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What is This?

Authentic Leadership: The Role of Self-Awareness in Promoting Coaching Effectiveness

Anthony R. Gatling
Patricia A. Castelli
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Abstract

Authentic leadership encompasses four dimensions crucial for the success of leadership: self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing and internalised moral perspective. In the context of Business Coaching, authentic leadership is a crucial factor in the coach–client relationship in which the leader demonstrates to others a genuine and honest desire to understand their leadership in order to serve others more effectively. The current study investigated the relationship between leadership style and coaching effectiveness among 96 business coaches from the Professional Business Coaches Alliance (PBCA). Study results indicate authentic leadership and its constitutive factor self-awareness were significantly related to coaching effectiveness. Coaching organisations, franchises and alliances, may benefit from this research if they wish to leverage higher levels of authentic leadership and self-awareness when developing selection, assessment, training and measurement systems.

Keywords

A business coach supports clients to improve their personal and professional effectiveness in a variety of enterprise endeavours (Gale, Lijenstrand, Pardieu & Nebeker, 2002). Business coaching has been described as a natural conversation between coach and client that follows a predictable process leading to superior performance, commitment to sustained improvement and positive relationships (Kinlaw, 2002). Business coaching encompasses a wide range of clients, from business and non-profit leaders and executives from major corporations, to Fortune 500 CEOs and small and mid-size entrepreneurs. We examined the coach–client relationship from the perspective of the business coach's authentic leadership style. The self-reported authentic leadership qualities of the business coach were analysed for their impact on the coach's effectiveness in obtaining client goals.

The authentic leadership construct refers to a leadership style in which the leader demonstrates to others a genuine and honest desire to understand their leadership in order to serve others more effectively (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing & Peterson, 2008). Authentic leadership is a pattern of leader behaviour that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical culture through four factors that support positive self-development: self-awareness, balanced processing, internalised moral perspective and relational transparency. The self-awareness of a business coach refers to a coach's awareness and trust in personal values, feelings, motives and cognitions, as well as an awareness of inherent conflicting self-aspects, which can influence the coach's thoughts, feelings, actions and behaviours (Ilies, Morgeson & Nahrgang, 2005). Balanced processing is at the core of a coach's personal integrity and character since it influences their decisions and actions (Gavin, Quick, Cooper & Quick, 2003). Business coaches that are perceived to have an internalised moral perspective are perceived as being morally authentic. Such coaches will be afforded greater influence and will have increased positive effects on others

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(Hannah, Lester &Vogelgesang, 2005). Lastly, relational transparency requires a business coach to be open for inspection and feedback, thereby facilitating a more effective leadership style (Chan, Hannah & Gardner, 2005; Popper & Lipshitz, 2000).

The relationship between the coach and the client provides the necessary foundation for successful business coaching efforts (Ely et al., 2010). In the current study, it is argued that authentic leadership has the ability to establish unconditional trust between coach and client leading to a free exchange of knowledge and information which can result in positive outcomes, such as increased personal and business performance (Ilies et al., 2005). We explore the extent to which business coaches perceive they possess the qualities of authentic leadership, and the extent to which they perceive their coaching is effective in obtaining their client's personal and business goals. We also suggest some of the mechanisms by which authentic leadership may be affecting coaching performance.

Authentic Leadership

There is a significant body of literature in the field of authentic leadership from both the applied research (Gardner & Schermerhorn Jr., 2004; George, 2007; George, Sims, McLean & Mayer, 2007) and academic management domains (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans & May, 2004; Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Brumbaugh, 1971; Heidegger, 1962; Rogers, 1959; Seeman, 1960). From a practical perspective, authenticity encompasses individuality and promotes self-esteem (Deci & Ryan, 2000; George et al., 2007). Leaders who are authentic foster the development of authenticity in followers and, in turn, followers who are authentic attain a sense of well-being and sustainable and veritable performance (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Authentic leadership has coalesced around several underlying dimensions. Avolio and Luthans (2006) initially defined authentic leadership as a method that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organisational setting, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviours on the part of leaders and followers, fostering positive self-development. Ilies et al. (2005) proposed a more focused four-component model of authentic leadership that includes self-awareness, unbiased processing, authentic behaviour/acting and authentic relational orientation. These perceptions and definitions were integrated by Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May and Walumbwa (2005) resulting in a proposed a self-based model of authentic leader and follower development that focuses on the self-awareness and self-regulation factors of authentic

leadership. Walumbwa et al. (2008) propose a higher order model with multidimensional definitions of authentic leadership in which the inherent components of the construct were identified as self-awareness, internalised moral perspective, balanced processing of information and relationship transparency.

