

## ONLINE COACHING/ CONSULTING IN CAREER MANAGEMENT

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### Abstract

*The article emphasizes the importance of coaching/ consulting to improve performance as one of the competencies which is absolutely necessary in the process of career consulting through Internet. The article analysed the similarities and established the differences between online coaching and online counselling in career management. Implicitly, it is revealed the role of using one of these online services, underlining the advantages, but also the limits of each of them. In the background, the work brings into question, the importance of multicultural competencies in the online services such as: counselling, consulting and coaching offered for international clients, as forms of transgression of psychological barriers and to build links between different cultures.*

**Key words:** career management, multicultural competencies, online coaching/ consulting, online counselling

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### Coaching/ consulting – terminological clarifications

*“[...] before they were all consultants; today everybody makes coaching”*

(Weiss, 2014)

In the last century, theories of counselling and career management were focused on the choice of career and on the models of decision-making and less on issues of performance, advancement and development of a certain type of leadership.

Today, centres have been set up in charge of career management, providing services of individual counselling, vocational testing, training, placement services and databases of potential work places. The dynamics of the labour force and of the labour market has shown the need of the emergency for a new intervention in career management, which has led to a growing number of career counsellors, skills addressed to these complex issues. Also, there is an increase in the

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number of “paraprofessionals”/ “support staff” who represent a new kind of aid, known as “coach”/ “career coaches”.

Coaches are experts in career management. As surfing on the Internet (“networking”) constitutes an important strategy in career management, online coaching/ consulting to improve performance is an essential skill of career counselling. Listed sixth in the list of 11 career counselling competencies necessary to the counsellors who work with international clients<sup>2</sup>, coaching/ consulting for performance improvement constitutes an essential skill to address the complexity of the client issues that may occur beyond the career choice, problems with performance at the workplace, training, and career advancement.

Coaching is a new and special training and personal development method, which is literally translated by “meditation” or “training”. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines the verb <to coach> as “to meditate, to train, to make suggestions on the « *work with the facts* »”. The coaching brings results, to a great extent, because of the relationship of support, between the coach and disciple, as well as to the means and style of communication used. (J. Whitmore, 2014, p. 17).

Like education, motivation and management, coaching must take into account the psychological development and the understanding of the way in which people reach their full potential. The coaching unleashes the human potential in order to maximize one’s performance. It helps people learn for themselves rather than allow themselves to be taught by others.

Coaching does not resemble training at all, its essence consisting in the *creation of all the necessary conditions* for learning and development. Coaching aims to raise the quality level of performance and learning ability of others. It involves providing feedback, but also other techniques as motivation and effective use of questions. In the case of a manager-coach, it includes the recognition of the availability of a team member to assume a specific task, in terms of skills and motivation.

Florence Stone defines coaching as a process by which “the employees gain the skills, abilities and knowledge they need to develop themselves professionally and become more effective in their jobs” (Stone, 1999, p. 11). In the author’s opinion, coaching is designed to boost performance levels, by making clear to employees *what* they should do and *how* they should best do it (“instruction”), positively reinforce good work (“praise”) and find ways to redesign the jobs of employees or to increase their contribution (“empowerment” or “shared leadership”).

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<sup>2</sup> These are the additional competencies of the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* of the *American Counselling Association* – ACA, 1994.

Max Landsberg considers that the individual which has recourse to coaching ensures that the person who helps will be helped in return. It is a dynamic interaction – not based on a one-way communication of tasks or instructions (from coach to the client). (Landsberg, 2007, p. 10).

In the work *Process Consulting*, Alan Weiss puts a sign of equivalence between coaching and consulting, defining coaching as “a type of business consulting”, focused on individual, and not on groups, systems, processes, procedures, structures, etc. (Weiss, 2014, pp. 49).

On the contrary, other authors establish a clear distinction between coaching and consulting: consulting has as its object of work the products, processes and procedures that govern the client’s interactions, while coaching has as its object of working the human individual (e.g., you can’t do coaching with a product). Coaching can be related to the development of the product in question, when there is one or more people responsible for this. Coaching is “for” and “about” people.

As it happens in sports, when the coach allows the athletes to perform, the coach must intervene only when he can help employees to improve their performance. Not everyone is able to provide coaching, although he/she may be a good consultant, because the requirements of this profession are very specific – just as not all consultants can be very good coaches, strategists or negotiators.

