



### Have we helped?

The "how" of HR can be centred around the question: "Have we helped?"

- to build an organization fit to compete
- to develop capacity to change
- to learn development of insights, practice and feedback with both the individual and within the whole
- to improve the quality of both leadership and management
- to enable organizations to work with the difficult and to avoid the obvious and easy answers

### HR departments are looking for

- alignment with company goals in which the coach/consultant acts as "midwife"
- transparency in a three cornered contract between (1) the company , (2) the coaching counterpart and (3) the coach
- transparency in meeting expectations by HR and reporting time/management/scope, leading to an outcome that is tangible and measurable
- that the coach be a role model - congruency in that aspect.
- qualifications - proven coach experience - references, registered with a professional body (such as ASCCANZ)
- information re: what styles and methods used and fields of practice
- an absolute turn off: a coach who tries to on-sell programs to the team without the HR's knowledge

This raised lively discussion and upon reflection this has been a very useful and energetic forum, thanks to Ms Clements and those present. The meeting seemed to push the point home for a successful working relationship between a coach or consultant and an HR employer.

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## Downturn of a Profession

### - the bad imago of consultants -

by Servaas van Beekum, Waverley\*

A classical joke about consultants goes like this:

A consultant travels by car in the country and meets a sheep farmer amidst hundreds of grazing sheep. They chat awhile and then the consultants says to the farmer:

"If I tell you how many sheep you exactly have, can I then have one sheep?"

"OK, says the farmer, "tell me"!

The consultant takes his laptop, contacts with internet, makes a GPS scan, does several calculations and after working it out in an excel sheet, the proudly tells the farmer:

"Your herd is exactly 4298 sheep".

"Wow" says the farmer, "you're right, it's exactly that".

The consultant takes one of the sheep and puts it in the back of his car. And when he wants to drive off, the farmer says:

"Wait a second. If I tell you what you are, can I then have my sheep back?"

"OK, says the consultant, "tell me".

The farmer says: "You must be a consultant".

"Right, how did you work that out?" says the consultant.

"Well", says the farmer, "firstly you mingle in my business unasked for, secondly you tell me something I already know and thirdly, well, I want my dog back"!

The point of the joke is to make it clear that you don't need consultants, they don't really add value to the company, their fees are ridiculous, they are stupid and they are out of touch with reality. Consultants have a bad reputation, close to that of waiters and used car salesmen.

3 The collapse of Enron in 2001 was an earthquake in the corporate world. The collapse of Arthur Anderson, consulting firm to Enron, was of the same proportions in the world of the big five consulting firms. Arthur Anderson left the field, shamed for its collusion with the interests of greed and opportunism of their client Enron. Arthur Anderson lacked independence, and most of all, lacked integrity and ethics. Competing consulting firms rubbed their hands and grabbed the opportunities by quickly filling the gaps that the disgraced Anderson consultants left. Ironically they often hired the fired Anderson consultants to do the work. This, of course, went not unnoticed in the field of customers, dealing another blow to the credibility of consultants.

### Developments

The collapse of Arthur Anderson coincides with two other developments in the consultancy market; (1) customers demanding more accountability from consultants and (2) discomfort with the involvement of consultants in structural change and strategic choices at the expense of people issues that come up in organizational reconstructions.

#### (1) Accountability

Once there was (and sometime there still is), a time that a company would just pay a consultant a heavy fee, in order not to deal with internal issues themselves. Expertise for internal financial management or change processes was projected out of the company. Beyond the formal questions and contracts, consultants were, on a psychological level, actually hired as heroes, as rescuers, as guiding angels, as problem solvers, as trouble shooters or as protection shields toward the tax office or public opinion. Consultants colluded with those projections, happily walking away with large pay outs. The collapse of Enron spoiled the party. And, while the effects of consultant approaches became more and more questionable, the call for accountability was heard louder. Unfortunately, many consultants could not deliver. Confronted with demands of transparency and reflection, they were just not up for grabs and left the field.

A side effect of this development has been, that within companies a new awareness about responsibility for their own change processes has occurred. There has been a switch in how and with what sort of questions, companies were going to approach consultants. Nowadays

companies do their homework better, they organize internal brainstorming sessions, they think about strategy and they prepare the questions, before contacting consultants. By doing so, not only have the questions for consultants changed, the projected dependency onto the consultants has changed with it. Companies can count their sheep themselves, their real questions have become more sophisticated.

#### (2) Human factor

The well known "balanced score card" model (Kaplan & Norton, 1991) divides the issues that companies deal with in four areas: finance, markets and customers, internal processes and people's issues. It is understandable that different consultants specialize in different areas, each of them deserving attention. When company directors and managers reflect about their company's performance, it shows that they each have their specific area of interest as well. Some are more interested in the financial matters, others in customer relations, others in the internal process. However, over the years there has been a shift in attention towards the human factor. Nowadays one can sometimes hear managers say that their most important capital in the company is the employees. And they mean it.