The Context of Business Coaching

Progressively, business owners are beginning to embrace a leadership culture based on inclusion, involvement and participation, rather than on the traditional command, control and compliance theory. To that end, business coaches have a unique opportunity to model leadership behaviours they expect from clients. Flaherty (1999) claimed that previous command and control leadership styles cannot bring about the conditions and competencies necessary to effectively meet the challenges of innovation, unyielding downsizing, re-engineering and the ever changing multicultural and multinational workforce. The new leadership paradigm calls for coaching behaviours that focus on employee empowerment, learning and development (McGill & Slocum, 1998). Evered and Selman (1989) argued that good coaching was the fundamental ingredient of truly effective management and they supported a theory that the core of managerial activity was an organisational culture created in the context of coaching. Coaching, therefore, is purported as the heart of management and not just a subset in the realm of management. Researchers, organisations and business owners are coming to value the integral role that coaching plays in everyday leadership activity (Ellinger, 2003).

Hunt and Weintraub (2002) referred explicitly to the notion of the 'coaching manager', defined as a manager who helps employees learn and develop through coaching and a combination of leadership and authenticity. Bianco-Mathis, Nabors & Roman (2002) asserted that the most powerful leaders are 'coaching leaders'—those who embrace coaching as a way to align values about coaching with actions that include honest communications, a focus on the future and approaching others in open and authentic ways. While traditional leaders have wielded direction, advice and coercion, today's coaching leaders rely on their ability to influence, teach and inquire.

In addressing the observation that context is an important consideration in leadership research (Peterson, Walumbwa, Avolio & Hannah, 2012), we consider business coaching as a relevant context to study the impact of authentic leadership behaviour because the business coach is often employed to improve clients' leadership-related issues (Ely et al., 2010; Manz & Sims, 1989). The context of business coaching is also relevant because in recent

years, the business coaching industry has grown from small to mid-size entrepreneurial leaders to include executives, Fortune 500 leaders and entrepreneurs (Walzer & Athiyaman, 2007). In these times of corporate distrust, which have been fuelled by scandals and the demoralisation of financial institutions, the public is demanding greater transparency and accountability from organisational leaders (Dealy & Thomas, 2006). Clients of business coaches are increasingly mindful of the need for transparency and ethical behaviour and will likely look for these characteristics in their business coaches. Just as stakeholders are observed going to great lengths to hold boards of directors accountable (Aguilera, 2005), clients of business coaches will hold the business coach more accountable. Consistency between what business coaches say and what they do will determine where credibility and trust develop more rapidly (Simons, 2002). Additionally, as the demand for business coaches grows, there has become an increased interest in characterising the methods in which business coaches are providing coaching to their clients (Hudson, 1999; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2007; Kilburg, 2007; Olesen, 1996; Sorohan, 1994).

The purpose of the present study was to extend the leadership literature with an empirical investigation of authentic leadership in the context of business coaching. We investigated the relationship between authentic leadership and coaching effectiveness among a sample of business coaches. The research questions whether authentic leadership builds self-awareness in the leader (or business coach), and if clients are positively affected by growth in authentic leadership. Accordingly, it was hypothesised that the multidimensional theory of authentic leadership as proposed by Walumbwa et al. (2008) is valid in the business coaching context and that authentic leadership has a positive effect on coaching effectiveness.

Methods

Data for this study were obtained using a random sampling technique of 96 US business coaches who completed online surveys via SurveyMonkey. We investigated the construct validity of authentic leadership in the context of business coaching and characterised the influence of authentic leadership on the performance of business coaches. The study hypothesis tested the relationship between the coach's authentic leadership and their coaching effectiveness, while controlling for demographic factors.