### **“To ask” versus “to advise”: similarities and differences between coaching and counselling**

If some authors establish a clear distinction between coaching and counselling, defining the counselling as a continuous process of development and the coaching as a means to improve performance, others equate the two terms. There is also a third category, the authors who postulate inclusions (considering either counselling as a form of coaching, or coaching a form of counselling) or intersections between the spheres of the two concepts (presence of the common elements). We shall further analyse a few of these situations.

The definition of the coaching/ consulting underlines, by default, the difference between the goals of counselling and coaching. While the coaching is primarily aimed at the individual, the field of career counselling serves both the individual and society. The counselling is dedicated to the “enhancement of worth, dignity, potential and uniqueness of each individual and thus, to the service of society” (Boer, 2001, p. 86).

Max Landsberg (2007, p. 11) considers that one of the clear distinctions between coaching and counselling consists in the fact that the process of coaching is largely proactive and counselling is reactive. Coaching provides a proactive and focused thinking, attention and observation. Another distinction is that the activity of coaching is generally addresses problems directly related to the workplace, but it requires counselling skills if a problem persists or has its origins in childhood.

In turn, Alan Weiss says that a person can't be simultaneously counsellor/ psychotherapist, consultant and coach in the relation with the same client: "the sudden passage from one register to another is at least improper, if not unethical". (Weiss, 2014, p. 61). The duty of a consultant is to focus on observed behaviour and to provide opinions, feedback, guidelines and assessments. It is by its nature an occupation based on critical thinking.

In contrast, the task of a counsellor/ psychotherapist is to focus on the deep motivations, often determined by family or social factors, and to guide the client/ patient to self-discovery and self-awareness. The counsellors don't judge the clients, are non-critical, and usually ask questions like: "how do you feel regarding this matter" and not "what do you think about this problem". They are reluctant to express severe critical opinions.

The career counselling process is a non-critical and non-punitive process, which involves a one-to-one meeting between a counsellor and an employee who encounters a particular issue. In this case, the purpose of the counsellor is to determine the employee to recognize the difference between actual and expected performance, to identify the source of the problem and to develop an action plan to achieve a level of performance at least at minimal expectations. The secret of an effective counselling is a good communication with an open, direct and sincere character; active listening; questions and checks.

According to John Whitmore, the coach is not the one who solves problems; he/she is neither a teacher nor a counsellor, instructor or expert. He/she is a facilitator, a guide, a person who stimulates awareness. The coaching, in order to foster awareness and responsibility, works on the short term in the fulfilment of a task or on the long term, for improving the quality of life. (Whitmore, 2014, p. 67).

If the outcomes of coaching, respectively of counselling, may be similar when we refer to the awareness and responsibility of the client, the method of achieving them is different: coaching proves its effectiveness when performed predominantly by questions, while in counselling, the advices/ guidance prevail. A coach supports skill training, without having a very didactic

approach; and the most important decision is whether to ask a question, to give an indication or to use a style of interaction, somewhere between these two extremes.

Max Landsberg pled for the applications of the “technique of effective questions” in the sessions of coaching, underlining that “the key question is stronger than the advice”. (Landsberg, 2007, p. 20). Sometimes, the interaction of the coaching may consist in a single sentence, most probably only one question. However, the formulation, the intent and the effect of this sentence may be different. (Whitmore, 2014, p. 27).

Regarding the period of time during which coaching should be carried out, sometimes, the process of coaching is forced to relate to the short terms (coaching can occur spontaneously, in a minute or in a session of one hour), while the duration of counselling is greater. A good coach, unlike a good counsellor, does not delve too deeply in the psychology of the individual, when helping someone to develop their skills. He provides feedback by working with the behaviours and actions perceived. As John Weiss shows, “a coach should avoid at any cost the “psychologising”/ “the exploring of the soul”, as coaching represents an intention, not a guarantee of a specific result” (Weiss, 2014, p. 61).

In turn, according to this idea, Landsberg postulates the principles of coaching, showing that for a “coach” it is important not to “psychologise” the coaching process. (Landsberg, 2007, p. 97).