Australia does not do so well in this area. In over 100 interviews with CEOs and senior managers, conducted from 2000-2003 in Australia \*), the human factor was rated lowest. It got the least attention and was considered the least important. The recent change of the industrial relations laws mirrors this neglect of the human factor in Australian business life, actually bringing human relations in companies back to the state of 150 years ago.

Elsewhere in the world however, there is more respect for and acknowledgement of the importance of the people factor. In Europe, forget the US on this point, the four areas of the balanced score card are brought together into a much more holistic approach of doing business, which includes social engagement of companies in so called Corporate Social Responsibility - CSR\*\*). Recently in Switzerland, not the most progressive European nation, the entire board and top management of former Swissair, 19 top managers in total, have been brought to justice for mismanagement and dishonesty that caused the breakdown of Swissair in 2001, creating the loss of jobs for 5000 people. They did not do classical criminal acts as in the One-Tel or HIH affairs in Australia. In the Swissair case, board and directors were brought to justice for not being socially responsible, for the effect of their actions on their employees.

(continued from p.3: Downturn of a Profession - the bad imago of consultants)

4 This sort of development has an effect on the demands made on consultants. Having a bright analytic company diagnosis, a restructuring plan and a strategy of implementation, is not enough anymore. Hiding one's head in the sand for social consequences or colluding with ethical mismanagement, is no longer acceptable. The effects of business development on people working for the company, on their job satisfaction, on their roles and responsibilities, on their relationships within the company and on their career perspectives, need to be taken into account. Consultants, who cannot deliver in this area, are out.

### **The rise of executive coaches and the fall of consultants**

Where consultants are the losers, coaches are the winners. One man's meat is another man's poison. In the corporate dynamics, coaching has taken over where consultancy lost the plot. The "agent of change" has become more personal and general and s/he knows that dogs are not sheep. Executive coaching has developed a personal touch, whereby (1) the effects on the manager of personal issues in the company, are taken into account. As well, (2) personal history, that may explain patterns in the difficulties of managers in companies, can be taken into account. And, (3) considering the effects of decisions on employees and finding good ways to communicate them, are also part of the picture in a coaching session. Finally, (4) group dynamics in teams and project groups are considered worth reflecting about.

The market has given a clear signal. Companies take more responsibility for the themes in their organizations and want a more personal approach from the consultants they hire. Don't mix this up with the rise of so called life-coaching, which is a trendy way of making counseling exciting and giving counselors a more corporate acceptable image. Although this development is related with the dynamics described above, life coaching is a different phenomenon from executive or business coaching.

### **What is left for consultants?**

Now that coaches are filling the gaps left by dysfunctional consultants, what is left for the consultants themselves? Interestingly enough, the consultants who do not suffer from the dysfunctional development described above are those who work from a much more systemic approach, including the research of conscious and unconscious dynamics in companies. They provide companies with a

process of learning, in which (1) incumbents have to take responsibility, instead of projecting it out. In this learning process, (2) no one is to blame, but all do carry responsibility for the problems that inevitably rise in any company. In this approach, (3) problems are understood in their complexity. And (4) role keepers are encouraged to reflect about and take up their company roles.

These trustworthy consultants would always emphasize the responsibility for change within the company and include the totality of the company in a holistic approach to consultancy. They would not collude with corporate narcissism, greed and unethical tendencies, but maintain their independence. Once I consulted to BMW in Munich and came to the client in my Saab. An outcry: an independent consultant driving a competitive brand was unheard of. Then came the pressure to buy one of their cars. They just could not stand the narcissistic injury of me not driving their brand. Real independent consultants have a more "difficult" message to communicate than the consultants who collude with the projection attached to the expert. And one can argue that because of this they suffered in the past because their services were not sought so much. But that is changing.

Opportunities for consultants to train and learn about working systemically, including psychodynamic processes, are growing. Globally, the growth of the number of so called group relations conferences and training courses that include group relations and systemic approaches is actually explosive. Associations that have this interest (besides ASCCANZ) are the International Society for the Psychodynamic Study of Organisations - ISPSO ([www.ispsso.com](http://www.ispsso.com)) and Group Relations Australia ([www.grouprelations.org.au](http://www.grouprelations.org.au))

The good news for consultants: is: get back to doing your homework. So that you don't mix up sheep and dogs anymore.