Hypothesis. *The higher a business coach's self-reported authentic leadership, the higher the coach's perceived effectiveness in obtaining the client's personal and business goals.*

Participants

Participants for this study were randomly selected from among the population of business coaches in the US, excluding coaches from non-business areas, such as personal coaches and life coaches. In 2007, there were an estimated 40,000 business coaches in the US (*Business Coaching Statistics,* 2009). The study sample was 96 business coaches recruited from the Ohio-based organisation PBCA via e-mail invitations sent during a two-week period. The sample was predominantly Caucasian (92 per cent) and male (80 per cent), with 32 per cent in the age range of 30–49 years old, 68 per cent in the age range of 50+ years of age and approximately half with a graduate degree (48 per cent). Approval to conduct research with human participants was obtained from the appropriate university Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Measurements

Authentic leadership was measured by Walumbwa et al.'s (2008) 16-item Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) delivered within a 25-item online survey that measured demographic characteristics of the business coaches (5 items) and their perceived personal and business coaching effectiveness (4 items). The ALQ measured authentic leadership along the four factors of self-awareness (4 items), balanced processing (3 items), internalised moral perspective (4 items) and relational transparency (5 items). Each ALQ item asked the coach to judge the frequency with which each item fit their leadership style along a 5-point Likert scale, 1–5 (Not at all, Once in a while, Sometimes, Fairly often, Frequently if not always). Each set of ALQ items was combined into the respective authentic leadership factor and the four ALQ factors were combined into a composite authentic leadership variable. The participant instructions were adjusted from the original survey which asked the respondent to answer the questions 'As a leader' to read 'As a coach'. Coaching effectiveness was measured along a 6-point Likert scale (1–6, Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Slightly Agree, Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree) in which coaches were asked to rate their effectiveness in obtaining their client's personal and business goals; these items were combined into a composite coaching effectiveness variable.

Data Analysis

The first step in data analysis tested the psychometric properties of the authentic leadership construct. In testing the psychometric properties, reliability was evaluated via Cronbach's coefficient alpha test of internal consistency

(Cronbach, 1951) and validity was evaluated via confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) tests of construct validity (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993). To correct for the underestimation of Cronbach's alpha in the authentic leadership factors that were measured by less than six items, the Spearman–Brown prophesy formula was applied (Charter, 2003). The Spearman–Brown prophesy formula corrected alpha as follows: $\rho_{xx'}^* = \dfrac{2\rho_{xx'}}{1 + \rho_{xx'}}$ where $\rho_{xx'}^* =$ corrected reliability and $\rho_{xx'} =$ current reliability. In evaluating construct validity using CFA, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was used to *assess CFA*, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and the ratio of chi-square (χ^2) to the degrees of freedom (*df*). Construct validity was evaluated using the criteria of CFI $\geq$ 0.90, RMSEA < 0.08, and χ^2/df ratio < 2-to-1 (Bentler, 1990, 2007; Loehlin, 1998).

The next step in data analysis tested the study hypothesis using linear regression-based inferential statistics to test the relationship between authentic relationship and coaching effectiveness. In all regression tests, demographic characteristics were included in the analysis as covariates to control for gender, age, education and ethnicity. For each statistical procedure, all available data were used and for all inferential statistics, significance was evaluated at the 95 per cent confidence level ($\alpha = 0.05$, two-tail tests). Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using M *plus* version 6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2007); all other statistics were conducted using Minitab 16 (www.minitab.com).

Results

Cronbach's alpha and confirmatory factor analysis tested the reliability and validity, respectively, of the authentic leadership construct as measured by the 16-item ALQ. Reliability was evaluated first and initial tests found the full 16-item ALQ had acceptable internal consistency reliability, with $\alpha = 0.729$. Acceptable internal consistency reliability was also found among three of the four authentic leadership factors using the criteria suggested by Hinkin (1998), that acceptable internal consistency reliability occurs in scales with alphas > 0.5: Self-Awareness ($\alpha = 0.783$), Balanced Processing ($\alpha = 0.691$), and Relational Transparency ($\alpha = 0.579$). Internal consistency reliability was unacceptable for the fourth factor, Internalised Moral Perspective ($\alpha = 0.268$). These results led to the factor's modification by dropping the item 'Helps client support his/her own values' which was negatively correlated with the three other items in the factor. Thus, authentic leadership was measured in this study using a revised 15-item ALQ questionnaire.