1. Do not “psychologise” the coaching process

Table 1. Coaching Principles (Landsberg, 2014)

Yes:	No:
Relation: coach - athlete	Relation: psychologist - patient
Focus on patient involvement in the concrete tasks	Look for the psychological issues which “might” exist
Adopt a professional and frank attitude	Try to be “nice”
Verify that the real problem is not missed	Cause misunderstanding
Moderate the breadth and depth of the coaching	Do too much coaching
Send people with major personal problems to a qualified counsellor	Address the issues that go beyond you skills

2. Do not lose sight of the strategic and operation issues that require a firm action.

Other differences between coaching and career counselling refer to professional preparation and training requirements. Career counsellors are required to hold a master’s degree in counselling or in a related field, such as human development. This academic training introduces them in career development theories, as well as in individual and group assessment skills, considered essential

for professionals in career counselling. Coaching may include (without being compulsory!) a broad set of skills, including advocacy (legal advice) related to the career development and the workforce planning.

If in the opinion of the author Florence Stone, counselling is an element of coaching (Stone, 1999, p. 151), however, in the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* of the *American Counselling Association* (ACA; 1994), coaching/ consulting is postulated as the “necessary competence in career counselling”. Thus, in addition to the eight fundamental competency areas (regarding: the specific/ the structure of the relationship counsellor-client; confidentiality; competence and professional responsibility; relationships with other professionals; evaluation, assessment and interpretation of psychological tests/ inventories; training and supervision; research and publication; resolving ethical issues etc.), necessary for career guidance set out in the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* of the ACA, career counsellors seeking a certification to work with international clients, must demonstrate additional competency in 11 areas. These are as follows: 1. career development theory; 2. individual and group counselling; 3. individual/ group assessment; 4. informational resources; 5. program promotion, management and implementation; 6. coaching, consultation and performance improvements; 7. diverse populations; 8. supervision; 9. ethical/ legal issues; 10. research/ evaluation; 11. technology. (Boer, 2001, pp. 19-20).

According to Shannon Anderson: “career counsellors can provide not only coaching skills, they can provide assessment and individual counselling for their clients. The career coach is limited to offering only one skills set.” (Anderson, 1999 in Boer, 2001, p. 78).

Our opinion is: if the theoretical field of career counselling is wider (the counsellor must display not only coaching skills, but also assessment, diagnosis and counselling, strictly speaking), in the applied and practical plan, the scope of coaching is much wider<sup>3</sup>.

At present, in the opinion of Cheryl Richardson, one of the former presidents of the *International Coach Federation* (ICF), the popularity of coaches grew because “unlike a psychotherapist, a coach helps the human individual to look to the future instead of to the past and to actions instead of causes”. (Richardson, 1999 in Boer, 2001, p. 78).

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<sup>3</sup> Guidelines of *National Career Development Association* (NCDA) of USA, on coaching and consultation skills, postulated in the publication concerning *Career Counselling Competencies* (revised version, 1997), covering a wide scope for coaching skills, including the following: 1. use consultation theories, strategies and models; 2. establish and maintain a productive consultative relationship with people who can influence a client’s career; 3. help the public and legislators to understand the importance of career counselling, career development and planning work; 4. the impact of public policy as it relates to career development and workforce planning; 5. analyse future organizational needs and current level of competences of employees and develop performance improvement training; 6. mentoring and coaching employees (in Boer, 2001, pp. 77).

If the differences and the inclusions spheres of counselling and coaching have been presented above, which are more obvious, we must underline the fact that the similarity between the two terms is due to mistaking one of them for the concept of mentoring. Confusions about coaching, counselling and mentoring abound!

A review of the literature would suggest confusion only at the semantic level: coaching is mistaken for counselling or mentoring, and mentoring confused with coaching or coaching and counselling, but, actually, the confusion can go deeper. Some authors use interchangeably the terms mentoring and coaching. The mentor is a guide, a wise friend and a counsellor (to be someone's mentor is very similar to coaching him). The mentor's and the coach's roles are very similar. The only real difference is that the coach is focused on developing the skills of people in concrete tasks, while the mentor has a wider perspective. Usually, the mentor has a long-term relationship with the person; it is a kind of counsellor for a wide range of issues, at any time.

