the similarity or otherwise in personality between coach and coachee impact on effectiveness? Scoular and Linley found that when the coach and client differed more on aspects of their personality profiles, the outcome scores were significantly higher. In other words, there is no need for the coach and coachee to have similar personalities, in fact differences in personality improve the outcome of coaching.

In summary, personality can have significant influences on coaching outcomes. Offering coaching to those who are more organised, curious, confident and not being concerned about personality differences between coach and coachee is useful.

Scoular, A. & Linley, P.A. (2006). Coaching, goal-setting and personality type. What matters? *The Coaching Psychologist*, 2, 9-11.

Stewart, L.J., Palmer, S., Wilkin, H. & Kerrin, M. (2008). The influence of character: Does personality impact coaching success? *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 6(1), 32-43.

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