Table 1 presents the psychometric properties of the revised 15-item ALQ. As shown, the revised scale has stronger internal consistency reliability than the original 16-item scale in the study sample ($\alpha = 0.732$ vs. 0.729). Furthermore, all four AL factors demonstrated acceptable reliability: Self-Awareness ($\alpha = 0.783$), Balanced Processing ($\alpha = 0.691$), Internalised Moral Perspective ($\alpha = 0.544$) and Relational Transparency ($\alpha = 0.579$). After the reliability of the revised authentic leadership scale was confirmed, its construct validity was evaluated using confirmatory factor analysis. As shown in Table 1, the χ^2/df ratio was less than two-to-one (χ^2/df ratio = 1.4), RMSEA was less than 0.08 (RMSEA = 0.070) and the CFI value was very close to the acceptable criterion of 0.90 (CFI = 0.811). In summary, the results of the psychometric tests demonstrate that the revised 15-item ALQ was reliable and valid in the study sample of business coaches.

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations and bivariate correlations of the study variables. The study outcome variables, Coaching Efficacy, Personal Efficacy and Business Efficacy were all positively correlated with the study predictor Authentic Leadership at $p < 0.05$ ($r = 0.25$, $r = 0.24$, $r = 0.23$, respectively). Of the four Authentic Leadership factors, Self-Awareness was positively correlated with the outcome variables at $p < 0.05$; Balanced Processing, Internalised Moral Perspective and Relational Transparency were not significantly correlated ($p = 0.10$–0.33).

Table 3 presents results of multiple linear regression tests in which the study hypothesis was accepted: *The higher a business coach's self-reported authentic leadership, the higher the coach's perceived effectiveness in obtaining the client's personal and business goals*.

Specifically, tests of coaching effectiveness (CE), personal effectiveness (PE), and business effectiveness (BE) regressed on authentic leadership and its four constitutive factors (while controlling for gender, age, education and ethnicity which were found to be significantly distributed according to Chi-square test for equality of distribution) found authentic leadership to be a significant predictor of CE ($\beta = 0.859$, $p < 0.05$), PE ($\beta = 0.853$, $p < 0.05$), and BE ($\beta = 0.864$, $p < 0.05$). Regressions support a one unit increase in AL predicts an increase in coaching effectiveness of approximately 1 unit rating scale increase when controlling for the impact of demographic variables. Similarly, the authentic leadership factor self-awareness was found to be a significant predictor of CE ($\beta = 0.688$, $p < 0.05$), PE ($\beta = 0.640$, $p < 0.05$), and BE ($\beta = 0.735$, $p < 0.05$). The other three authentic leadership factors were not statistically significant as predictors of coaching effectiveness. Figure 1 summarises the positive impact

Table 1. Reliability and Validity of the Revised 15-item Authentic Leadership Scale

Authentic Leadership Items	Mean[2]	SD	Alpha	Adj Alpha[3]	Factor[4]
Authentic Leadership Full Scale (15 items)	4.52	0.28	0.732	0.732	
Self-Awareness (4 items)	4.29	0.47	0.643	0.783	0.664
Seek feedback to improve interactions	4.43	0.61			0.573
Describe how others view my capabilities	4.15	0.76			0.499
Know when to reevaluate my position	4.17	0.68			0.761
Understand my actions impact others	4.59	0.57			0.461
Balanced Processing (3 items)	4.36	0.50	0.528	0.691	0.791
Solicit views that challenge my positions	4.12	0.87			0.585
Analyse data before making a decision	4.52	0.61			0.270
Listen to different points of view	4.52	0.57			0.707
Internalised Moral Perspective (3 items)	4.78	0.33	0.374	0.544	1.040
Beliefs are consistent with others	4.67	0.52			0.223[ns]
Make decisions based on core values	4.83	0.41			0.416
Make decisions based on high ethical conduct	4.82	0.52			0.527
Relational Transparency (5 items)	4.56	0.34	0.407	0.579	1.514
I say exactly what I mean	4.84	0.40			0.085[ns]
I admit mistake when they are made	4.78	0.45			0.554
I encourage everyone to speak their mind	4.90	0.34			0.241
I tell you the hard truth	4.71	0.62			0.106[ns]
Display emotions in line with feelings	3.72	1.00			0.104[ns]