### **Online career counselling – definition and standards**

The debate about online counselling services began with the sales of psychological assessment tests and career interest inventories over the Internet. Online administration and scoring of these psychological instruments increased the number of those who access such services. However, online assessments constitute additional tools for counsellors, but can't replace the counselling itself.

In the last few years, online career counselling services have evolved, becoming rapidly an integral part of career management (in particular, in the USA). Zunker describes this development of career management as: "the story of human progress in a nation founded on the principles of human rights. It touches all aspects of human life, for it has involved political, economic, educational, philosophical and social progress and change". (Zunker, 1994 in Boer, 2001, p. 6). Other evidence of the evolution and expansion of electronic career counselling services and interventions can be observed in the increasing number of Web sites dedicated to academic centres for career guidance and commercial online career services.

Today, a growing number of electronic interventions in career management, or online services are available to the public. The list of these electronic interventions is as follows:

- computer-based career guidance and information systems;
- vocational assessments and interest inventories;
- message boards;

- chats;
- telephone counselling;
- e-mail counselling;
- databases;
- video and teleconferencing;
- combinations of the above interventions.

The services of online career counselling are limited to “providing information designed to help a client with a specific need”. Specific needs relate to: a review of a CV; assistance in networking strategies; identification of occupations based on interests, skills and previous work experience; support in the job-seeking process; assessment by means of online inventories of interests, skills and/ or work-related values. According to the *National Career Development Association* (NCDA) from the United States, the career counselling process goes beyond a specific need, and “implies a deeper level of involvement with the client”. (NCDA *Guidelines* in Boer, 2001, p. 24).

Most authors consider that only online one-to-one counselling via e-mail is considered a form of professional counselling. Chats, online messages, forums or other group activities, sometimes associated with online career counselling are excluded from the “official” definition. The e-mail is the method to respond to applicants from anywhere in the world who ask questions “under the protection of anonymity and confidentiality”. The clients receive answers quickly or within a specified period of time, from a career counsellor, similar to individual face-to-face sessions, but without financial costs. This type of counselling targets also information and recommendations or links with reference to the specific services required by the client.

The standards for counselling over the Internet were adopted in September 1997, in the USA. A month later, the *National Career Development Association* (USA) approved the *Guidelines for the use of Internet* for the provision of career information and planning services. (in Boer, 2001, pp. 4-5). The guidelines provide:

- four major ways to provide career planning services to clients;
- differentiate career planning services from career counselling;
- a list of eight means for the delivery of online counselling services, including: developer/provider qualifications, access and understanding of environment; content of career counselling and planning services; appropriateness of client to receive the services by Internet; appropriate support for the client; clarity of the contract with the client; inclusion of links to the various sites; use of assessment.



There are also included: professional and ethical guidelines related to the jobs posted; unacceptable counsellor behaviours on the Internet; need for research and review.

### **Online coaching/ consulting *versus* online career counselling**

It is important to distinguish between online coaching and counselling, in career management. Firstly, because online career coaching can be offered in virtual environment, or on a public forum (a situation disapproved by many professionals!), or by e-mail, when establishing a relationship as a type one-to-one, like classic counselling sessions. In each of the two situations, the kind of online questions and answers differs, but also the roles and the responsibilities of the coach, respectively, of the client. The advantages and the limits related to the online environment, especially when the environment is a public forum and not the e-mail, are themselves different. Therefore, in each case, the online questions and answers must have an appropriate content context, and the roles and responsibilities of each participant should be clarified from the beginning.

For example, career counselling on a public forum is a service where clients submit questions that are publicly posted (online), that career experts must respond by posting messages, generally within 48-72 hours.

In contrast, online career counselling by e-mail is similar to telephone counselling, is performed in the form one-to-one and “implies a deeper level of involvement with the client”. Most online career counselling professionals argue that e-mail career counselling is practiced on an individualized, one-to-one basis, with the e-mail messages and responses written between the client and the career counsellor. The counselling relationship by e-mail proceeds in a specific framework and is similar to individual counselling sessions.

Whitaker, a counselling expert, said that as counsellors: “we need to win the battle for structure and lose the battle for power” (in Boer, 2001, p. 82). By this assertion he defines the parameters of the counselling sessions, namely: the role of the counsellor to determine when and where the sessions will be held, the duration, fees and the areas of expertise or practice used when addressing clients.