#### Notes

\*) Consulting experience of Alex Fok & Servaas van Beekum in implementing a company diagnostic model described on: [www.ascenture.com.au](http://www.ascenture.com.au)

\*\*) CSR - Corporate Social Responsibility, a leading website is <http://www.csrwire.com/>

#### Literature

Kaplan, R. and Norton D (1991) The Balanced Score Card, Harvard Business School Review

**\* drs. Servaas van Beekum, president ASCCANZ and vice president Group Relations Australia, Psychotherapist (PACFA) and Executive Coach (ASCCANZ) in private practice**

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## Conferences and other information for Consultants:

20-22 June 2006  
Amsterdam (Netherlands)  
ISPSO world conference  
[www.ispso.org](http://www.ispso.org)

17-18 June 2006  
London (UK)  
OPUS / Bristol University conference  
[director@opus.org.uk](mailto:director@opus.org.uk) / [christine.taylor@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:christine.taylor@uwe.ac.uk)

2-5 November 2006  
Belgirate, Lago Maggiore (Italy)  
A.K. Rice institute, OFEK, Tavistock institute:  
Theory, Design and Role-Taking in Group Relations  
Conferences and their Applications  
[www.akriceinstitute.org](http://www.akriceinstitute.org)

Group Relations Australia is planning a working  
conference for 2007. Ask for updates via:  
[secretary@grouprelations.org.au](mailto:secretary@grouprelations.org.au)

On the occasion of Sigmund Freud's 150th birthday  
the Australian Psychoanalytic Society website  
opened a page under the title: "An Experiment in  
Dialogue".

Look at [www.pschoanalysis.asn.au](http://www.pschoanalysis.asn.au) and click on  
"an experiment in dialogue".

## Recent Publications

Brunning, H. (Ed.) (2006) *Executive Coaching: Systems-  
Psychodynamic Perspective*, Karnac, London  
Order at: [www.karnacbooks.com](http://www.karnacbooks.com)

Mathur, A.(Ed.) (2006) *International Perspectives on  
Group Relations*, Aivoairut Oy, Tampere  
Order at: [piia.lindgren@aivoairut.fi](mailto:piia.lindgren@aivoairut.fi)

Newton, J., Long, S., Sievers, B. (Eds.) (2006) *Coaching  
in Depth*, Karnac, London  
Order at: [www.karnacbooks.com](http://www.karnacbooks.com)

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ASCCANZ Activities - ASCCANZ Activities - ASCCANZ Activities

Friday 26 May in Waverley / Sydney

Masterclass

"Psychodrama Techniques in  
Supervision and Coaching"

by Rollo Brown

Fee

A\$195,- (ASCCANZ Members) A\$225 (non Members)

Apply by sending cheque to: ASCCANZ  
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[www.asccanz.org](http://www.asccanz.org)

ASCCANZ **web-member-search** is  
a service for both clients  
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**For clients** it is an easy  
access to find an ASCCANZ  
accredited coach, supervisor  
or consultant. Example: Look  
for a coach in NSW and all  
accredited coaches in NSW  
will be listed with their  
name, suburb, email and  
phone. You can then contact  
them directly.

**For members** it is a marketing  
opportunity: once listed,  
max. 40 words about oneself  
can be added. This is part of  
the membership fee. Further  
information or a picture  
attached, will be an extra  
charge of \$33,- (incl. GST)  
per annum.

## Training news

Consulting Supervision  
Training

Dates: 2006  
Mercy Foundation  
Waterloo NSW  
Contact  
**Dr. Alex Nelson**  
[educate@mercyfoundation.com.au](mailto:educate@mercyfoundation.com.au)

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## Coaching/ Supervision III "Role Analysis Approach"

27-28 October Wellington  
New Zealand

Contact:  
**drs. Janneke Geurts**  
[janneke@offtheplanet.co.nz](mailto:janneke@offtheplanet.co.nz)

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## Open Space facilitation programs in Perth

9-11 August & November 7-9  
Contact:  
[mckeague@iprimus.com.au](mailto:mckeague@iprimus.com.au)

## Training news

Solution Focused  
Coaching Training  
21 days / 1 year

Dates: start this spring  
2006  
Ask for brochure:  
**drs. Servaas van Beekum**  
[servaasvanbeekum@bigpond.com](mailto:servaasvanbeekum@bigpond.com)

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## ASCCANZ Forum Meetings 06

Informal meetings for  
members and non-member  
(6 - 7.30 PM + social)

Sydney: **19 July**  
Cross Cultural  
Issues

Wellington (NZ) and  
Perth: **check dates at**  
[info@asccanz.org](mailto:info@asccanz.org)

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## ASCCANZ Annual Conference

Friday 3 November 2006

## ASCCANZ

### Board meetings 06

26 June Waverley NSW  
11 September Roseville NSW  
27 November Newport NSW  
(18.00-20.00 hrs)

**Observers welcome**  
Contact **+612/93861488**



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