Source: Authors.

Notes: Psychometric properties conducted on AL data from N = 82 coaches. Tests of model fit for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA): $\chi^2 = 116.610$, df = 83, p < 0.001; RMSEA (90 per cent CI) = 0.070 (0.036–0.099); CFI = 0.811.

[1] Grand mean is the normalised composite mean of 15 items where each item is measured on a 5-point Likert scale, 1 = Not at all, 5 = Frequently.

[2] Composite mean is calculated on 15 items.

[3] Cronbach's alpha reliability measure of internal consistency. Alphas for each of the four factors were adjusted for a 6-item construct according to the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula: $\rho^*_{xx'} = \dfrac{2\rho_{xx'}}{1 + \rho_{xx'}}$ where $\rho^*_{xx'}$ = predicted reliability and $\rho_{xx'}$ = current reliability.

[4] Factor loading scores from CFA significant at p < 0.05 unless otherwise noted as non-significant (ns).

Table 2. Intercorrelations Among Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Age	1.00											
2. Education	−0.05	1.00										
3. Gender	−0.25*	−0.05	1.00									
4. Ethnicity	−0.01	0.07	−0.06	1.00								
5. Coaching Efficacy	−0.02	0.13	0.07	−.33**	1.00							
6. Personal Efficacy	−0.07	0.06	0.13	−0.34**	0.93**	1.00						
7. Business Efficacy	0.03	0.18	0.00	−0.28**	0.93**	0.74**	1.00					
8. Authentic Leadership	0.03	0.05	0.12	−0.03	0.25*	0.24*	0.23*	1.00				
9. Self-Awareness	−0.01	−0.02	0.24*	−0.06	0.26*	0.23*	0.26*	0.79**	1.00			

(Table 2 continued)

(Table 2 continued)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
10. Balanced Processing	0.04	0.13	0.01	0.06	0.14	0.10	0.16	0.72**	0.50**	1.00		
11. Internalised Moral Perspective	0.12	−.01	−.02	0.09	0.15	0.17	0.11	0.64**	0.30**	0.38**	1.00	
12. Relational Transparency	0.01	0.02	0.04	−0.07	0.15	0.18	0.11	0.70**	0.40**	0.29**	0.39**	1.00
Mean	3.83	5.21	1.20	1.19	4.95	4.90	5.00	4.52	4.29	4.36	4.78	4.56
SD	0.82	0.98	0.40	0.79	1.02	1.09	1.09	0.28	0.47	0.50	0.33	0.34

Source: Authors.
Note: $*p < 0.05$ $**p < 0.01$ Pearson's correlation coefficient.

**Table 3.** Regression of Coaching, Personal and Business Effectiveness on Authentic Leadership and its Constitutive Factors

	CE			PE			BE		
Predictors	β	SE	T	β	SE	T	β	SE	T
Authentic Leadership	0.859	0.381	2.26*	0.853	0.405	2.11*	0.864	0.423	2.04*
Self-Awareness	0.688	0.284	2.42*	0.640	0.302	2.12*	0.735	0.315	2.33*
Balanced Processing	−0.113	0.255	−0.44	−0.214	0.272	−0.79	−0.013	0.284	−0.05
Internalised Moral Perspective	0.084	0.389	0.22	0.140	0.414	0.34	0.029	0.432	0.07
Relational Transparency	0.113	0.369	0.31	0.298	0.393	0.76	−0.073	0.410	−0.18

Source: Authors.
Note: Authentic Leadership, self-awareness, balanced processing, internalised moral processing and relational transparency were entered into the regression equation as their respective grand mean (for example, the grand mean of the 15-item authentic leadership scale which ranges from 1−5). $*p < 0.05$ Regression coefficient with gender, age, education and ethnicity included as covariates.