Once this is established and the client agrees to the structure of the counselling, the job of the counsellor is “to lose the battle for power”. “The battle for power” refers to the client’s availability and willingness to change, to move forward or to decide on whether or not to take action. In coaching, the goal is to provide information to the client to take action (in the sense of

acting!) and to make him accountable for his achievement. Whitaker believed the client must have this freedom to choose, in order to have confidence in the counsellor and be motivated to change. The battle for power (defining client issues and outcomes) is one of the major differences between career coaching as a speciality and career counselling.

Online counselling implies a deeper level of involvement than the coaching/ consulting in the relationship with the client. A deeper level of involvement is what Whitaker understands by “losing the battle for power or trusting the client”. In this case, the individual transformation rests not in action alone, but more in the client being rewarded by deeper inner insight / understanding (as are feelings or affirmation and self-worth). However, the author believes that the boundary guidelines developed and established by career coaches are valuable additions for career counsellors to include in their practices. (Whitaker, 1971 in Boer, 2001, pp. 81-82).

In online coaching, many clients ask information about the nature and content of the interview. They want to know what to expect, the questions to which they could find answers or how to face certain difficulties. For example, one of the most frequently asked questions in online interviews of clients is: “Why did you leave your last job?”

Martin Yate (1995), professional career coach, suggests six reasons for leaving a job, namely:

- ⇒ **Challenge:** They were not able to advance professionally in that position.
- ⇒ **Location:** The commute was unreasonably long.
- ⇒ **Advancement:** There was nowhere for them to go. Although they have strengths and competences, there were too many people before, entitled to promote.
- ⇒ **Money:** They were underpaid for their skills and contribution.
- ⇒ **Pride or prestige:** They wanted to be with a better company.
- ⇒ **Security:** The company was not stable.

This example of online coaching (Martin Yate, 1995 in Boer, 2001, p. 83) highlights the difference between responses in coaching, in relation to the messages in online career counselling, where attention is paid to the tone, language and emotional load of the client’s message. The response to the tone, language and/ or the context of a person’s life are related to counselling skills which involve affirming or normalizing the client’s feelings, focusing on attitudes and decision-making processes. Career counsellors know the importance of such skills training, even when responding to routine questions, as in the previous example.

Others differences between online career coaching and counselling, can be deduced from the limitations on assistance through online coaching. Thus:

- coaching services are provided only to adults aged 18 or over (usually, assistance through online coaching is a process for helping clients aged 21 to 51). If a career coach receives any indications that the person they are communicating with is a minor they will cease providing advice.
- a coach doesn't provide legal advice. (This limitation is questionable, some authors argue for the need for advocacy skills in coaching!).
- a coach will provide assistance to the client as long as he or she will be able to have his or her own options and make personal choices. But, the ultimate responsibility for their own actions remains to them.

The principles on which career coaching relies do not deviate from career counselling standards and there is no conflict between the codes of ethics of the two areas. Rather, career counselling may have something to learn from online coaching in terms of setting limits in this environment. From this perspective, the potential implications of online coaching in career management, recently introduced in Romania, are more than obvious for Romanian counsellors in practice. They refer to the positive impact that online coaching has on counselling, an influence expressed by a transfer of methodological norms and practical-applicative aspects, with usefulness especially in counselling centred on objectives and solutions.

If the differences between online career coaching and counselling bring to light not only the advantages but also some specific limits, positive aspects, common to both, reside mainly in the similarities between them.

The inherent advantages in online services result, paradoxically, from anonymity. Anonymity brings unexpected benefits, such as giving clients the freedom to ask core and intimate questions, anonymity adding the assurance of confidentiality. Although it can maintain the one-to-one relationship, as in the classic counselling, in online coaching and counselling, the disappears the direct contact of the type face-to-face, which not only reduces the client's anxiety, but eliminates the possible mistakes in interpreting the client's body language. Online coaching and counselling facilitates the integration of interpersonal communication skills, regardless of individual differences related to gender, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, physical and psychic capacities. Facilitating the work with the various categories of population, belonging to different

cultures, online services enable and require, in equal measure, the training and the development of the multicultural skills.