Figure 1. Summarised Relationship between Self-Awareness and Coaching Effectiveness
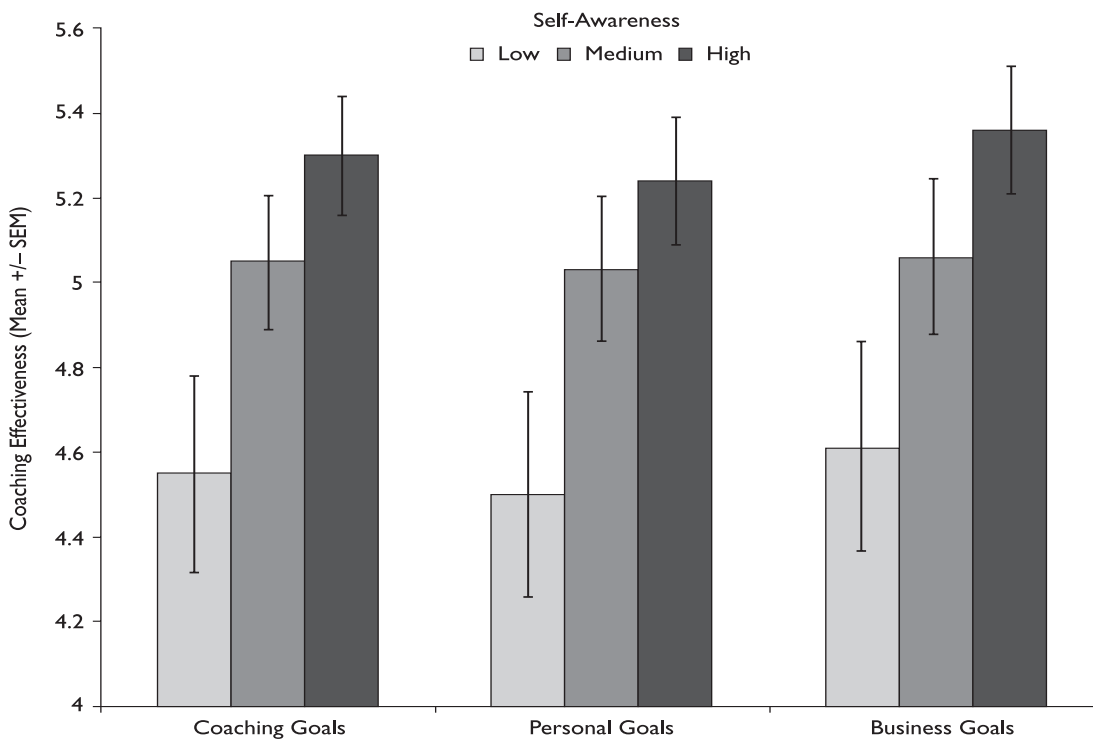
Source: Authors.

of authentic leadership and self-awareness on coaching effectiveness, with coaching, personal and business goals categorised as low-med-high (using 33.3 per cent split).

Discussion

This study suggests that business coaches employ characteristics of authentic leadership geared towards self-awareness when working to improve their coaching effectiveness. In the business coaching field, coaches' performance is defined as the achievement of the client's personal and business objectives and aspirations, as well as traditional accounting measures such as sales growth, market share and profitability (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). This research suggests that authentic leadership qualities may provide the catalyst for a collaborative, result-oriented, solution-focused environment. With authentic leadership driving the behaviour of the business coach, work performance, life experience, self-directed learning and personal growth of clients may be enhanced (Grant & Greene, 2001).

This study provides insights and practical applications that are useful to business coaches, business coaching enterprises and entrepreneurs who are looking to create or enhance business results through AL. This research is also significant for the future development of business coaches as leaders and teachers due to the research results on AL's impact on business coaching effectiveness. The results of this study contribute to the existing literature on AL, provide new research on the relationship between AL and business coaching and demonstrate how a business coach's AL may impact the client's personal and business goals. This study supports the research of Henderson and Brookhart (1996) who found that the behaviours of authentic leaders were predictive and were significantly correlated to financial performance. This study also supports the research of Jensen and Luthans (2006) who purported that business founders' perceptions of AL demonstrated significant correlations with reported sales and market share growth.

Although research has been conducted concerning AL's impact on job satisfaction and job performance (Gardner et al., 2005; Ilies et al., 2005), and concerning AL's impact on fostering intrinsic worker motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000), the current research investigating business coach's perceptions of AL is relevant and timely to this field of study due to the current state of corporate malfeasance and apparent low authenticity of today's corporate leaders. The current research on the impact of AL on coaching effectiveness is also relevant to business coaches and other coaching occupations that are working to increase effectiveness in their coaching behaviour.

Implications

Results of this study found that of the four factors comprising authentic leadership, self-awareness was significantly related to coaching effectiveness. The implication of this finding is that self-awareness may have a significant impact on coaching effectiveness since a coach's cognizance of their impact on others may enhance client achievement of goals (Kernis, 2003).

Because a business coach is often employed by a client for a finite time frame, usually between 12–18 months, the positive self-development that authentic leadership fosters within this time frame becomes important to the sustainability of coaching performance. This implication suggests that coaches and other individuals in a position of leadership who adopt an authentic leadership style should work to maintain the coach–client relationship to help the client consistently achieve a positive outcome, for example, achieve the stated personal and business goals. Coaching organisations, franchises and alliances, may also benefit from this research if they wish to leverage higher levels of authentic leadership and self-awareness when developing selection, assessment, training and measurement systems.

Another implication of this research is for coaches to acquire authentic leadership skills. Business coaches and coaching organisations should attend workshops and other modes of training to enhance authentic leadership qualities. Stronger balanced processing, for example, could positively impact client-learning capabilities and could result in innovative ideas being discovered. Higher levels of relational transparency could impact the level of commitment that a client has to the long-term coaching process. The trust that can be achieved through relational transparency may offer benefits to the client and the coach. Additionally, a coach that possesses a strong internalised moral perspective may avoid any industry-driven tendency to engage in unethical business practices, or malfeasance.

Applications for Practitioners

The findings in this study are useful to business coaches, business coaching organisations and clients of business coaches by suggesting that authentic leadership will help business coaches motivate the client to remain engaged in the coach–client relationships and also help guide the client towards their visions, missions, purposes and goals (Morrison, 2001).

Practitioners who are looking to enhance the performance and effectiveness of business coaches as clients can do so by augmenting the authentic leadership characteristics of business coaches. Results from this study suggest

that coaching effectiveness is positively affected by authentic leadership. This result is important to practitioners because it underscores the potential impact that authentic leadership and its constitutive factors have on coaching effectiveness. Furthermore, because the authentic leadership factor self-awareness, in particular, was found to be significantly related to coaching effectiveness, it should be given attention by coaches, coaching organisations and business coaching trainers. Avolio and Luthans (2006) purport that greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviours on the part of individuals in a leadership role, such as the business coach, foster their positive self-development.

The research results indicate that it behoves business coaches to find ways to increase their self-awareness (Novack, Epstein & Paulsen, 1999) which in turn may improve their coaching effectiveness. Practical ways to increase self-awareness include: (*a*) Understanding psychological strengths and emotional triggers, (*b*) Understanding how the dark side of personality characteristics (such as gregariousness, need for approval, tendency to be judgemental, need for perfection and control) affect relationships with clients, (*c*) Knowing how family-of-origin, race, class, religion and gender issues shape attitudes and (*d*) Recognising self feelings and emotions (frustration, vulnerability, elation, etc.) and the role these play in both 'easy' and 'difficult' coaching interactions. Additionally, an effective method for business coaches to improve their self-awareness is through the 360-feedback process (Hagberg, 1996; Rosti & Shipper, 1998; Shipper & Dillard, 2000). By enlisting formal and informal feedback from a variety of client sources and through self-reflection, coaches will be better equipped to understand their own perceptions and how these mesh with the perceptions of others regarding their management strengths and skills that require improvement.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