### **Multicultural competence in online coaching and counselling**

Rayman (1999) reveals that “in this millennium, online career counselling services raised the need to new and alternative service delivery modes (e.g., bilingual counsellors; counsellors familiar with disability issues, counsellors with expertise/ competencies in various cultural fields etc.)”. (Rayman, 1999 in Boer, 2001, p. 61).

D. W. Sues and D. Sue (2008) describe culturally competent counsellors “as being aware of their own assumptions, values and biases; understanding the worldview of culturally diverse clients; and using appropriate interventions strategies and techniques. These criteria correspond with the attitudes/ values, knowledge and skills typically used to define competence in general. [...] knowledge of a specific diverse population will include such information as the definition of the population, including its various segments, and the history of oppression the population has experienced”. (D. W. Sue & D. Sue, 2008 in Cornish, J. A. E. *et al.*, 2012, pp. 6-7).

The definition of the multicultural competence comes to underline one thing already known that the competencies are not static, but ever changing. The process of becoming a multicultural competent counsellor resembles a complex and lifelong journey. Multicultural competence can be defined as “the extent to which a counsellor is actively engaged in the process of self-awareness, obtaining knowledge, and implementing skills” in working with people from diverse cultures. (Arrendondo *et al.*, 1996; Constantine, Hage, Kindaichi & Bryant, 2007; Sue, Arredondo & McDavis, 1992 in Cornish, J. A. E. *et al.*, 2012, pp. 6-7).

The domains within the model of multicultural counselling competencies can be thought of from a double perspective: as fixed-goal or as process (Collins & Pieterse, 2007 in Cornish, J. A. E. *et al.*, 2012, p. 7). The fixed-goal perspective implies that the final result of the competence is seen through demonstrable behaviours, while the process perspective requires internal engagement and change. Multicultural competence counselling may consist in obtaining information relative to “various worldview orientations, histories of oppressions endured by marginalized populations and culture-specific values that influence the subjective and collaborative experience of marginalized populations”. (Constantin *et al.*, 2007, p. 24 in Cornish, J. A. E.; Nadkarni, L. I.; Henderson Metzger, L. *et al.*, 2012, p. 7). The development and the implementation of the skills, within the multicultural counselling competency, requires that the counsellor acts in a way that

“draws from an existing fund of cultural knowledge to design mental health interventions that are relevant to marginalized populations” (*Idem*). The perspective process or domain of self-awareness requires that the multicultural competent counsellor is aware of “one’s attitudes, beliefs and values regarding race, ethnicity and culture along with one’s awareness of the socio-political relevance of cultural group membership in terms of issues of cultural privilege, discrimination and oppression” (Constantin *et al.*, 2007, p. 24 in Cornish, J. A. E. *et al.*, 2012, p. 7).

The differences between national and organizational cultures can be grouped into four main domains, namely:

- frankness/ sincerity (to get straight to the point *versus* to leave the other to understand the message);
- hierarchy (to follow orders *versus* to engage in discussing them);
- consensus (to accept various opinions *versus* the need for unanimity);
- individualism (individual winners *versus* the effectiveness of the team).

#### *Online coaching/ consulting*

When we make coaching with someone from a different culture, he or she can act or react differently than usually. For example, individuals work differently in a new job according to the number of hierarchical structures in their background. Similarly, the meaning and relevance of “teamwork” may differ significantly or subtly, from one culture to another, with implications for those who are trying to build a team. Therefore, it’s necessary to reflect upon the most important cultural differences between the coach and the person that is being assisted through coaching, as well as upon the context of the coaching.

- a. Cultural differences have not only national, racial or religious causes; e. g., a new employee in an organization can still be extremely influenced by the previous employer’s culture, but in time, by coaching, he/she can become efficient in an unfamiliar cultural environment.
- b. Cultural differences can lead to higher or lower levels of perceived performance and to a greater or lesser need of feedback, as well as to the acceptance thereof.
- c. When working with a multinational team or with individuals from different cultures, a coach must be explicit with himself and with the team, on the implications of cultural differences;

d. It should be pursued the building of shared expectations regarding management style, timeliness, frequency controls, the need for knowledge.

*Online career counselling*

Online career counselling increases people’s access to the counselling services and encourages them to ask questions to the counsellor. Surfing the Internet is a specific skill to the international clients and represents a strategy of searching for new jobs, in various cultural spaces. In the case of international clients, the Internet provides increased access from isolated areas to career counselling and can equally serve as strategy in building bridges between cultural differences.