A variety of limitations constrain the conclusions drawn from this research. One limitation of the study concerns the sample and the limited information that was obtained regarding the experiences of the business coaches. Since this information was not obtained, the potential variability in the coaching experience may have had an impact on their perceived coaching effectiveness. Another limitation concerns the sample size for this study which was relatively small, perhaps due in part to the limited accessibility to business coaching populations. The demographic makeup of the sample was also a limitation since the sample was comprised almost exclusively of males and

Caucasians (80 per cent and 90 per cent of the sample were male and Caucasian, respectively). Additionally, 71 per cent of the sample was between 40–59 years old, and 80 per cent held a bachelor or graduate degree. Thus, the study was potentially impacted by social and cultural bias. However, the inclusion of demographic characteristics as covariates in the regression analyses may have controlled for the homogeneity of the sample. There was also a limitation in the study for not including any client data—ideally, coaches will be matched with their clients—but at the very least, inclusion of client data would have contributed to an examination of the impact of authentic leadership on coaching effectiveness from the perspective of the client.

Another important limitation of the study is that the questionnaire did not measure constructs beyond authentic leadership. There are many other constructs that future research should consider, such as motivation, persuasion and trust. For example, trust is central to the relationship between a coach and a client. A coach's perceptions of the trust they engender and the client's perceptions of the trust engendered by the coach, is important to future research studies.

This study strongly suggests perceived authentic leadership characteristics of a business coach are significant predictors of coaching effectiveness. As a result of these findings, there are important opportunities to further this research and build upon the existing body of knowledge regarding authentic leadership and its impact on coaching effectiveness. For example, it would be useful to further investigate the role of the authentic leadership factors other than self-awareness and explore methods to increase their impact on coaching effectiveness.

Future research should investigate the perceptions of the clients in addition to the perceptions of the business coach regarding the impact of the coach's authentic leadership on coaching effectiveness. Business coaches may have a wide variety of client types, such as those who learn more quickly than others and coaching may therefore be easier for some coaches than for others. Areas of research in this regard could study the client's potential dependence on the coach, the client's commitment to the coaching process and the client's level of engagement as a result of the coach's perceived leadership characteristics.

Understanding the degree to which authentic leadership factors influence coaching effectiveness will be useful to researchers and practitioners because clients typically pay business coaches respectable fees for their service. Business coaches tend to request 12 to 18 month contracts with the expectations that their client's business results will improve—the improvement depends, on large part, on the coach's effectiveness.

Given the limited size, nationality and demographic makeup of the study sample, future research should include additional business coaching franchises in the US, as well as international coaching organisations and study coaches with a wide variety of demographic characteristics. Greater diversity in the sample might offer significant contribution to the literature by improving the ability to generalise the results.

This study was conducted within the business coaching setting and future research should administer the survey to a broader population of coaches, such as executive and personal coaches. Future research should also collect data on additional experiences of the business coach (training, work experience, etc.) and should study the individual items comprising the ALQ instrument in more detail in order to determine if the ALQ accurately measures authentic leadership in the global business coach.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between authentic leadership and coaching effectiveness in a sample of business coaches. The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which business coaches perceived that they possess the qualities of authentic leadership and if authentic leadership is related to coaching performance measured as the coaches' perceived effectiveness in obtaining the client's personal and business goals. First, there was statistically significant evidence that authentic leadership as measured by a 15-item revision of the ALQ scale is a valid construct in business coaches. This served as foundation for the subsequent analysis of authentic leadership's impact on coaching effectiveness, results of which indicate that authentic leadership can function as a predictor of coaching effectiveness. Research should continue to examine the impact of authentic leadership on coaching effectiveness since authentic leadership appears to be a salient factor in further enhancing the performance of business coaches seeking to be effective in obtaining goals set by the client and the coach.

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