In the face-to-face counselling, the knowledge of nuances and subtleties of communication styles specific to various cultures, are essential for the interpretations of the counsellor.

For example, Sue and Sue (1990) (in Boer, 2001, p. 62) emphasized the importance of understanding the differences between communication styles, charting nonverbal and verbal styles for American Indians, Asian Americans/ Hispanics, Whites and Blacks (see Table 2).

Table 2. Differences between communication styles: dimension nonverbal/ verbal (Sue & Sue, 1990)

1. American Indians	2. Asian / Hispanics	3. Whites	4. Blacks
5. 1. Speak softly/ slower	6. 1. Speak softly	7. 1. Speak loud so to control the listener	8. 1. Speak affected
9. 2. Avoid eyes when listening or talking	10. 2. Avoid eye contact when listen or talk to people with high status	11. 2. A higher eye contact when listening	12. 2. Prolonged eye contact when talking, but lower when listening
13. 3. Intervene more rarely in order to encourage the communication	14. 3. Similar rules	15. 3. Head nods, give nonverbal communication markers	16. 3. Interrupt the communication (and take over when they can)
17. 4. Respond with delay time (silence)	18. 4. Respond with delay	19. 4. Respond quickly	20. 4. Respond quickly
21. 5. Manner of expression low-keyed, indirect	22. 5. Low-keyed, indirect	23. 5. Objective, task-oriented	24. 5. Affective, emotional interpersonal

The differences between communication styles are less important, in the case of online career counselling or of the communication through written text. In this case, there may occur misinterpretations depending on the questions and answers or eye contact. The process of online

communication allows interpretations for any style of communication, thus establishing connections between people from different cultures.

The fundamental characteristics of the online environment are: ensuring user anonymity, increasing the probability to overcome cultural differences and serving as an effective strategy for international clients to use online counselling services. For example, unlike face-to-face counselling, online clients (clients counselled by e-mail) are able to be completely anonymous, sharing to the counsellor everything they like or whatever they want to know. These clients know that they can ask a question without being disclosed: name, address, telephone number, sexual orientation and even the country of origin, not to speak that they have no fears about the counsellors' interpretations related to the non-verbal cues or body language.

Online practice shows that complete anonymity is not a priority for online clients. Most volunteer to inform on their identity and education, current profession and country of origin. It may seem a paradox, but when they have the freedom offered by e-mail communications, the clients decide how much and what information to share.

The clients become freer to open themselves when they are no longer forced to share their feelings and intimacy, as in face-to-face counselling, free from the misunderstandings that could generate non-verbal communication from the usual counselling. Perhaps, online environment allows clients to provide information that they would never reveal in direct contact with the career counsellor.

## **Conclusions**

Coaching aims to improve the performance and the learning ability of human individuals. It involves feedback from clients and tools such as motivation, effective use of questions and the awareness and adaptation of the management style to the person's level of competence, relative to the task that they have to fulfil. The purpose of the coaching assistance is to help people find their own solutions to their own problems through a dynamic interaction; it is not achieved by a unilateral communication of hints, tips, instructions and orders. (Landsberg, 2007, p. 109).

The goal of a coach is to build awareness, responsibility and self-confidence. In order for people to build and strengthen their self-confidence, in addition to achieving successes, it is necessary to know that their success is a result of their own efforts. The fundamental intention of coaching is to build the self-confidence of the disciple (regardless of the nature of the task and of the problem

to solve). Awareness and responsibility are, without doubt, two crucial qualities in relation to performance, in any activity.

For some people, coaching requests and causes a fundamental change in how they perceive themselves and others. Coaching is not only a technique that should be spelled out and rigidly implemented, in certain prescribed circumstances. Coaching is a way to lead, to treat people, a mind-set, a way of being, and a sort of “a way of life” (Lionnet, 2015). We could waive to the word “coaching”, or may add new terms to those that already exist: counselling, advice, guidance, facilitation, mentoring, support, guidance, psychotherapy, training etc. Their application differs to some extent, but overlap, and although it is possible to be differently expressed, the fundamental principles of awareness and responsibility are common to all, constituting the very essence of human development, effectiveness and efficiency.

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